HS2P99: Period in Modern History

British Foreign Policy since 1918

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Introduction: British Foreign Policy since 1918

Britain emerged from the First World War still a major global player. While the events of 1914-18 witnessed the disappearance of the German, Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires, Britain’s imperial presence reached new heights. With America back in isolation and Russia in revolution by the 1920s, Britain once again reigned as the world’s sole superpower. By the turn of the century, however, Britain’s international position had drastically changed. Few remnants of its imperial past remained. What was once a global foreign policy orbit had become an essentially European one under an American nuclear umbrella. The purpose of this course is to provide a stimulating analysis of this transformation by examining the successes and failures of British foreign policy from the end of the First World War to the New Labour era.

Seminar overview

Week
1 Introduction
2 British foreign policy in the 1920s
3 Germany again: Britain, appeasement and the Second World War
4 Finding a role: Britain in the early Cold War period
5 ‘An era of retreat’?: Suez, nuclear weapons and Europe, 1955-63
6 ‘A world power or nothing’: East of Suez, the United States and Europe under Wilson
7 Europe (yet again), the Cold War and the domestic politics of foreign policy in the 1970s
8 ‘Britain Is Great Again’: Thatcher and the wider world
9 From the Cold War to ‘liberal interventionism’: foreign policy under Major and Blair
10 British foreign policy since 1918: themes, continuities and changes

Introductory and General Reading


AND

- C. J. Bartlett, British foreign policy in the twentieth century (Basingstoke, 1989)
- G. Bennett, Six Moments of Crisis: Inside British Foreign Policy (Oxford, 2013)
- N. Crowson, Britain and Europe: A Political History since 1918 (London, 2011)
- G. Fry, The politics of decline: an interpretation of British Politics from the 1940s to the 1970s (Basingstoke, 2005) - BB
- P. Mangold, Success and Failure in British Foreign Policy: Evaluating the Record, 1900-2000 (Basingstoke, 2001)
- J. Young, Britain and the world in the twentieth century (London, 1997)

BB = article/book on Blackboard
Week 2 - British foreign policy in the 1920s

1. What were Britain’s aims at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference? Were they achieved?
2. How did the first Labour government alter Britain’s foreign policy?
3. What was the effect of the ‘spirit of Locarno’ on British foreign policy in the 1920s?
4. Was there a ‘crisis of Empire’ in the 1920s?

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapters 4-5

Paris Peace Conference

First Labour government
- J. Callaghan, The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History (Abingdon, 2007), chapter 3
- M. R. Gordon, Conflict and Consensus in Labour’s Foreign Policy, 1914-1965 (Stanford, 1969)

Spirit of Locarno
- P. W. Doerr, British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939 (Manchester, 1998)
- R. S. Graubard, Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy, 1924-29 (London, 1997)
- J. Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the west, 1925-1929 (Princeton, NJ, 1972)

British imperialism in the 1920s
- C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (Stroud, 1997)
- Young, Britain and the World, pp. 80-6
Week 3 - Germany again: Britain, appeasement and the Second World War

1. Was the Empire a wasting asset in the 1930s?
2. What did events in East Asia reveal about British foreign policy prior to 1939?
3. How do historians explain Neville Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement?
4. ‘A third partner’. Discuss with reference to Britain’s role during the Second World War.

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapters 5-6

Empire
- C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (Stroud, 1997)
- L. J. Butler, Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a post-imperial world (London, 2000) – chapter 1
- R. Hyam, Britain’s Declining Empire: the Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968 (Cambridge, 2006)
- P. M. Kennedy, ‘“Appeasement” and British defence policy in the inter-war years’, British Journal of International Studies, no. 4 (1978), pp. 161-77
- P. Williamson, National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932 (Cambridge, 1992)
- Young, Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century, chapter 4

East Asia (Manchuria and Sino-Japanese relations)/Appeasement
- P. M. H. Bell, The origins of the Second World War in Europe (London, 1997)
- F. McDonough, Neville Chamberlain, Appeasement and the British Road to War (Manchester, 1998)
- F. Owen, Guilty Men (1940)
- G. Post, Dilemmas of Appeasement: British Deterrence and Defence (Ithaca, 1993)

Britain during the Second World War – lots in the Library on this, a few good places to start:
- D. Reynolds, From World War to Cold War (Oxford, 2006) – on BB
- Young, Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century, pp. 127-140
Week 4 - Finding a role: Britain in the early Cold War period

1. Was Britain still a world power in 1945?
2. Did Labour adopt a ‘socialist’ foreign policy between 1945 and 1951?
3. Was there a ‘special relationship’ between the Labour Party and America in the years 1945-51?
4. How do you explain the European policy of the Attlee government?

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapters 6-7

Labour’s foreign policy 1945-51/world power
- H. Pelling, America and the British left: from Bright to Bevan (London, 1956)
- D. Russell, “The Jolly Old Empire”: Labour, the Commonwealth and Europe, 1945-51’, in A. May (ed.), Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe: the Commonwealth and Britain’s Applications to Join the European Communities (Basingstoke, 2001) – BB, good for subsequent weeks as well
- H. Wilford, The CIA, the British left, and the Cold War: Calling the Tune? (London, 2003)

Special relationship/world power
- A. Deighton (ed.), Britain and the first cold war (Basingstoke, 1990)
- P. Jones, America and the British Labour Party: The Special Relationship at Work (London, 1997), chapter 2
- D. Reynolds, ‘A ‘Special Relationship?’ America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War’, International Affairs, 62.1 (1985), 1-20
- D. Sanders, Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy since 1945 (Basingstoke, 1990)
- R. Self, British Foreign and Defence Policy since 1945: Challenges and Dilemmas in a Changing World (Basingstoke, 2010)

Europe (useful for other weeks as well)
- J. Dumbrell, A special relationship: Anglo-American relations from the Cold War to Iraq (Basingstoke, 2006)
- S. George, An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community (Oxford, 1998), chapter 1
- D. Gowland, A. Turner and A. Wright, Britain and European Integration since 1945: On the Sidelines (Abingdon, 2010), chapter 1
- M. Williams, Crises and Consensus in British Politics (Basingstoke, 2000), chapter 11 - BB
- J. W. Young, Britain and European Unity, 1945-1999 (Basingstoke, 2000), chapter 1
Week 5 – An ‘era of retreat’? Suez, nuclear weapons and Europe, 1955-64

1. Why did Suez fail? What impact did it have on Britain’s imperial policy?
2. Did Britain ‘miss the boat’ to Europe in the 1950s?
3. How do you explain the launch and subsequent failure of Britain’s first application to the EEC?
4. What did the Anglo-American nuclear alliance reveal about British foreign policy up until 1964?

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapters 7-8
Young, Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century, chapters 6-7
W. Kaiser and G. Staerck (eds.), British foreign policy, 1955-64: Contrasting options (Basingstoke, 2000)

Europe (and use other weeks)
- O. Daddow, Britain and Europe since 1945: Historiographical perspectives on integration (Manchester, 2004), chapter 3
- J. Ellison, Threatening Europe: Britain and the creation of the EC, 1955-58 (New York, 2002) - BB
- S. George, An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community (Oxford, 1998), chapter 1
- Gowland, Turner and Wright, Britain and European Integration since 1945, chapter 2
- N. P. Ludlow, Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Application to the EEC (Cambridge, 1997)
- J. W. Young, Britain and European Unity, 1945-1999 (Basingstoke, 2000), chapters 2-3

Suez/imperial policy
- D. Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis (Oxford, 1988)
- D. Epstein, British politics in the Suez crisis (London, 1964)

Nuclear policy/US
See Week 4 US/Cold War reading list +
- N. J. Ashton, Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War (Basingstoke, 2002)
- Dumbrell, The Special Relationship, chapter 3
- R. Neustadt, Alliance Politics (London, 1970) – use for Suez as well
Week 6 - ‘A world power or nothing’: East of Suez, the United States and Europe under Wilson

1. What caused Harold Wilson’s ‘turn’ towards Europe? Was the policy successful?
2. Assess the reasons and impact of Britain’s withdrawal ‘east of Suez’.
3. Why didn’t the Labour Government choose to fight in Vietnam?
4. Did the Commonwealth prosper or decline under Harold Wilson?

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapter 8

Europe (and use other weeks)

East of Suez/Commonwealth
- D. McCourt, ‘What was Britain’s “East of Suez” Role?: Reassessing the Withdrawal, 1964-1968’, Diplomacy and Statecraft, 20. 3 (2009), 453-472

Vietnam/Anglo-American relations
- S. Ellis, Britain, America and the Vietnam War (Westport, CT, 2004)
Week 7 - Europe (yet again) and the domestic politics of foreign policy in the 1970s

1. What contributed to Britain’s successful application to the EEC under Heath?
3. How do you explain the emerging détente of the 1970s? What was Britain’s role in it?
4. Was there a ‘post-war consensus’ in British foreign policy between 1945 and 1979?

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapter 9

AND

Europe (and use other weeks)
- M. Baimbridge (ed.), The 1975 Referendum on Europe, Volume 1: Reflections of the Participants (Exeter, 2007)
- R. Broad, Labour’s European Dilemmas: From Bevin to Blair (Basingstoke, 2001)
- D. Butler and U. Kitzinger, The 1975 Referendum (Basingstoke, 1996)
- U. Kitzinger, ‘Entry and Referendum Revisited’, in Broad and Preston, Moored to the Continent? – BB
- J. Smith, ‘The European dividing line in party politics’, International Affairs, vol. 88, no. 6 (2012), pp. 1277-95, especially pp. 1280-1
- M. Pine, Harold Wilson and Europe: Pursuing Britain’s membership of the European Communities (London, 2007) – BB

Détente in the 1970s

For post-war consensus question please use notes and reading for weeks 4-7
Week 8 - ‘Britain Is Great Again’: Thatcher and the wider world

1. ‘I want my money back’. Account for Britain’s European policy under Margaret Thatcher
2. Was the Falklands War the exception or the rule to Thatcher’s Commonwealth policy?
3. How central were superpower relations to the foreign policy of the Thatcher governments?
4. Did Thatcher welcome or fear the end of the Cold War?

Reynolds, Britannia Overruled, chapter 10
Documents and speeches from the Thatcher era can be found at http://www.margaretthatcher.org/

Europe (and use other weeks)
- N. J. Crowson, The Conservative Party and European integration since 1945: At the heart of Europe? (Abingdon, 2007)
- D. Dinan, Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration (Basingstoke, 1999), chapters 4-6
- George, An Awkward Partner, chapters 5/6
- Gowland, Turner and Wright, Britain and European Integration since 1945, chapters 3-4
- A. May, Britain and Europe since 1945 (Harlow, 1999), chapter 8
- D. W. Urwin, The Community of Europe: A History of European Integration since 1945 (Harlow, 1995), chapters 14-16
- S. Wall, A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair (Oxford, 2008)
- Young, Britain and European Unity, chapter 6
- Young, Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century, pp. 213-19

Commonwealth/Falklands – check Library for full listing of literature on the Falklands War
- G. M. Dillon, The Falklands, politics and war (Basingstoke, 1989)
- L. Freedman, Britain and the Falklands War (Oxford, 1988)

Thatcher and the superpowers (and use other weeks)/end of the Cold War
- R. Renwick, A Journey with Margaret Thatcher: Foreign Policy under the Iron Lady (2013)
- P. Sharp, Thatcher’s Diplomacy: The Revival of British Foreign Policy (New York, 1997)
- Young, Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century
**Week 9 - From the end of the Cold War to liberal intervention**

1. Was Britain at the ‘heart of Europe’ under John Major?
2. Was Britain at the ‘heart of Europe’ under Tony Blair?
3. What was new about New Labour’s ‘ethical’ foreign policy? Was it successful?
4. How did the notion of intervention change during the 1990s?

Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, chapter 11

**Europe under Major/Blair (and use other weeks)**
- N. J. Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European integration since 1945: At the heart of Europe?* (Abingdon, 2007)
- Forster, *Euro scepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, chapters 6-7
- George, *An Awkward Partner*, chapters 8
- Gowland, Turner and Wright, *Britain and European Integration since 1945*, chapters 6-7
- M. Holmes, *European Integration: Scope and Limits* (Basingstoke, 2001), part 1 - BB
- W. Wallace, ‘British foreign policy after the Cold War’, *International Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 3 (1992), pp. 423-42
- W. Wallace, ‘The collapse of British foreign policy’, *International Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 1 (2005), pp. 53-68
- Young, *Britain and European Unity*, chapter 7/8

**Intervention/Ethical foreign policy**
- O. Daddow, ‘“Tony’s War” Blair, Kosovo and the interventionist impulse in British foreign policy’, *International Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 1 (2005), pp. 547-60
Week 10: British foreign policy since 1918: themes, continuities and changes

We will use our last seminar to address some of the lasting themes in British foreign policy and discuss the continuities and changes that have marked Britain’s foreign policy and its place in the world since 1918.

By way of preparation, you should reacquaint yourself with the general reading listed on p. 2 and consult your notes from previous seminars.

Exam Questions

For your essay, you are free to choose any of the seminar questions above provided that you have not already presented on it in class.

Please engage with the question and refer to the historiographical debate.

Assessment

All assessed essays must be submitted both in hard copy and electronically. Electronic submission will be via Blackboard, and students must submit twice, once as an essay submission, and once via Turnitin. Non-submission of either or both electronic copies may result in a penalty.

Turnitin software detects similarities between your essay and other material on the internet or in the Turnitin database (including other essays submitted to the database). Turnitin can thus help you to understand whether you are referencing and quoting correctly, as well as helping the Department to detect any plagiarism or poor academic practice. If you wish to use Turnitin to help you with this, you must submit a draft of your essay to Turnitin AT LEAST 24 HOURS BEFORE you will be submitting the final essay. Be aware that Turnitin ‘scores’ can be unusually high or low for a variety of reasons: a high score may not indicate plagiarism. Please see the History area on Blackboard and the Department’s handbook, Studying History at Reading (available via Blackboard) for more detail on how to interpret Turnitin reports, and how to avoid plagiarism or poor academic practice.

Re-using work you have already submitted for another assessment is against the University’s rules. This applies whether the previous assessment was for the same module, another module in the same department, a module in another department or a module in another university. Turnitin can detect the re-use of your own work as well as plagiarism of other sources. The University will impose penalties ranging up to awarding a mark of zero for modules in which work has been re-used (without the right to re-sit) for a first offence. A second offence could lead to expulsion from the University.
What is required for assessments? Criteria for achievement

Students often ask what standard of work they need to produce to gain a particular mark or class. The criteria that follow have been drawn up by the Department and are relevant to all coursework and exam essays in History. If you are taking a joint degree, you will need to find out the criteria for your other subject from the School or Department in question.

The following criteria are offered as a guide to some of the characteristics typically associated with the work of each particular class. They indicate in broad terms what it is that we are looking for. Remember, however, that each class spans a range of marks and that a specific piece of work will not necessarily contain all the characteristics of the class awarded.

First Class (70% or more)
A comprehensive treatment of the topic showing a sustained, coherent, and clearly structured examination of the issues raised by the question; demonstrates a confident command of a wide range of material, including factual information, appropriate concepts and historiography; shows the ability to analyse and synthesise the different aspects of the topic, to evaluate received opinion, and to consider the subject beyond its immediate context; evidence of original and independent thought; clear writing and some stylistic flair. Stepped First-Class percentage marks are: 72, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95 and 100%

Upper Second Class (60-69%)
Accurate exposition and confident command of a wide range of factual, conceptual and interpretative material; maintaining a logical argument; thorough in coverage without being fully comprehensive, and revealing some independence of thought without being original; good organisation and clear writing; may contain some minor errors or omissions and may not sustain a consistent depth of analysis.

Lower Second Class (50-59%)
An answer which, though fairly detailed in terms of factual information, is more limited in its ability to handle concepts or issues of historiography, and which does not engage as far with the issues raised by the question, tending instead to deal with the subject in general in an unduly narrative or descriptive way. May contain errors and omissions, and may not cover the full range of key elements; may not always fully explain points and material may not follow on section by section.

Third Class (40-49%)
Shows limited information, and a lack of conceptual or interpretative awareness; addresses only part of the question and does so at a very general or imprecise level, tending to narrate what happened rather than to assess its significance; shows some understanding, but has important omissions or inaccuracies; is often unclear in both the expression and the organisation of the material.

Pass without honours (35-39%)
Work shows a very limited appreciation of the subject and the issues relating to it; limited knowledge; unclear expression and organisation.

Fail (less than 35%)
Clear, obvious and serious deficiencies in relevance, knowledge, understanding, and expression. Work not degree-worthy. A fail may also be given where work has not been attempted or submitted, or where the student is guilty of plagiarism.
Module title: **Period in Modern History: British Foreign Policy since 1918**

Module code: **HS2P99**
Providing Department: **History**
Level: **5**
Number of credits: **20**
Terms in which taught: **Autumn or Spring**
Module convenor: **Dr Matthew Broad**
Pre-requisites: **None**
Co-requisites: **None**
Modules excluded: **None**
Current from: **2013-14**

**Aims:**
Periods involve the study of substantial chronological periods. They aim to acquaint students with the causes and consequences of continuity and change over the long term in the political, social, economic and cultural systems under study. Periods are distinguished as Medieval, Early Modern or Modern.

**Assessable outcomes:**
By the end of the module it is expected that the student will be able to:
- identify and explain the main issues and events studied
- appraise critically the primary sources and historical interpretations of the subject
- think comparatively about aspects of British, European or American history over a substantial period
- assess the nature of social, economic, political and cultural change
- organise material and articulate arguments effectively in different kinds of written exercises and orally
- locate and assemble bibliographic and other information by independent research, using IT as appropriate

**Additional outcomes:**
The module also aims to encourage the development of oral communication skills and the student’s effectiveness in group situations and team-working. Students will also develop their IT skills by use of relevant web resources and databases, where appropriate.

**Outline content:**
Britain emerged from the First World War still a major global player. While the events of 1914-18 witnessed the disappearance of the German, Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires, Britain’s imperial presence reached new heights. With America back in isolation and Russia in revolution by the 1920s, Britain once again reigned as the world’s sole superpower. By the turn of the century, however, Britain’s international position had drastically changed. Few remnants of its imperial past remained. What was once a global foreign policy orbit had become an essentially European one under an American nuclear umbrella. The purpose of this course is to provide a stimulating analysis of this transformation by examining the successes and failures of British foreign policy from the end of the First World War to the New Labour era.

**Brief description of teaching and learning methods:**
Seminars, requiring preparatory reading and investigation, may include informal and interactive presentations by the module teacher; structured group discussion; short seminar papers by students; occasional tutorials; team-based simulation exercises and debates; examination of primary and secondary sources, as appropriate. Staff will be available for consultation as necessary.
**Contact hours:**

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<td>Placement</td>
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**Formative Assessment Methods:**

**Summative Assessment Methods (%)**

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**Assessment:**

**Coursework**

Students will write ONE essay of 2,500 words, to be handed in by 12 noon on the Monday of week 8 of term, which should be submitted electronically via Blackboard and in hard copy to the History office.

**Penalties for late submission**

Penalties for late submission will be in accordance with University policy.

**Length of Examination**

One two-hour paper requiring two answers to be taken at the time of the Part 2 examinations.

**Requirements for a pass**

A mark of 40% overall.
Reassessment arrangements

Students who achieve an overall threshold performance may not be able to re-sit this module. Where a re-sit is permitted, students will be assessed by examination in August/September. Coursework will be carried forward if it bears a confirmed mark of 40% or more. Otherwise it must be re-submitted by 12 noon, 1 September.