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## **A 'Sound Investment'? British Cultural Diplomacy and Overseas Students: The British Council's Students Committee, 1935–1939**

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This article explores the UK government's first foray into cultural diplomacy by focusing on the activities of the British Council's Students Committee in the run-up to the Second World War. Students were placed at the heart of British cultural diplomacy, which drew on foreign models as well as the experience of intra-empire exchanges. While employing cultural internationalist discourse, the drive to attract more overseas students to the United Kingdom was intended to bring economic and political advantages to the host country. The British Council pursued its policy in cooperation with non-state actors but ultimately was guided by the Foreign Office, which led it to target key strategic regions, principally in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin.

Writing on the occasion of the British Council's twenty-fifth anniversary, A. J. S. White, its first secretary-general, described the Council's student scholarships launched in the interwar period as a one of its 'soundest investments'.<sup>1</sup> This raises the questions: who was 'investing' in the scheme and what 'return on investment' did they hope to gain? Between 1935 and 1939, some five hundred students benefitted from British Council bursaries and scholarships, as part of a wider drive to bring more overseas students to the United Kingdom. The scheme was a

complex operation involving state and non-state actors, whose motivations were more or less explicit. The impetus for the scheme nevertheless emanated from a number of government departments in response to the economic and political challenges of the interwar period. It was only when they intersected with a broader commitment to cultural diplomacy that these plans came to fruition via the British Council's Students Committee.

The British government came somewhat late to the field of cultural diplomacy. Although the interwar period saw the development of a number of private initiatives and limited support from the Foreign Office's News Department, it took Reginald (Rex) Leeper of this same department until 1934 to persuade the government, and the Treasury, of the need to invest in what was initially termed not 'cultural diplomacy' (a term rarely used by the British at the time) but 'cultural propaganda'. For the British diplomat Anthony Haigh, writing in the 1970s, the practices developed under this label in the interwar period are nonetheless recognisable as cultural diplomacy, which he defined as 'the activities of governments in the sphere – traditionally left to private enterprise – of international cultural relations'. Haigh describes the British interwar 'experiment' as amateurish compared to French cultural diplomacy of the time but credits it with enabling the emergence of 'the most professional body of cultural diplomats in the world' after the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> More recently Nicholas Cull cited the British Council as a 'cultural diplomacy actor' while proposing a typology that considers cultural diplomacy and exchanges as parallel subfields of public diplomacy, a position he admits remains debated.<sup>3</sup> This article questions the pertinence of this model for the United Kingdom not only because it fails to reflect the institutional reality but also because the development of scholarships was intimately linked to the spread of the English language, arguably at the heart of cultural diplomacy. Irrespective of the terminology used, the interwar period marked a turning point for the UK as the Foreign Office (FO) began to intervene in international cultural and educational relations as a way to bolster British prestige and foreign policy. Faced with the

growing threat of Nazi and Fascist propaganda, and, to a lesser extent, rivalry with France, economic competition and imperial concerns, the FO became an important though discreet actor in this field, working through the semi-autonomous British Council.

Although Philip Taylor's pioneering book *The Projection of Britain* (1981) provided us with a detailed account of this larger process, little has been written on the British Council's policies and actions in the years immediately preceding the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, until quite recently, the history of the British Council had failed to generate much scholarly interest at all.<sup>5</sup> This article proposes to contribute to this growing literature by focusing on one of the Council's earliest projects, namely its attempts to encourage overseas students to study in the United Kingdom. Student mobility in the interwar period has figured in recent books by Tamson Pietsch, Hilary Perraton and Tomás Irish.<sup>6</sup> As these studies have shown, student mobility, and its management by private and state actors, became an increasingly recognised field of international relations in the interwar period. This article will build on this research by considering the cultivation of overseas students specifically as a facet of British cultural diplomacy. As Patricia M. Goff has noted, there is no single fixed definition of cultural diplomacy: while some scholars emphasise the importance of 'mutual understanding', others insist on the role played by governments and foreign policy considerations.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, while the French model emphasises the role of the state, studies of American cultural diplomacy in particular have drawn attention to the role of private organisations; in practice public and private overlapped in both countries.<sup>8</sup> It will be seen that British cultural diplomacy attempted to bring together these different tendencies. Furthermore, unlike many other studies of scholarship programmes, the perspective that emerges here highlights academic exchange beyond the British empire, tending to complexify the overall picture whilst hinting at interactions between the national, imperial and international dimensions of student mobility.

Focusing on the international mobility of students is a particularly fertile angle from which to examine interwar cultural diplomacy as it is one of the areas where the intersection of internationalism and nationalism emerges most clearly.<sup>9</sup> For post-First World War internationalists, who looked to intellectual cooperation and the education of transnational elites to foster the mutual understanding that they believed would bring peace, students obviously had a key role to play. Internationalists were therefore keen to promote academic exchanges of both students and teachers.<sup>10</sup> Given that such exchanges fell within the remit of the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, founded in 1922 under the aegis of the League of Nations, this was not merely a matter for universities. Yet the FO remained sceptical of the value of such multilateral forms of intellectual co-operation, due in part to a traditional liberal belief in the primacy of private initiative but also to fears that it would be used to increase French cultural influence. The desire to maintain and expand its cultural reach drove the French commitment to intellectual co-operation while ensuring that university co-operation did not escape governmental control.<sup>11</sup> Even before the rise of the fascist states, international student exchanges were becoming subject to national regulation. In France, which would provide the model for the British Council, the management of grants for international students was subsumed into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1920, thus bringing scholarships into line with foreign policy considerations.<sup>12</sup> Student mobility would become a key field of cultural diplomacy even before cultural internationalism buckled in the hostile environment of the 1930s.

Attracting international students was not only a site of rivalry between European countries, it also offered an ideal opportunity to showcase national culture in all its forms. When the British government finally decided to enter the field of cultural diplomacy in the early 1930s, encouraging 'overseas' (both empire and non-empire) students to come to the UK was quickly identified as a priority. Thus in its first year of operation in 1936, the Students

Committee of the British Council received nearly a quarter of the body's meagre £20 000 budget and as government support increased more funds were channelled into study grants.<sup>13</sup> Based primarily on the archives of the British Council, this article will map out the origins, objectives and geographical scope of the Students Committee's programme, following to a large extent the framework of analysis proposed by Tournès and Scott-Smith.<sup>14</sup> It will show how the United Kingdom used bursaries and scholarships as a means to enhance its foreign policy in the run up to the Second World War. Studying this aspect of the British Council's work gives us a deeper insight into the nature of the British cultural diplomacy that emerged in these crucial years and in particular of the role played by non-state actors in collaboration with official bodies. It also highlights the increasing interest in students as international agents and the intertwining of internationalism and imperialism. Indeed, the British Council's student policy can be seen as an attempt to incorporate non-empire students into existing models of intra-empire student mobility. Although the Council's student policy was barely emerging from the experimental phase when war broke out in 1939, it would fashion the scholarship programmes which blossomed after the war. Despite the enormous changes unleashed by the Second World War, the experiences of the British Council in the interwar period laid the foundations of British postwar cultural diplomacy.

### **The Ramsden Committee and the Founding of the British Council**

Official interest in developing student exchanges as a means to increase international interaction and spread 'British thought' dated back to the First World War.<sup>15</sup> However, during the 1920s both the FO and the private organisations it might have worked with – for instance the All Peoples' Association or the English Speaking Union – lacked the funds to implement any wider-ranging programme. Even when the Treasury was persuaded to allocate a small grant

to the Travel Association in 1928 this was not sufficient to match private sector funding, meaning that business interests continued to override those of international understanding.<sup>16</sup> The need to support British businesses would provide the key to breaking down Treasury resistance to financing cultural and educational activities overseas.

The origins of the British Council's student policy can be found in the Committee on the Education and Training of Students from Overseas. This committee was set up on the recommendation of the Overseas Trade Development Council with the aim of boosting British trade in the wake of economic and trade missions to South America (1929), the Far East (1930–1) and Scandinavia (1933). The belief that trade no longer simply 'followed the flag' but also, in the words of Philip Taylor, 'the newspaper, the schoolteacher and the language of a country', was gaining traction beyond the confines of the FO's News Department.<sup>17</sup> That the impetus for the creation of the committee came from concerns about the UK's export trade and ability to compete in world markets was reflected in the decision to invite the chairman of the Trade and Industry Committee of the House of Commons, Sir Eugene Ramsden, to act as chair. Furthermore, the composition of the committee was heavily weighted towards industrial and commercial interests. The committee was formally established in June 1933 under the aegis of the Boards of Trade and Education and given the following terms of reference: 'to consider what steps could usefully be taken to encourage suitable students to come to the United Kingdom for education and training – general, commercial or technical; and to make recommendations'.<sup>18</sup> This broad remit had implications for how students were defined, encompassing those in higher and further education, however brief their visit.

Reflecting these economic concerns, one of the objectives of the committee was to encourage students in engineering and technical fields to acquire some of their training or early work experience in the United Kingdom. In consultation with official and voluntary bodies, the committee also collected evidence about the presence of international students in the

universities and existing exchange programmes. Certain groups of students appeared to be well catered for, thanks to work by official bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for India and the Office of the Egyptian Ministry of Education. However, the United Kingdom lacked a single recognisable office which could disseminate information about the facilities offered by UK educational establishments and field inquiries from potential students. The committee concluded that an official overseas student office would not only be efficient but would 'provide testimony to the interest taken by His Majesty's Government in the problem of attracting overseas students to this country and to counteract the prevalent contrary impression'.<sup>19</sup> From the outset, therefore, being *seen* to take an interest in overseas students, thereby generating positive publicity for the United Kingdom abroad, was deemed equally as important as the long term impact on students. The committee discovered that its enquiries had generated 'interest and expectation' from countries within and beyond the empire, and particularly in Scandinavia. Noting that it 'would be undesirable to disappoint those expectations', in November 1934 the Committee recommended the immediate creation of such an office, jointly run by the Board of Education and Department of Overseas Trade, aided by a committee made up of representatives of educational authorities as well as industry and commerce. Furthermore, reciprocal relations were to be established wherever possible, differential fees for overseas students abolished and government-sponsored scholarships provided.

By this time, members of what had become known as the Ramsden Committee had been drawn into more ambitious plans emanating from the Foreign Office. The Committee's interim report of June 1934 argued strongly that the question of overseas students could not be divorced from that of the United Kingdom's broader international cultural policy, particularly in relation to the teaching of English. The development of cultural and commercial relations was a prerequisite for attracting good students in the first place and for maintaining a long-term



relationship with them once they returned home. As such, it welcomed news that the Foreign Office was working on a scheme for the promotion of cultural relations. Rex Leeper's initial attempts to use the private sector to set up a new organisation floundered on the differing objectives of the FO and its sponsors. Finally, Leeper brought together representatives of government departments as well as those of education and industry to form the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries, chaired by former ambassador William Tyrrell. With Treasury opposition finally overcome, the FO was able to offer modest financial support to what soon became known as the British Council. Its first meeting was held in December 1934, a few weeks before the Ramsden Committee submitted its final report.

As a semi-autonomous organisation, the British Council was a compromise solution allowing the FO to direct policy while maintaining a façade of independence.<sup>20</sup> For Tyrrell, cultural diplomacy represented 'work of real importance ... not only in national interest, but also in that of a return to sanity in international relations', highlighting the FO view that national interests and internationalism were not only compatible but complementary.<sup>21</sup> This position was reflected in the Council's mission statement, which assigned it the dual task of making 'the life and thought of the British peoples more widely known abroad' with promoting 'a mutual interchange of knowledge and ideas with other peoples'.<sup>22</sup>

The British Council quickly set up its first specialist committee, the Students Committee, which included many members of the original committee including its chair, Sir Eugene Ramsden. This committee was clearly geared towards implementing the recommendations of the Ramsden Report within the parameters of the FO's new commitment to deploying cultural diplomacy in the national interest. Despite the large degree of continuity with the Ramsden Committee, power relations within the new committee were altered by the presence of representatives from the Foreign and Colonial Offices and by the fact that

representatives of higher education establishments henceforth outnumbered those from commerce and industry.<sup>23</sup>

### **Implementing the Ramsden Report: the Students Committee 1935–1937**

The British Council's Students Committee began its work in the spring of 1935. Although it declared its long-term goal to be the development of the two-way traffic of students, it was decided that it would confine itself initially to encouraging overseas students to come to the United Kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Priority was to be given to the placing of trainees in British companies, the dissemination of information about UK universities and technical colleges abroad, and the creation of scholarships, within the limits imposed by the British Council's minimal budget. These tasks reflected the Ramsden Committee's original terms of reference and the recommendations made in its final report, but the Students Committee differed from its predecessor in that its work would ultimately be guided by the FO which had founded the British Council primarily as an adjunct to diplomacy. Hence the placing of trainees, which was never whole-heartedly embraced by industry, in practice remained a peripheral concern and was eventually transferred to a specialised sub-committee. This proximity to the FO meant that the Students Committee could draw on the resources of UK diplomatic missions abroad, but also that it would have to mould its proposals to match plans for cultural diplomacy in specific regions.

The first region to be targeted by the British Council was Scandinavia. The 1933 trade mission to Scandinavia, which had led to the creation of the Ramsden Committee, had highlighted the dominant position of German engineering in this region, due in part to its role in training Scandinavian students. A visit the following year by an official from the FO's News Department confirmed the decline of interest in British culture in the region, leading the British

Council to make Scandinavia its first target.<sup>25</sup> H. M. Legation in Oslo supported the work of the Students Committee by agreeing to allocate some of the funds assigned to improving cultural relations with Norway to sending selected students to study English in the United Kingdom. Three students, selected by a panel composed of H. M. Minister in Oslo, the Rector of Oslo University and representatives of local Anglophile associations, began courses in October 1935.<sup>26</sup> Conversely the Legation in Stockholm considered that English was already well taught in Sweden and expressed a desire for its cultural propaganda funds to be used in other ways.<sup>27</sup> The establishment of the Students Committee indicated the importance the newly-formed British Council accorded to increasing the flow of overseas students to the United Kingdom but, as long as the organisation was in its infancy, diplomatic missions on the spot would play a decisive role in deciding how limited funds were spent.

In practice there was a broad consensus as to the desirability of providing some financial assistance to enable selected foreign students of English to study at one of the UK universities. The reasons for this were manifold. Firstly, encouraging the spread of the English language was seen as the core of British cultural diplomacy, whether its ultimate aim was primarily political or commercial. Here British commentators looked to France whose cultural diplomacy drew strength from the Alliance Française's well-established international network of language teaching institutes as well as the weighty university and school section of the official *Œuvres françaises à l'étranger* founded in 1920.<sup>28</sup> Rex Leeper specifically cited the 'French example' when explaining the British Council's objectives in a 1935 article.<sup>29</sup> Given that it was considered 'impracticable' for the Council to set up British schools in foreign countries, the best method for promoting the study of English appeared to be by bringing foreign teachers of English to the United Kingdom for part of their training. This approach presented an added advantage: future teachers would gain not only knowledge of the English language and literature but also of 'British life and culture', which they would then be able to pass on to their

pupils. It was therefore decided that scholarships to study in the UK should be confined to those destined to teach in secondary schools ‘in order that the *influence* of the scholarship scheme may be as widespread as possible’ (my emphasis).<sup>30</sup> This was already an established practice within the empire as ‘educating the educators’ was a tenet of those organisations which had been organising teachers’ tours of empire since before the First World War.<sup>31</sup> Finally, offering bursaries to future teachers of English would enable the British Council to respond positively to a number of governments which had requested help in precisely this area.

One of the first concrete measures adopted by the Students Committee was the allocation of bursaries to students in eleven countries which had expressed a desire for ‘furthering the study of English’: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Spain and Portugal. Forty-four students in all were to share a budget of £2,200 which, although a small sum, represented almost half of the Council’s grant from the FO for 1935–1936.<sup>32</sup> In the states which had emerged from the turmoil of the First World War, language policy was linked to nation-building and the choice of foreign languages available in schools could indicate the government’s orientation in terms of international relations. For instance, in the Baltic states, which had been ruled by a German nobility within the Russian Empire, the decision to make English the first compulsory foreign language in secondary schools was a clear break with the past. The Council’s grants to the Baltic states were therefore a way of recognising and supporting this policy in an area which acted as a buffer zone between Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. It also enabled the United Kingdom to respond favourably to requests for such aid from Lithuania and Latvia which had been turned down in the 1920s due to Treasury opposition.<sup>33</sup> In the case of Yugoslavia, the FO believed German influence in the Ministry of Education was seeking to delay the implementation of a 1935 decree announcing the introduction of English classes in state schools.<sup>34</sup> Contributing to the training of four future teachers might have little concrete impact

in the short to medium term but at least it provided tangible evidence of British interest in and support for the teaching of English in Yugoslav schools.

Although the principal objective was the long-term one of spreading knowledge of the English language and British life and culture, short-term political considerations also came into play. Offering bursaries to Spanish students was seen as a 'desirable' quid pro quo given the Spanish government's provision of scholarships to nine British students in Madrid. Similarly, Czechoslovakia was described as being worthy of special attention in order 'to make use of the influence and support of President Masaryk' as well as in recognition of the Czech generosity towards English education.<sup>35</sup> Economic and geopolitical considerations, although never stated explicitly, obviously carried great weight in the choice of recipient countries. Cultural diplomacy reinforced the British drive to win export markets through the signing of bilateral trade agreements between 1933 and 1934 with the Baltic and Nordic states, where the UK found itself in direct competition with Germany.<sup>36</sup> The Baltic region and central and south-eastern Europe were at the heart of the diplomatic manoeuvres which marked the 1930s, while the Iberian Peninsula and Scandinavia were also of prime strategic importance. Given the diplomatic context, when rapid increases to the Council's budget in 1936 and 1937 made it possible to extend the scheme, it is not surprising to discover that applications were invited from Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary and Italy. As early as November 1935, the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, had identified Finland, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria as the main targets for British Council activities for both commercial and political reasons, arguing that,

In all, the danger of German cultural and commercial penetration, which may be expected to increase as the power and wealth of Germany revive, makes it particularly desirable for British cultural propaganda to secure as firm a hold as possible on the minds and interests of the population, before the counter attraction becomes too strong.<sup>37</sup>

The countries of western Europe are notable by their absence from this programme. Such countries were not accorded priority status by the Foreign Office and so were unlikely to benefit from the limited resources of the British Council in its early years. There was less need for British Council intervention in this region since there was a tradition of student mobility as well as official exchanges such as the German Rhodes scholarships that were re-established in 1930 and ran until the outbreak of war. English was already widely taught across the region and future teachers could travel to the United Kingdom to improve their language skills and acquire professional experience under the language teaching assistant exchange programme launched before the First World War. As will be seen, students from western Europe also tended to dominate the student exchanges run by the National Union of Students.

The bursaries scheme was mainly directed at Europe but was quickly extended to countries from the Council's other priority regions, namely the Near and Middle East and Latin America.<sup>38</sup> By 1937, the Near East Committee was in charge of seventeen students from Cyprus, Greece, Iraq, Transjordan, Turkey and Malta. Although the last of these countries was also the smallest, it received the lion's share of the Near East budget with seven bursaries. This was no doubt due not only to the strategic importance of Malta as home to the Mediterranean fleet, but also its geographical and cultural proximity to Italy, all of which made it a prime target for Italian cultural propaganda. Given that Italian had only lost its status as one of Malta's official languages around the time of the creation of the British Council, and that Italian universities attracted large numbers of Maltese students (especially those who could not meet the demanding English language requirements of the University of Malta), the teaching of English was an acutely political issue in Malta with obvious diplomatic ramifications.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Latin America (initially Argentina and Uruguay) only received five bursaries which were administered by the Council's Ibero-American Committee. The Colonial Office received a similar number, despite the fact that the British Council's original mission statement had

specifically assigned it an imperial mission, including encouraging ‘the study and use of the English language’ in the colonies.<sup>40</sup>

The Student Committee also turned to a more systematic advertisement of British universities abroad. Although it developed quickly, the Student Committee’s bursary scheme for future teachers of English could only hope to bring a handful of students to the UK. At the beginning of the 1930s France dominated the international student market, attracting 17,000 students to its universities while the UK trailed behind both the USA and Germany with only 5,000 international students.<sup>41</sup> This data suggests that the Committee’s implicit premise was correct, namely that the UK was failing to attract as many students as its rivals. As a 1938 memorandum would later point out, the reasons for this were also structural: since British universities were independent, the government could not oblige them to welcome large numbers of foreign students at ‘uneconomic rates’. State-run French and German universities were popular as they combined academic merit and care for their foreign students with cheaper fees, even if British universities benefitted from a reputation for ‘relative exclusiveness’ and ‘freedom from political infection’.<sup>42</sup> For that reason, greater efforts needed to be made in communicating to students abroad and offering assistance to potential candidates if the United Kingdom was to attract significantly more overseas students.

The Committee thus identified the need for – but struggled to establish – an organisation that could produce and distribute a pamphlet aimed at this market and also act as a clearing house for applications.<sup>43</sup> Rather than assume this role itself, the Committee sought to work with the Universities Bureau of the British Empire which was already active in this field and was better placed to cooperate with the fiercely independent British universities than any official body.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the First World War, the lack of a unified structure had been identified by the FO as rendering the UK higher education system opaque for foreign students, particularly Americans, but it remained circumspect in its dealings with the universities.<sup>45</sup> Although the

Students Committee had good reason to turn to the Universities Bureau, there were drawbacks to working through this organisation. Whereas the FO was primarily interested in harnessing the potential of UK higher education to extend British influence in Europe and the Near East, the University Bureau's internationalism was very much framed by its imperialism: its overriding ambition was to foster what Tamson Pietsch has termed an 'expansive British community'.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the Bureau only represented universities and not the technical institutes to which the government also hoped to attract overseas students. Despite this, the Universities Bureau did not accept the Committee's proposal to set up a joint committee including representatives of the Board of Education and the Association of Technical Institutes to deal with the needs of overseas students. Such was the Bureau's resistance to state interference that it even rejected funding from the Committee in order to maintain full responsibility for dealing with the projected handbook and related enquiries from international students.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the British Council had to bring out a publication bearing its own name, comprised of separate contributions by the Universities Bureau, the Board of Education and the educational departments of Scotland and Northern Ireland. In August 1936, the bulk of the first edition, entitled *Higher Education in Great Britain and Ireland*, was sent to diplomatic and consular posts and Anglo-Foreign Societies, while a smaller proportion was reserved for the Dominions and colonies.<sup>48</sup> The following year the handbook was issued as a joint publication between the British Council and the Universities Bureau of the British Empire with the former assuming the cost of subsequent revisions.<sup>49</sup> While this episode underlines the Committee's commitment to promoting British universities and technical institutions across the world, it also illustrates its initial difficulties in cooperating with longer-standing organisations, particularly in the field of higher education.

### **Accommodation, Hospitality and Welfare: Provisions and Partnerships**



In addition to attracting overseas students, the Committee was also aware of the need to look after them once they arrived in the United Kingdom. The principal challenge was accommodation, though directly linked to this was the integration of international students into the host community. For this reason ‘hospitality’ – welcoming international students, enabling them to experience the British ‘way of life’ and giving them opportunities to mix with UK students – was far from trivial. If the Committee’s objective was to produce not only future consumers of British products, but also to create a sympathetic attitude to the United Kingdom abroad, ensuring students came away with a positive view of the country and its people was key. As the secretary of the National Union of Students (NUS) had noted, accommodation problems combined with the ‘coldness’ of English colleagues meant that overseas students ‘could leave after two or three years with no better understanding of, and even dislike for, the English’.<sup>50</sup> Here the pursuit of national interests – engendering positive attitudes towards the United Kingdom among foreign citizens – led the Committee to adopt methods long advocated by cultural internationalists, who believed that person-to-person contact would lead to mutual understanding and ultimately peace. The empire movement provided a similar model. Organisations such as the School Empire Tour Committee placed great emphasis on personal contact in the belief that schoolboys would ‘return home Empire-minded with a knowledge of and an affection for the Empire which will find a vent in Parliament, in education or in any other career’.<sup>51</sup> The lack of interaction between overseas students and British people was a particularly acute problem in London, partly because its universities were traditionally non-residential but also because it acted as a magnet for international students. The Students Committee’s sub-committee on student accommodation and hospitality, which reported in 1937, therefore concentrated on the capital.<sup>52</sup>

The 1937 report found that there were about 12,000 overseas students in London, roughly half of whom were taking a short course, often at a language school. The latter group was made up predominantly of 'foreign' (i.e. non-empire) students, which meant that overall there were well over twice as many foreign students as empire students. Despite their much smaller numbers, however, students from the empire were relatively better catered for, mainly due to the many voluntary organisations concerned with imperial matters. Traditionally these had focused on students from the settler communities of the Dominions. As the report noted, the Victoria League and the Dominion Services and Students Hospitality Scheme together provided hospitality and accommodation for two hundred Dominion and British students. However, by the 1930s, specific services were also being provided to colonial students. The Victoria League, which prior to the First World War had resisted working with Indian students, now launched hospitality programmes for students from Malaya and Hong Kong in the hope of retaining their loyalty to the Empire.<sup>53</sup> Other organisations opened student centres with accommodation and club space targeted at specific groups or countries, for example the Indian Students Union and Hostel or Aggrey House for African and West Indian students. Although these services were offered by private organisations, they worked in close collaboration with public bodies. The Indian Hostel in Gower Street was run by the Indian YMCA but received funding from Indian provincial governments, while Aggrey House, despite being a charitable trust, was launched with Colonial Office backing and was financially dependent on colonial governments.<sup>54</sup> In both cases, official support stemmed at least in part from fears that independent hostels would become hotbeds of anticolonial agitation, while recognising that racial discrimination made it particularly difficult for colonial students to find lodgings. Student residences were not exempt from such discrimination, for example London House opened in 1937 (today's Goodenough College) was explicitly limited to empire students 'of White Parentage'.<sup>55</sup>

The report's position regarding the provision of facilities to students of 'non-European origin' – principally Indian, colonial and Chinese – was ambiguous. Although it stated that these students 'should not be excluded from any arrangement made for students in general', it failed to condemn racial discrimination, concluding that, 'the question of the extent to which they should be included in such arrangements and the method of selection should be further considered'. The Student Christian Movement's 'Club for Students of All Nations', which provided study and club facilities to all members regardless of their 'country, race or creed' was nonetheless praised by the report for its 'valuable work'.<sup>56</sup> It would have provided a rare opportunity for British, empire and foreign students to mix.

Students from outside the empire also faced discrimination in the housing market. A survey from the 1950s indicated that continental Europeans were considered less desirable tenants than students from the United States and 'white dominions', while the welcome offered to non-Europeans was directly proportional to the lightness of their skin tone.<sup>57</sup> The Students Committee was particularly concerned about the lack of a centre that could provide temporary accommodation and assistance to foreign students, most of whom came to study the English language and were not necessarily enrolled at the University of London. It was not, however, in favour of providing facilities specifically for such students to complement those already in existence for empire students. Instead, it recommended capital investment in a Bloomsbury site offering accommodation and club facilities to selected British and overseas students, based on a quota system related to the number of students of each nationality present in London. The projected London centre was to be organised so as to 'avoid predominance of one nationality or race' and to create a 'meeting ground for British and foreign students' unlike the many nationally oriented centres already in existence in London. In this respect it followed the model of the Rockefeller-sponsored International Houses – the first of which was founded in New York in 1924 – which deliberately sought to bring local and foreign students together under one

roof, mixing cultures and religions. In contrast the accommodation provided at the Cité Internationale Universitaire in Paris (1925) was divided into national houses, including the recently inaugurated Collège Franco-Britannique, whose very architecture was intended to express national differences. Although these projects were inspired, at least in part, by interwar cultural internationalism and the search for ‘international understanding’, they differed in their articulation of the national with the international.<sup>58</sup> Since war interrupted the planning of the London centre it was never actually built, unlike similar accommodation in the United States and France.

In order to improve the welfare of international students, and out of principle as well as pragmatism, the Students Committee turned once again to a non-state actor, the NUS, which was already a key player in the field of student hospitality and exchanges. The roots of this organisation lay firmly within the internationalist student movement born after the First World War as it was specifically created to represent the United Kingdom at the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE). Furthermore, its founding members were predominantly ex-servicemen, marked not only by the devastating destruction of war but also by the experience with foreign lands, peoples and cultures that came with it. Developing opportunities for student travel and exchange, as a means of generating ‘knowledge and understanding’, was therefore at the heart of the NUS’s mission.<sup>59</sup> Its founding members hoped to pass on what the NUS secretary Ralph Nunn May termed the ‘international bias’ of the ex-servicemen generation of students to their successors while also promoting knowledge of the United Kingdom among foreign students. Tellingly, the report of the NUS’s Hospitality Council for 1932 to 1933 starts with a quote from Sir Stephen Tallents’ pamphlet *The Projection of England* (1933) which called for the creation of a ‘school of national projection’ along the lines of the future British Council.<sup>60</sup> There was not felt to be any contradiction between the NUS’s cultural internationalist agenda of facilitating mutual understanding and the promotion of British culture

and 'way of life'. Hence the NUS Hospitality Council, quoting Tallents, described its purpose as providing a 'homely window' from which to view 'England' in a spirit of 'genuine friendliness and in enlightened self-interest'. The report went on to argue that, 'There is nothing that we, with our world-wide ramification of Empire and commerce, need more for our continued welfare than the friendly co-operation of other peoples'.<sup>61</sup> The NUS saw its participation in the international programmes of the CIE as a means to pursue British interests as well international understanding. This was by no means an unusual attitude among CIE members, leading Daniel Laqua to conclude that: 'Rather than being the prerogative of high-minded idealists, internationalism offered opportunities to pursue national agendas'.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as the document quoted above suggests, the NUS conceived of internationalism as a means to consolidate the British empire. It encouraged the students of the Dominions to set up their own unions and to join the CIE, thus contributing to what Daniel Gorman has described as the internationalisation of the British Empire.<sup>63</sup>

The NUS and the British Council therefore shared a similar agenda and an interest in developing student travel and exchange as a means of pursuing it. One of the very first student trips organised by the NUS in 1922 was that of a group of British students to Germany, an act of practical and symbolic importance in re-establishing contact between the former enemies and one that demonstrated the political significance of student exchange.<sup>64</sup> By the 1930s the NUS had developed considerable experience in welcoming foreign students from across Europe and the USA as well as, to a lesser extent, South America and the empire. It mostly worked by inviting individuals to social events hosted by British students but also organised tours for groups, often on a reciprocal basis. In addition, it acted as a clearing house for an exchange programme whereby families in the United Kingdom would receive a student, mainly from France or Germany, whose family took in their own son or daughter. This was, in many respects, the ideal solution to the problems identified by the British Council's Students

Committee as it offered foreign students accommodation and a means to experience life as a local, hopefully developing genuine friendships with British people in the process.

The Committee was impressed by the NUS's record in this field, despite the financial restrictions placed upon it.<sup>65</sup> Between 1928 and 1936 it had brought over 7,500 students to the UK on educational visits and arranged approximately 3,000 individual exchange and au pair visits. In 1935 alone, it had coordinated over 5,000 initial invitations for foreign students to private homes. Its expertise in the field was such that by 1936 it was already being employed by the British Council to arrange visits for Belgian schoolchildren, Polish naval cadets and Austrian grantees. Nonetheless, the Committee felt that arrangements for foreign students were still not as extensive and well organised as those offered to empire students by associations like the Victoria League. It found that organisers of educational travel in foreign countries were confused by the multiplicity of agencies and lacked an interlocutor. As demand continued to grow, there was a need for a central organisation to organise exchange visits and hospitality for incoming and outgoing students. The Committee had neither the means nor the expertise to set up such a body and, as with the university handbook, preferred to work through pre-existing independent structures. It therefore decided to invite the NUS to act as the Council's agent in this respect, for which purpose it was allocated a yearly grant of £100 for 1936–37 rising to £500 in subsequent years. Plans to set up a board composed of various voluntary associations active in the field of student travel and hospitality, including the empire societies, did not come to fruition. The outbreak of war, coupled with internal divisions within the NUS, greatly reduced the extent of this partnership by the end of 1939. Whereas many of the founding leaders and staff of the NUS had developed close ties to the FO and were recruited to the wartime Ministry of Information, the Communist Party was by then exerting great influence over the NUS President and Congress.<sup>66</sup> Despite this, the interwar efforts of the internationalist student and empire movements not only helped establish students as actors in international relations,

they further developed models and machinery which could be adopted by the state once it had recognised their potential.

### **Expansion and Consolidation 1938–1939**

By 1937, the failure of collective security was evident, the postwar treaties of Versailles and Locarno were in shreds. Arguing that the threat to British interests from aggressive Italian and German propaganda was continuing to grow, the Chairman of the British Council sought additional funding, pleading: ‘The Council is no longer expected merely to rescue British prestige from neglect; it has to defend that prestige from deliberate attack. The political motive has become overwhelming; the “bread-and-butter” motive, always rather shadowy, has receded into the background’.<sup>67</sup> His success resulted in the tripling of the Students Committee’s budget, enabling it to submit proposals for a more ambitious programme in 1938–1939 at a cost of £18,000. The extra money was mostly to be channelled directly to overseas students through the bursaries for future teachers of English and new scholarships for postgraduate students.

The Committee’s extended programme continued to give top priority to the bursary scheme, more than doubling its budget for Europe and the colonies to over £10,000 (bursaries for the Near East and Latin America were funded by the relevant regional committees). Rather than offering more bursaries or including new countries, the Committee instead opted to lengthen the period of study from one term to one year. This decision was influenced by reports received from the students themselves, the universities and UK diplomatic missions. The principal objective was not to improve the language skills of the recipients – the impact on the standard of English teaching abroad was already felt to be significant – but to give them the opportunity of becoming ‘acquainted with British students and the country generally’.<sup>68</sup> The proposals insisted on the impossibility of making friends in as little as ten to twelve weeks.

Enabling these foreign students to forge friendships with their British counterparts was presumably intended to create a lasting attachment to the country of potentially greater political value than mere technical competence. In this respect the scholarships drew upon the example of the Rhodes scholarships, which placed greater emphasis on the 'affective ties' acquired at Oxford than on the education itself.<sup>69</sup>

How should the Students Committee's preoccupation with enabling foreign and British students to become friends be understood in the light of research by scholars such as Oelsner, Koschut, Berenskoetter and van Hoef into the concept of friendship in international relations? Although the archival documents do not explicitly answer this question, certain hypotheses can be put forward. The FO seems to have seen the scholarship programmes as contributing to the development of 'strategic' friendships with states that were considered important geopolitically rather than states with which the United Kingdom already shared deep bonds and common values.<sup>70</sup> Hence no change was made to the list of receiving countries apart from the disappearance of Spain, which had been plunged into civil war. All the recipient countries, whether in Europe, the Near East or Latin America, had been identified as priority targets by the FO in November 1937, either as Class A countries 'in which important political or economic interests are in serious danger from foreign, cultural or commercial propaganda', or Class B countries where it was considered desirable 'to maintain the current degree of cultural propaganda and wherever possible, to intensify it'.<sup>71</sup> The countries which received the most bursaries, for example Poland and Yugoslavia, tended to come high up in the priority rankings. Only the five bursaries allotted to the West African colonies did not feature in the FO's directions to the Council. By the final year of the scheme, before it was disrupted by war, the Council was offering a total of ninety-three bursaries at a cost of £19,500; they were primarily divided between Europe (fifty-five bursaries) and the Near East (twenty-seven bursaries).<sup>72</sup>



The Students Committee's insistence on the importance of fostering friendship between individual students suggests that the extension of the bursary scheme was not primarily seen as a way of smoothing interstate relations but rather of developing mutual trust and affective bonds at the level of civil society. Teachers who had trained in the UK could be expected to pass on not only technical competence in the English language but also a positive appreciation of British culture, facilitating the emergence of an audience receptive to messages about British policy or values. International friendship could assist the development of networks in various fields, paving the way for political rapprochement while shaping the 'mental frames' which would influence the perceptions, and hence decisions, of those grantees who later found themselves in positions of responsibility.<sup>73</sup> The emotions generated by such friendships are also worthy of interest: feelings of trust and empathy might counterbalance those of fear and awe elicited by German propaganda.<sup>74</sup> Indeed the 1938 memorandum referred to earlier predicted that students from the Balkans returning from trips to Germany were more likely to 'retain an impression of a powerful and resolute organisation' than become 'Germanophiles'. The British Council's policy, on the other hand, aimed at showing 'we are grateful to our friends and are prepared to welcome any additions to their number'.<sup>75</sup> Such aims were not incompatible with the more idealistic one of promoting peace, particularly in the context of appeasement, although friendship is potentially exclusionary.<sup>76</sup>

A direct political intention was also evident in a new scholarship scheme for postgraduates to undertake one year of study and research in the UK. This was a logical extension of the Committee's programme and built on previous government encouragement to the universities to attract both foreign and empire students through the introduction of PhDs.<sup>77</sup> The students were chosen by British diplomatic missions, the British Council and the Universities Bureau, according to academic merit, as well as political suitability.<sup>78</sup> Applicants were to be drawn from the fields of engineering and applied science, architecture, medicine,

journalism, law and the humanities, and while not all were destined to become opinion makers or join political elites, they could be expected to participate in professional networks and exercise some form of influence. In the long term, by bringing together scholars and practitioners in discrete fields, the scheme had the potential to nurture epistemic communities which could have an impact on national policy. It is noticeable that the scheme excluded pure science, seemingly favouring those disciplines which offered the best prospects for achieving political outcomes.<sup>79</sup> The first call for applications in the spring of 1938 was addressed to single male students in those fourteen European countries where German economic, cultural and political penetration was most feared and the number of scholarships offered was proportional to their importance in foreign policy terms: Finland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Yugoslavia, which had received top priority ranking from the FO, were awarded two scholarships while the other countries (the Baltic states, Sweden, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Austria) only received one.

Launched in 1938, the postgraduate scholarship programme underwent a few instructive changes in the following years. For one, continued increases to the Student Committee's budget enabled it to grant some scholarships to students from the Dominions and colonies in 1939. However, despite pressure from the Dominions Office, the Dominions were awarded a mere four scholarships, compared to seven for the Far East (China and Siam), nine for South America and forty for Europe.<sup>80</sup> No scholarships at all were allotted to the United States, reflecting the FO's reluctance to involve the British Council in Anglo-American relations for fear of provoking accusations of propaganda. A mooted project to offer government travel grants to US students explicitly rejected working through the Council.<sup>81</sup> The biggest change compared to the first year of the scheme concerned the Near East which, with sixty-one scholarships, far outstripped all other regions.<sup>82</sup> Over half of these were shared between Greece and Egypt, the countries which had topped the FO's priority ranking list at the end of 1937. While the

Council's prime objective in Greece was defined by the FO as retaining the friendship which had been 'taken for granted and so nearly lost through indifference', its policy towards the latter was framed by the rise of nationalism which had rendered the Near and Middle East 'susceptible to outside attention'. In this context, students were identified as the Council's most important target given their perceived receptiveness to 'extreme ideas'. At the same time demand for 'Western education and technical instruction' was such that offering educational opportunities could enable the Council to overcome 'political suspicions'.<sup>83</sup>

In 1939–1940, the scheme was also extended to France which henceforth supplied the biggest contingent of postgraduates among the British Council's European scholars. This new policy was in direct response to a proposal put forward in March 1939 by the secretary of the Universities Bureau, an indication both of the more active role the Bureau was playing in European affairs and in advising the Student Committee of the British Council. A report to the Committee noted that the number of French students in the United Kingdom had fallen over the last five years due to the higher costs of UK universities and a weak Franc and that, although the French government offered grants to British graduates, those university bursaries open to French students were too limited in scope to be considered truly reciprocal.<sup>84</sup> Within a few days of the presentation of this proposal to the Committee, Germany invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia, setting off a chain of events which tied the United Kingdom and France firmly together through their guarantees to Poland, Greece and Romania. It was within this context that the Universities Bureau's proposal for ten scholarships and a small grant to be used at the discretion of the Bureau and the British universities was subsequently accepted.

The same context put pay to another proposal, made in the aftermath of the Munich crisis, to extend the scholarship scheme to Germany. Based on the claim that, 'many of the German students who were in London during the recent international crisis were very impressed by the British point of view and inclined to question the policy of the present regime in

Germany', the proposal argued that bringing more capable German students to the United Kingdom would enable the Council to address a German audience 'without giving the impression of indulging in propaganda of an obvious kind'.<sup>85</sup> This proposal was in fact part of a wider propaganda offensive on German public opinion discussed by Cabinet in December 1938 in which British Council student exchanges were seen as having an immediate short term impact.<sup>86</sup> Yet the proposal presented to the Students Committee emphasised the long term aim of undermining support for Hitler among the elite by claiming that, 'There can be little doubt that a year at a British university would serve in time to create a body of educated Germans familiar with the British outlook and less inclined to unquestioned acceptance of totalitarian doctrines'. While such hopes disappeared following the occupation of Czechoslovakia, they demonstrate the extent to which immediate political and ideological considerations had come to inform the British Council's scholarship scheme.

When war broke out in September 1939 there were 121 British Council scholars due to start courses in UK universities, at a total cost of £32,515. The increase in the budgets allotted to the bursary and scholarship schemes bears witness to the success of the British Council's chairman in obtaining more funding from the government. Appointed in July 1937, Lord Lloyd was a former Governor of Bombay and High Commissioner, a diehard imperialist and proponent of rearmament who would become a fierce critic of appeasement. He was particularly interested in the Mediterranean region, which had led him to chair the British Council's Near East Committee and, although not officially a diplomat, he travelled widely and possessed an extensive network both within the United Kingdom and abroad. The chairmanship of the Council allowed him to deepen his involvement in British foreign policy in a semi-official capacity, particularly in the Balkans and Middle East, and the nomination of his close friend Lord Halifax as Foreign Secretary in February 1938 further strengthened his position. While his predecessor, Lord Percy, had been chosen for his experience as both an educationalist as

well as a diplomat, Lloyd was more interested in the Council's potential as a strategic tool of 'moral rearmament'.<sup>87</sup> Under his leadership the government grant to the Council was more than doubled to £130,500 for 1938–39 before leaping to £330,249 for 1939–40.<sup>88</sup> Although still small in comparison to the estimated budgets of Germany and Italy these increases allowed the Council to allocate more resources to attracting overseas students. By the outbreak of the war the Council had developed new operations, including the opening of British institutes and the appointment of official British Council representatives in the Middle East, Poland and Portugal. Despite this internal competition for resources, the Student Committee's share of the Council's budget remained at approximately twenty per cent. With £63,000 for 1939–1940 the Students Committee was able to envisage a far broader programme than at its establishment less than five years earlier.

## **Conclusion**

The British Council's Students Committee established in 1935 saw its mission as implementing the recommendations of the Ramsden Report which sought to increase the flow of overseas students to the United Kingdom as a way to generate positive publicity for the country and reap economic benefits. Yet from the outset, the role played by the Foreign Office in directing the Council determined the parameters within which it functioned. For the founder of the British Council, Rex Leeper, cultural work was to be used as a 'political instrument' to increase 'British influence' rather than exports.<sup>89</sup> The Students Committee received a significant proportion of the Council's budget because of the perceived political advantages its work could bring in key strategic regions.

Offering bursaries to future teachers aimed in the long-term at improving the standard of English teaching abroad, thus laying the ground for future cultural relations. But it was also

a way of encouraging recipient countries to offer English in their schools and potentially detaching them from alternative spheres of influence. Even more important was the act of bringing students to the United Kingdom to experience the British way of life and, hopefully, develop friendships with British people. In seeking to increase the flow of overseas students, the Committee was attentive to the human dimension of the process, looking to ensure that these students forged new networks and returned home with a positive image of the United Kingdom that they could relay to other audiences.

The early years of the British Council and its Student Committee are of larger significance in understanding British cultural diplomacy during a formative phase. Focusing on this episode illustrates the degree to which the British Council relied on public-private cooperation and aligned with national and internationalist interests. The years 1935–1939 corresponded to a period of construction and experimentation for the British Council, which lacked a global presence and a significant budget. It compensated for this by working through other agencies. It depended on UK diplomatic missions abroad to provide advice, to carry its message abroad and to shortlist candidates for its student schemes, thus ensuring it worked as an adjunct of British diplomacy. But it also relied heavily on independent associations, most notably the Universities Bureau and the NUS, to pursue its goals. Both of these organisations acted as an interface between the British Council and the autonomous universities but also as a channel for the internationalisation of imperial academic networks.

The expansion of student-focused cultural diplomacy in the interwar period derived partly from its capacity to simultaneously accommodate desires for international understanding, imperial consolidation and national promotion. Indeed, the Council's collaboration with the NUS demonstrates how cultural internationalism and 'national projection' could intersect and combine in the practice of cultural diplomacy. The concomitant emphasis on friendship and understanding explains the ease with which cultural internationalists, like those in the NUS,

were able to subscribe to the courting of students in the pursuit of national interest. This alignment had a significant legacy. Though the partnership between the NUS and the British Council was short-lived, the NUS's expertise was transferred to the British Council when its hospitality secretary Nancy Parkinson joined the Council's Home Division in 1939. For almost thirty years, Parkinson dealt with student welfare, competing and collaborating with the successor to the Universities Bureau, the Association of Universities of the British Commonwealth.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, although the Council's interwar relationship with the Universities Bureau was not without friction, it laid the ground for joint postwar student exchange projects.<sup>91</sup>

This inspires two further observations. The first is the degree to which the student emerged as a subject of international politics in the interwar period. True, initiatives like the Rhodes and 1851 scholarships predate the end of the First World War but it was only in the 1920s and 1930s that students truly came within the purview of internationalist reformers *and* governments. As examples from this article illustrate, interwar Europe was awash with initiatives to attract and accommodate international students. Part of this was due to an active post-First World War student generation, who craved and promoted student mobility, but it also speaks to the increasing geopoliticisation – to borrow from Kramer – of the overseas student in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere.<sup>92</sup> By the late 1930s, student mobility had become a strategic tool to support foreign policy objectives in response to a period of international crisis. At least as far as the United Kingdom was concerned, this article suggests that this discovery of the student was the product of increasing commercial and, later, ideological confrontations in Europe. In fact, the development of the Students Committee cannot be understood without attention to the aspect of competition. It was British competition with cultural (France) and commercial and ideological rivals (Germany, Italy) and the prevalent fear of falling behind other countries that underwrote the founding of the British Council and its student activities.

The programmes and initiatives of other countries served as a rationale for this expansion, just as they provided some of the models for it.

Finally, this article underlines a distinct feature of British cultural diplomacy, namely that it developed in an environment already shaped by longer-standing intra-empire exchanges. Despite the Students Committee's original aim of dealing with all overseas students, it gave little attention to empire students, *because* they were already much better catered for. Indeed, the reports of the Students Committee illustrate the significant and concerted scope of student-oriented British cultural diplomacy within the empire. UK universities were already integrated into a wider academic community spreading across the British world that facilitated student mobility, while official bodies and voluntary organisations provided a support network. Whereas imperial scholarships sought to build industrial, technical and administrative capacity within the empire and foster imperial citizenship, the British Council scholarships posited students as agents of international relations.<sup>93</sup> The mid- to late 1930s witnessed a new focus on cultural and educational ties with Europe and the Middle East which were developed in parallel to long-standing imperial networks. But the priority given to foreign students also reflected the fact that the British Council was founded and, primarily, funded by the Foreign Office. Despite its commitment to strengthening the cultural bonds of empire and the imperialist sentiments of many of its leading officials, not least Lord Lloyd, in the context of the 1930s, cultural diplomacy aimed at Europe and the Mediterranean region took precedence over the elaboration of an imperial cultural policy. What stands out then is that Britain was *not* a latecomer to cultural diplomacy so much as it was a latecomer to European-focused and Foreign Office-planned cultural diplomacy. Just as the 1930s redirected the British government's attention to Europe in general, so its new commitment to student mobility outside of the empire developed only in response to the economic and ideological crises of that time. While the overseas student policy developed in the 1930s originally drew on the imperial experience, the reverse would be true



post-1945. Once empire students were reimagined as potential leaders of former colonies, informal, private initiatives were deemed insufficient and the British government adopted a more interventionist stance, as it continued to do with regard to foreign students.<sup>94</sup> When the British Council was thus called upon to respond to the challenges of decolonisation and the Cold War, it did so using the toolbox developed in the period 1935–1939.

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<sup>1</sup> A. J. S. White, *The British Council. The First Twenty-Five Years*, (London: British Council, 1965), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Haigh, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1974), 28, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy. Foundations for Global Engagement in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 70, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain. British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919–1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). One exception is Tamara van Kessel's *Foreign Cultural Policy in the Interbellum. The Italian Dante Alighieri Society and the British Council Contesting the Mediterranean* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016). There are also two official histories: A. J. S. White, *The British Council. The First Twenty-Five Years*, cited above; Frances Donaldson, *The British Council. The First Fifty Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Examples of studies published in the last twenty years include: Edward Corse, *A Battle for Neutral Europe. British Cultural Propaganda during the Second World War*, (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Mark Hampton, 'Projecting Britishness to Hong Kong: the British Council and Hong Kong House, nineteen-fifties to nineteen-seventies', Institute of Historical Research, August 2012; John Morris, *Culture and Propaganda in*

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*World War II. Music Film and the Battle for National Identity*, (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014); Christine Okret-Manville, 'La politique étrangère culturelle, outil de la démocratie, du fascisme et du communisme. L'exemple du British Council, 1934-1953', *Relations Internationales*, 115 (2003); James Vaughan, "'A Certain Idea of Britain": British Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945-1957', *Contemporary British History*, 19, 2, (2005).

<sup>6</sup> Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars. Universities, Networks and the British academic world 1850-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Hilary Perraton, *A History of Foreign Students in Britain*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Tomás Irish, *The University at War, 1914-25*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Patricia M. Goff, 'Cultural Diplomacy', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 420.

<sup>8</sup> Alain Dubosclard, 'Diplomatie culturelle et propagande françaises aux États-Unis pendant le premier vingtième siècle', *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, 48, 1, (2001), 105. Robert Frank, 'La machine diplomatique française au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Relations internationales*, 115 (2003), 326. Katharina Rietzler, 'Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American philanthropy and cultural diplomacy in the inter-war years,' *Historical Research*, 84, 223 (2011), 148-164; Scott Lucas, "'Total Culture" and the State-Private Network' in Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Franck Schumacher, eds., *Culture and International History*, (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 206-214.

<sup>9</sup> Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3-8.

<sup>10</sup> Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 72-3. More recently Daniel Laqua in particular has explored the role of international education and student mobility in interwar internationalism in 'Transnational intellectual Cooperation, the League of Nations, and the Problem of Order', *Journal of Global History*, 6, 2 (2011), 239-41 and 'Activism in the "Students' League of Nations": International Student Politics and the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants, 1919-1939', *The English Historical Review*, 132, 556, (2017), 624-31.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L'UNESCO oubliée. La Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919-1946)*, (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999), 21-31.

<sup>12</sup> Guillaume Tronchet, 'The Defeat of University Autonomy. French Academic Diplomacy, Mobility Scholarships and Exchange Programs (1880s-1930s)', in Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith eds., *Global*

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*Exchanges. Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 55–8.

<sup>13</sup> White, *British Council*, 12–3. In comparison, France and Germany were believed to be devoting over £1 million a year on cultural diplomacy while even small, neutral Switzerland was spending twice the amount of the UK. Taylor, *Projection*, 142–3.

<sup>14</sup> Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith, ‘A World of Exchanges. Conceptualizing the History of International Scholarship Programs (Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries)’, in Tournès and Scott-Smith, *Global Exchanges*, 4–10.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 129.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 94–5.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 87, 100, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Committee on the Education and Training of Students from Overseas (Ramsden Committee), The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), BW 82/1.

<sup>19</sup> Amended interim report of the Ramsden Committee, 1 Nov. 1934, TNA BW 82/1.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 146–153.

<sup>21</sup> January 1935, quoted by Taylor, *Projection*, 161–2.

<sup>22</sup> White, *British Council*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Students Committee, first meeting, 10 July 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>24</sup> Draft Confidential Circular Despatch, Aug. 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 151.

<sup>26</sup> Students Committee Paper no. 2, 15 June 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>27</sup> Students Committee, Scholarships for 1936, 15 Nov. 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>28</sup> Ruth McMurry and Muna Lee, *The Cultural Approach, Another Way in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 25–6.

<sup>29</sup> R. A. Leeper, ‘British Culture Abroad’, *Contemporary Review* 148 (1935), 203.

<sup>30</sup> Students Committee ‘Scholarships for 1936’, 15 Nov. 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>31</sup> Marjory Harper, ‘“Personal Contact is Worth a Ton of Text-Books”: Educational Tours of the Empire, 1926–39’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 32, 3 (2004), 51–2.

<sup>32</sup> Donaldson, *The British Council*, 382.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 135.

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<sup>34</sup> 'The British Council and the Maintenance of British Influence Abroad,' Sept. 1938, 10, TNA FO 395/647A.

<sup>35</sup> Students Committee 'Scholarships for 1936', 15 Nov. 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>36</sup> Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark. European International History 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 386–92.

<sup>37</sup> Hoare to Foreign Representatives, 8 Nov. 1935, TNA FO 395/529/P3900, quoted by Victoria Louise Ramsden-Atherton, 'Lord Lloyd: Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy 1937-1941', unpublished PhD thesis University of East Anglia, 1988, 19.

<sup>38</sup> White, *British Council*, 11. Hoare's circular of November 1935 also identified the Near East as a key area for the British Council to work in due to the extensive presence of Italian propaganda.

<sup>39</sup> Lord Lloyd correspondence, 1939, GLLD 20/3, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge.

<sup>40</sup> White, *The British Council*, 7. Once the administration of bursaries for Cyprus and Malta was taken over by the Near East Committee, the Colonial Office retained only five bursaries allotted to West African colonies (Nigeria, Gambia, Gold Coast and Sierra Leone). 'Scholarships for Teachers of English', April–July 1936, TNA CO 323/1355/3.

<sup>41</sup> Guillaume Tronchet, 'The Defeat of University Autonomy', 57. Perraton provides similar figures for 1931–32, with 4,865 full-time overseas students representing 10% of all university enrollments. Perraton, *Foreign Students*, 56. According to Laqua, foreign students made up a higher percentage of the overall student population in French universities than in Germany or at Oxford. Laqua, 'Activism', 624.

<sup>42</sup> 'The Maintenance of British Influence Abroad', 7.

<sup>43</sup> Report of conference between the Students Committee, The Universities Bureau, the Association of Technical Institutes and the Educational Department of the Office of the High Commissioner for India, 23 Nov. 1935, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>44</sup> State funding of both institutions and students was a relatively recent phenomenon in the UK and even the Universities Bureau had struggled to encourage university cooperation. Christophe Charle, 'Patterns', in Walter Rüegg ed., *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62–4; Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, 156.

<sup>45</sup> Eric Ashby, *Community of Universities*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 19–22.

<sup>46</sup> Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, 162–3.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from W. B. Brander, secretary to the Universities Bureau to the Students Committee 24 Feb. 1936, TNA BW 2/19.

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<sup>48</sup> Students Committee, Paper No. 25, 18 June 1936, TNA BW 2/19. The Committee's suggested title of *Higher Education in the United Kingdom* had to be modified to take account of the fact that the Bureau included information on the universities of the Irish Free State.

<sup>49</sup> Brander to Lord Eustace Percy, 9 Mar. 1937, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>50</sup> Speech by Ralph Nunn May, secretary of the NUS, non-dated, c. 1931–32, TNA BW 82/1. Whitney Walton's study of American students' experiences in interwar France similarly noted that while study abroad could help break down stereotypes and allow participants to develop a more balanced and realistic appreciation of the country, some students developed negative opinions of their hosts. Whitney Walton, 'Internationalism and the Junior Year Abroad: American Students in France in the 1920s and 1930s', *Diplomatic History*, 29, 2, (2005), 264–8.

<sup>51</sup> Harper, 'Educational Tours', 57.

<sup>52</sup> Report of the Sub-committee on student accommodation and hospitality, 20 Oct. 1937, TNA BW 2/19.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew C. Hendley, *Organized Patriotism and the Crucible of War, Popular Imperialism in Britain 1914–1932*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 197.

<sup>54</sup> J. M. Lee, 'Commonwealth students in the United Kingdom, 1940–1960: student welfare and world status', *Minerva*, 44, (2006), 4; Daniel Whittall, 'Creating Black Places in Imperial London: The League of Coloured Peoples and Aggrey House, 1931–1943', *The London Journal. A Review of Metropolitan Society Past and Present*, 36, 3, (2011), 225–46. The experiences of West African and Indian students in the United Kingdom and their role in nationalist movements are documented in Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998) and Sumita Mukherjee, *Nationalism, Education and Migrant Identities: The England-returned*, (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Hendley, *Organized Patriotism*, 292.

<sup>56</sup> Letter to the Editor of *The Spectator*, 2 Sept. 1938 <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/2nd-september-1938/19/oversea-students-in-london> (last visited 6 Sept. 2019); Emma Joly, 'Cultural Imperialism at Home? Mary Trevelyan and Student Movement House, 1932–1946', MA research dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University, 2014, 38–40.

<sup>57</sup> Perraton, *Foreign Students*, 166.

<sup>58</sup> Liping Bu, 'Cultural Understanding and World Peace: The Roles of Private Institutions in the Interwar Years.' *Peace & Change*, 24, (1999), 156–61; Jehnie I. Reis, 'Cultural internationalism at the Cité Universitaire: International Education between the First and Second World Wars', *History of Education*, 39, 2, (2010), 155–73.

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- <sup>59</sup> Speech by Nunn May, TNA BW 82/1. See also Georgina Brewis, Sarah Hellowell and Daniel Laqua, 'Rebuilding the Universities after the Great War: Ex-Service Students, Scholarships and the Reconstruction of Student Life in England', *History*, 105, 364 (2020), 101–4.
- <sup>60</sup> Taylor, *Projection*, 112–3; *The Projection of England* has been re-edited in Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).
- <sup>61</sup> Report of the Hospitality Council of the NUS 1932–1933, TNA BW 82/1.
- <sup>62</sup> Laqua, 'Activism', 618.
- <sup>63</sup> Nigel Roy Moses 'Bonds of Empire: The Formation of the National Federation of Canadian University Students, 1922–1929', *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 31, 1 (2019), 66–92. Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10.
- <sup>64</sup> Tara Windsor, 'Rekindling Contact: Anglo-German Academic Exchange after the First World War', in Heather Ellis and Ulrike Kirchberger, eds., *Anglo-German Scholarly Networks in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 219.
- <sup>65</sup> In the absence of official support, the NUS had diverted profits from its student travel services to fund these hospitality and exchange programmes but could not meet expanding demand from abroad. Nunn May, TNA BW 82/1; Students Committee paper 30, 20 Oct. 1936 TNA BW 2/19.
- <sup>66</sup> Mike Day, *National Union of Students 1922–2012* (London: Regal Press, 2012), 28–30. See also Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering. Britain and Beyond, 1880–1980*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 111–6.
- <sup>67</sup> Lord Eustace Percy to Foreign Secretary, 8 June 1937, quoted by Donaldson, *The British Council*, 56–7.
- <sup>68</sup> Students Committee Paper No. 38, extended programme, 1 Oct. 1937 TNA BW 2/19.
- <sup>69</sup> Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, 49.
- <sup>70</sup> Andrea Oelsner and Simon Koschut, 'A Framework for the Study of International Friendship', in Andrea Oelsner and Simon Koschut, eds., *Friendship and International Relations* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 13–4.
- <sup>71</sup> List of Priorities for the British Council, 1938-9, K. Johnstone to E. Hale, 17 Nov. 1937, TNA T 161 1238/S 355581/8 quoted by Atherton, 'Lord Lloyd', 30–4.
- <sup>72</sup> Students Committee, Programme 1939-40 – students, 17 May 1939, TNA BW 2/20.

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- <sup>73</sup> Felix Berenskoetter and Yuri van Hoef, 'Friendship and Foreign Policy', in Cameron G. Theis, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3, 12–3.
- <sup>74</sup> Robert Cole, *Britain and the War of Words in Neutral Europe, 1939–45: The Art of the Possible* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), 16. The potential of the history of emotions for the study of internationalism is indicated by Ilaria Scaglia's *The Emotions of Internationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
- <sup>75</sup> 'The Maintenance of British Influence Abroad', 9.
- <sup>76</sup> Oelsnet and Koschut, 'Framework', 19; Berenskoetter and van Hoef, 'Friendship', 7.
- <sup>77</sup> Ashby, *Community*, 22; Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, 156.
- <sup>78</sup> Memorandum sent to H.M. Missions 'Scholarships for Post-Graduate Students from other countries', TNA BW 2/19.
- <sup>79</sup> Giles Scott-Smith, 'Mapping the Undefinable: Some Thoughts on the Relevance of Exchange Programs within International Relations Theory', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, (March 2008), 187–9; Peter M. Haas, 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization* 46, 1 (1992), 1–35.
- <sup>80</sup> Students Committee Paper no. 42 'Post-Graduate Scholarships for Dominion Students', memorandum by Dominions Office, 20 Nov. 1937, TNA BW 2/19. For more on the British Council's policy in relation to the Dominions, see Alice Byrne, 'The British Council and the British World, 1939–1954', *GRAAT On-Line*, 13 (Mar. 2013), 21–33.
- <sup>81</sup> Alice Byrne, 'The British Council and Cultural Propaganda in the United States, 1938–1945', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11, 3 (2013), 250–3.
- <sup>82</sup> Students Committee, Programme 1939–40 – students, 17 May 1939, TNA BW 2/20.
- <sup>83</sup> 'The Maintenance of British Influence Abroad', 5, 11.
- <sup>84</sup> Students Committee, Paper no. 52 'Scholarships and Grants for French Students', 1 Mar. 1939, TNA BW 2/20. According to this report, German students far outnumbered the French, with 444 enrolments at British universities compared to 51. However, as Perraton points out, the size of the former group had been swollen by refugees. Perraton, *Foreign Students*, 60.
- <sup>85</sup> Students Committee, Paper no. 50 'Scholarships for German students', 9 Nov. 1938, TNA BW 2/20.
- <sup>86</sup> Atherton, 'Lord Lloyd', 113–8.
- <sup>87</sup> Atherton, 'Lord Lloyd', 3.
- <sup>88</sup> Donaldson, *British Council*, 62.

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<sup>89</sup> Leeper to Vansittart 14 March 1935, TNA BW 82/5, quoted by Donaldson, *British Council*, 42.

<sup>90</sup> Hilary Perraton, *Learning Abroad. A History of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 37–8.

<sup>91</sup> Alice Byrne, ‘The Commonwealth University Interchange Scheme: Promoting Exchanges in a Changing World (1948–1960)’, in *Global Exchanges*, 65–78.

<sup>92</sup> Paul Kramer, ‘Is the World Our Campus? International Students and U.S. Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century’, *Diplomatic History*, 33, 5 (2009), 781.

<sup>93</sup> Tamson Pietsch, ‘Many Rhodes: travelling scholarships and imperial citizenship in the British academic world, 1880–1940’, *History of Education*, 40, 6 (2011), 729–32.

<sup>94</sup> Lee, ‘Commonwealth Students’, 2.