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# Facing the Dictators: Anthony Eden, the Foreign Office and British Intelligence, 1935–1945

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## ABSTRACT

This article uses the inter-war and wartime career of Anthony Eden, as a vehicle to understand the little understood relationship between secret intelligence, British Foreign Secretaries and the Foreign Office. While secret intelligence is no longer the ‘missing dimension’, it once was in studies of diplomatic and political history, its use by British Foreign Secretaries remains a neglected subject. The article also sheds important new light on the Foreign Office’s wartime use of intelligence, especially diplomatic signals intelligence (SIGINT), a subject often overshadowed by the use of military SIGINT from Bletchley Park, showing the close relationship between intelligence officials and British diplomats in guiding British foreign policy. As Foreign Secretary in the 1930s and 1940s, Eden showed himself to be a skilful reader of intelligence reports, using this information as he went about crafting Britain’s policy towards the increasingly bellicose powers of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan.

## KEYWORDS

Intelligence; diplomacy; Eden; appeasement; Foreign Office; Second World War; GC&CS; MI6

This article uses the inter-war and wartime career of Anthony Eden, to explore the relationship between British intelligence, Foreign Secretaries and the Foreign Office. While the use of intelligence to shape British foreign policy has been well documented, less is known about the use of such information by individual Secretaries of State, and the relationship between the intelligence community and the Foreign Office (FO) more generally. The article looks at the career of Eden in particular as a case study on the role of intelligence and the Foreign Secretary, looking at his access to and attitude towards intelligence, and the sometimes complex relationship Eden had with Downing Street. While the attitudes of individual Secretaries of State towards intelligence undoubtedly changed from individual to individual, the article suggests that Foreign Secretaries have – as in Eden’s case – always received intelligence to shape decision making, even if they have often tried to stay far removed from the details of intelligence collection or the day-to-running of Britain’s intelligence community. In the case of Eden, the evidence shows that he took diplomatic, military and even open source intelligence seriously, establishing himself as an experienced intelligence consumer in government before and during the Second World War. This article therefore contributes to the literature on Eden’s career, while also offering wider observations on Foreign Secretaries and intelligence, and the process of handling and disseminating such information in the Foreign Office.

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That the Foreign Secretary receives intelligence should come as little surprise; the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has been responsible for 'laying down the broad lines of British foreign policy', standing at the 'apex of the pyramid of that section of the central government machinery which is responsible for the management of Britain's external relations'.<sup>1</sup> For centuries, the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs had always been privy to information obtained through the 'Secret Vote' – an annual fund to pay for intelligence, with this becoming just part of the 'flow of information' reaching the Foreign Secretary's desk following the formal creation of Britain's intelligence organisations, with the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6), stemming from the creation of the Secret Service Bureau in 1909, and in 1919 the Government Code & Cipher School (GC&CS, from 1946 the Government Communications Headquarters).<sup>2</sup> By 1919, PUS Sir Charles Hardinge insisted that SIS's overseas intelligence gathering should 'be in the hands of the Foreign Office', which was the 'only Government Department in a position to decide whether such operations may or may not conflict with the general foreign policy of H.M. Government', overseeing secret service activity by 'holding the purse strings'.<sup>3</sup> From 1921, the department also controlled GC&CS, which, despite its military origins, produced a 'great bulk' of political information concerning the 'Foreign Office primarily'. Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon quickly recognised that GC&CS's diplomatic reporting was 'by far the most important branch of our confidential work' offering the 'most accurate and ... the cheapest, means of obtaining secret political information'.<sup>4</sup> FO control of overseas intelligence gathering and covert activity has remained broadly the same; the Seymour Report of 1952 emphasised 'The Foreign Secretary is responsible in peace and in war for the S.I.S. ... the S.I.S. cannot function abroad without the cover provided by the Foreign Service', and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (as the FO was renamed in 1968) remains responsible for SIS and GCHQ, which operate under the 'authority of the Secretary of State'.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, despite the importance of the Foreign Secretary, few studies have looked at the roles of individual Secretaries of State and their involvement with 'secret service'. Commenting on the relationship between intelligence and twentieth-century premiers, historian Christopher Andrew once suggested that many basic questions had 'yet to be asked, let alone answered'.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, the release of archival material has gone some way to filling this void though significant gaps remain. In marked contrast, scholars have shown less inclination to look beyond the fabled black door of Downing Street to other Whitehall departments, with Andrew's observation still a prescient one for Foreign Secretaries and other Cabinet posts. In case of the Foreign Office (from 1968 the Foreign & Commonwealth Office or FCO)<sup>7</sup>, while it is possible to study the pre-1945 use of 'secret service' by some Secretaries of State, their post-war successors have often been circumspect on the subject. Despite occupying all four Great Offices of State – the Home Office, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary and, finally, Prime Minister, James Callaghan's memoirs omit his access to intelligence, with Callaghan often reluctant to discuss the subject in public, even after government avowal of SIS and GCHQ in the 1990s. The memoirs of another Labour Foreign Secretary, David (now Lord) Owen, contain a chapter on MI6, GCHQ and the Falklands, setting out the 'crucial role' of intelligence in defence and foreign policy. As he recalls, Owen was initially 'sceptical about the system for referring intelligence cases with a political context to the Foreign Secretary', but 'after a review of six months' referrals, I was completely satisfied' gradually growing to 'respect the work of MI6, particularly in Southern Africa, where they provided me with a lot of intelligence'.<sup>8</sup> Owen was less impressed with the large sums of money spent on Britain's covert propaganda machinery, the Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD), ordering its disbandment and replacement with a smaller organisation to achieve 'greater clarity' in overseas information work.<sup>9</sup> Conservative Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe referred to the importance of SIS agent and KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky (misspelt as 'Gordievski' in his memoirs) whose reports, seen only by himself, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and a few senior officials, convinced him that the Soviets 'had a genuine fear that "the West" was plotting their overthrow'.<sup>10</sup> Asked about his access to intelligence by

journalist Michael Cockerill, Sir Douglas Hurd replied how he 'wasn't left in ignorance ... I had a whole flow of information coming at me all the time'.<sup>11</sup>

Academic studies of the intelligence-policy maker relationship are equally silent on the role of the Foreign Secretary. While we know the aspects of Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home, James Callaghan and John Major's relationship with intelligence in Downing Street, we know very little about their formative experiences as Foreign Secretary, and the contrasting experiences in handling intelligence in the Foreign Office and No. 10 – an observation that equally applies to Eden. Still less is known about the use of intelligence by other Secretaries of State in framing British diplomacy. Alan Bullock's final volume of his three-part study of Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin makes no reference to the Joint Intelligence Committee or SIS and GCHQ, despite the importance of intelligence to the foreign policy of the post-war Attlee government.<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that the role of Foreign Secretary is insignificant when it comes to intelligence and security issues. Intelligence from Britain's agencies has been an important source of information, despite often embroiling the Foreign Secretary and senior officials in scandals when overseas operations go wrong. In September 1956, Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd congratulated the Director of GCHQ, Eric Jones, on the 'volume of material which has been produced ... relating to all the countries in the Middle East ... I am writing to let you know how valuable we have found this material and how much I appreciate the hard work and skill involved in its production' – something that Eden would do as wartime Foreign Secretary, even if the precise nature of the information and its use is largely unknown.<sup>13</sup> Sensitive intelligence collection or covert operations require ministerial approval; in 1956, following one such failed operation, the disappearance of navy diver Lionel 'Buster' Crabb during an SIS operation in Portsmouth harbour, guidelines were put in place governing Ministerial authority and approval.<sup>14</sup> Now the Foreign Secretary sits on the National Security Council (NSC) reviewing all aspects of UK security, receiving information from the intelligence and security services.<sup>15</sup>

While the post-war experiences of Foreign Secretaries and intelligence has been largely neglected, historians can now draw on the recently released records of the FO Permanent Under-Secretary's Department (PUSD) to study their pre-war and wartime predecessors. Established in 1949, the PUSD fulfilled the long established role of the Permanent Under-Secretary (PUS) in acting as the FO's link to Britain's intelligence agencies, with PUSD's released files up to 1951 giving a unique insight into the relationship between diplomats and intelligence.<sup>16</sup> The PUSD archive, supplemented by the files of the Cabinet Office, wider FO and other sources, also gives glimpses into the role played by inter-war Foreign Secretaries, revealing a love-hate relationship with intelligence. The influence of intelligence on individual Foreign Secretaries changed from individual to individual. The formidable Sir Robert Vansittart, who dominated British diplomacy as Foreign Office PUS from 1930 to 1938, recalled Labour's Arthur Henderson – a Methodist teetotaler – comparing 'Secret Service' to 'hard liquor, because he knew, and wanted to know, nothing of it'. As a result, Vansittart supposedly hid intelligence estimates and other 'secret service'-related material in the volumes of paperwork reaching Henderson's desk.<sup>17</sup> As in Henderson's case, most Foreign Secretaries had little interest in the day-to-day running of the intelligence. Even if they had wanted to know more, the exacting workload in shaping Britain's foreign relations had to be managed alongside Cabinet responsibility and wider party-political issues, though Henderson and his successors were certainly privy to the fruits of Britain's foreign intelligence agencies. Part of the problem also stemmed from the lack of a central machinery to assess the collected intelligence. Even with the formation of the JIC in July 1936, which increasingly dealt with national assessments for 'high powered people', the majority of SIS and GC&CS reports went directly to the FO's political departments and even the Secretary of State.<sup>18</sup> Under the circumstances, the consumers became their own analyst with mixed results. Lord Curzon saw GC&CS reports as an indispensable aid to diplomacy, even submitting an official protest drawing on SIGINT sources to the Soviet government (the 'Curzon ultimatum') calling for an end to subversive activity in Asia.<sup>19</sup> Curzon also saw SIS as an important

source; a 1919 assessment by the War Cabinet Committee, chaired by him, described Britain's overseas intelligence networks (known as MI1(c) and soon to be officially renamed SIS) as 'The Foreign Office's service'.<sup>20</sup> As with his sometimes erratic handling of SIGINT, Curzon was not immune from compromising 'secret service' sources; against the advice of his advisors, the Foreign Secretary sent another protest note to Moscow about alleged Soviet influence in Ireland and India based on SIS material, sources later discredited.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, Curzon had a 'better grasp' of intelligence than any other Minister in government.<sup>22</sup> While Labour's Ramsay MacDonald, who served jointly as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, was reportedly kept in the dark about GC&CS's reports, his successor Sir Austen Chamberlain frequently saw them, famously agreeing to a raid on the headquarters of the All-Russian Co-operative Society searching for stolen War Office documents, a raid justified by the publication of GC&CS intercepts in 1927, with disastrous implications for Britain's SIGINT against Russia.<sup>23</sup> Lord Halifax was also privy to the intelligence coming through normal diplomatic channels, Vansittart's private networks and the intelligence services, supporting a policy of appeasement towards Germany.<sup>24</sup>

Added to the everyday burdens of office, Foreign Secretaries have also had to endure a 'degree of irritation, actual or potential' in their relationship with Downing Street, a relationship hardly helped by the intelligence dimension.<sup>25</sup> As Eden's wartime example illustrates, Winston Churchill's avid love of spies and secrets inevitably brought Downing Street uncomfortably into British diplomacy, with most Secretaries of State since 1945 having to face Premiers often willing to use 'secret service' to push their own agenda, much to the annoyance of the FO.<sup>26</sup> The diplomat Sir Nicholas Henderson remarked that all Prime Ministers 'love intelligence, because it's a sort of weapon', giving power in the corridors of Whitehall.<sup>27</sup> Churchill certainly weaponised intelligence, from the spring of 1941 using his own daily access to a selection of the most important military and diplomatic decrypts to discomfort the Chiefs of Staff, and surprise an overburdened Eden and his officials. Churchill's continued involvement in foreign affairs remained a point of contention during the Conservative peacetime administration from 1951 to 1955, which saw, in effect, 'two men acting as Foreign Secretary at the same time'.<sup>28</sup>

The use of intelligence by Eden is a major gap in our understanding of his role as Foreign Secretary, especially during his first two periods as Secretary of State, 1935–1938 and 1940–1945. Eden is a fascinating focus for historical inquiry, having had a long and distinguished diplomatic career, serving in the junior posts of Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1931–1933) and Minister for the League of Nations, a post combined with Lord Privy Seal (December 1933–June 1935), becoming the youngest Foreign Secretary of the Twentieth Century at the age of just 38 in December 1935, holding the post until his resignation in February 1938. Eden escaped the 'guilty men' verdict that destroyed the reputation of so many colleagues in the inter-war period, before his recall to government as Secretary of State for the Dominions (1939–1940) and Secretary of State for War at the start of the Second World War. Returning to the FO in December 1940, Eden's wartime record was second only to Churchill's. His prolonged spell as Foreign Secretary was combined with the post of Leader of the House of Commons, a significant role in the War Cabinet whilst acting as Churchill's close confidant and heir apparent, remaining in frontbench politics after the end of the war as *de facto* Leader of the Opposition, supporting an ailing Churchill. Even out of office, Eden was seen, as his one-time Private Secretary Valentine Lawford commented, as 'Foreign Secretary by divine right' before his last tenure in the FO (October 1951–April 1955).<sup>29</sup>

What we know of Eden and intelligence is largely restricted to his tenure in Downing Street and notably the Suez Crisis of 1956. The available archive reveals what former FCO Chief Historian Gill Bennett has called a 'complicated story, rooted in the global nature of British overseas interests, fierce Anglo-American rivalry in the Middle East, and Arab nationalism set in a Cold War context, as well as a host of personal and political considerations' even if much of the intelligence dimension is missing from the story, thanks to the closure of SIS and GCHQ records.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, historians have tried to understand Eden's use of secret intelligence

during the crisis with Egypt, painting an unflattering picture. Overall, it's been argued that Eden ignored the balanced assessments of the JIC, believing, instead, that Egypt's President Gamel Abdel Nasser was a Soviet proxy irrevocably hostile to the West, thanks partially to the information supplied by an SIS source codenamed LUCKY BREAK.<sup>31</sup> For former JIC Chair Sir Percy Cradock, Eden regarded himself 'as an authority ... and he was already falling into the dangerous practice of selecting the pieces of intelligence that fitted his preconceptions'.<sup>32</sup> For Richard J. Aldrich and Rory Cormac, Eden 'abused intelligence and attempted to co-opt MI6 into launching its own secret foreign policy', a point echoed by the JIC official historian Michael Goodman who suggested that the JIC's 'steady line' towards Egypt differed to Eden's fixation with 'removing Nasser with covert plans'.<sup>33</sup> Whatever the truth, our understanding of Eden and intelligence is largely shaped by his Suez performance – a view, as this article shows – that does not sit well with Eden's earlier use of intelligence in the Foreign Office.

The literature on Eden is certainly a crowded field, thanks to the debate about his life and reputation, with at least six major biographies and countless more books and articles, yet the subject of intelligence remains absent from much of the literature, with the exception of the Suez Crisis – partially down to Eden himself.<sup>34</sup> Like most politicians of his day, Eden was reluctant to talk about 'secret service' activity, providing vague references to 'information', 'secret sources' and 'intelligence' in his memoirs. This may have been self-censorship, with Eden's private papers often silent on the issue; his diaries, already sparse, contain little on intelligence-related matters, beyond references to the factious relationship with Hugh Dalton, Minister for Economic Warfare. In one entry for April 1941, Eden referred to discussions of the Defence Committee 'so secret that I cannot write of it here'.<sup>35</sup> In 1944, replying to suggestions from Dalton, now President of the Board of Trade, that details of 'Danegeld' transactions, the secret smuggling of Swiss produced goods with military value, including watches, timing devices, and other specialist equipment across Nazi-occupied Europe to Britain through neutral countries, could be revealed to Cabinet, Eden scribbled: '*Secret organisations must remain secret.* I haven't read this in detail but note 100 copies have been printed! They clearly should NOT be circulated'.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, despite Eden's reluctance to discuss intelligence, new studies suggest that Eden was generally a 'good' analyst with a 'natural' flair for secret diplomacy, in wartime becoming a firm supporter of the FO Research Department, realising the importance of non-secret (or open source) information, while also benefiting from SIS and GC&CS's secret products.<sup>37</sup> In December 1943, Eden even became minister responsible for the Security Service (MI5), receiving summaries of MI5's work from Director-General Sir David Petrie, in a rare example of one individual being responsible for SIS, MI5 and GC&CS at the same time.<sup>38</sup>

Eden enjoyed a long relationship with British intelligence, even if he was reluctant to admit it. In December 1937, Eden wrote to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain about the outgoing FO PUS Sir Robert Vansittart. As PUS since 1930, Vansittart (or 'Van') had been at the heart of Britain's intelligence effort, and wanted to continue his grasp of 'secret service' following his move to the newly established post of government Chief Diplomatic Advisor. For Vansittart this was a '*sine qua non*' – an essential condition for the job – but, as Eden explained to Chamberlain, this was currently handled by PUS, with Eden 'reluctant' to deprive Vansittart's successor, Sir Alexander Cadogan, of 'a service which has always been the prerogative of the post'. Eden admitted to knowing little about 'secret service' which was 'under the personal [and] exclusive control' of the PUS. 'The Secretary of State has nothing to do with it', Eden told Chamberlain, 'and I at least have always avoided knowing anything about it in detail'.<sup>39</sup> Yet, Eden's claim he had little to do with intelligence was misleading. Like his predecessors, Eden saw intelligence reports after replacing Sir Samuel Hoare as Foreign Secretary in December 1935, even if examples of its use remain limited, thanks partially to the restricted nature of the archive and strict adherence to rules not to refer to secret intelligence in papers. In a later review, former Cabinet Secretary Lord Hankey warned that the 'utmost care' was needed when dealing with GC&CS's intelligence and that under 'no circumstances should it be referred to in Cabinet

Minutes or any circulated documents'.<sup>40</sup> As a result, every effort was made to hide traces of signals intelligence (SIGINT) and other covert sources, though examples can be found.<sup>41</sup>

The FO of the mid-1930s was faced with Nazi Germany's efforts to revise the political and military settlements reached under the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, although the impact of intelligence on British 'appeasement' policy is debatable.<sup>42</sup> GC&CS's inability to read Nazi Germany's military and diplomatic traffic placed growing emphasis on SIS reporting, Vansittart's confidential contacts and diplomatic reports from Britain's Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Eric Phipps. Despite the importance of some of these sources, intelligence had little impact on the emerging consensus in Whitehall that Germany would become the 'ultimate potential enemy', with the work of key committees such as the Defence Requirements Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence frequently based on 'overt information and common sense to strategic and political assessments'.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, Eden certainly saw intelligence, forwarding Secretary of State for Air Philip Cunliffe-Lister reports of Germany's expanding *Luftwaffe* 'from a source which the Foreign Office regard as in a sense the most secret and the best informed', adding to wider discussions across government on the strength of the German air force.<sup>44</sup> In February 1936, Eden also shared a document prepared by Vansittart on Germany, citing 'secret information' that advocates of an expansionist foreign policy had not 'renounced their aspirations in the West', likely drawing on networks organised by the former British Air Attaché to Berlin, Malcolm Grahame Christie.<sup>45</sup> In April 1937, Eden gave the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy a summary of a 'very reliable source' pointing to German military concerns at the pace of rearmament, citing the 'precariousness of her food and raw materials'.<sup>46</sup> In July, Eden refused to circulate a similar 'Most Secret' report from Vansittart, based on discussions with the German conservative anti-Nazi politician Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, including information from Werner von Fritsch Commander-in-Chief of the German Army and Chief of the General Staff Ludwig Beck. Writing to Eden, Vansittart accepted that the information, if leaked, would have 'really grave consequences', writing on his copy of the document 'Suppressed by Eden'.<sup>47</sup> By 1938, shortly before his resignation as Foreign Secretary, SIS provided further information on growing tensions within Germany, with Cadogan writing in his diary that SIS's Chief ('C') Sir Hugh 'Quex' Sinclair:

... came round in afternoon with interesting information. [Hans] Frank's advertised visit to London is 'off'. Berlin say they can't give reason. When pressed – as arrangements have already been made here – all they will say is 'Mussolini'. Does this mean that lunatic is going off the deep end in the Mediterranean? I have taken precautions. Press story is that there's trouble in Germany – Reichwehr (Blomberg) versus Party (Himmler) – and that it is over Musso's scheme for intensification of the campaign in Spain. Maybe. Told A. about it and told him to tell P.M.<sup>48</sup>

While certainly valuable in revealing tensions in the Nazi hierarchy, reports on Germany reinforced the consensus in government that Germany was the primary threat to Britain's interests in Europe – a view already reached through non-secret sources, reaffirming the need for an improvement in Anglo-German relations through a policy of appeasement.<sup>49</sup>

Intelligence was more important in shaping the FO (and Eden's) picture of Fascist Italy's belligerent policy in the Mediterranean. In October 1935, Italian forces invaded Abyssinia starting a war that would eventually isolate Italy from the international community<sup>50</sup>, while by July 1936 Italy had also become involved in Spain's Civil War supporting a rebellion by nationalist rebels opposed to the popular front government in Madrid. The most reliable information on Italian military and diplomatic activity was provided by GC&CS. In the 1920s, Britain's codebreakers had been able to read Italy's naval ciphers, and Mussolini's expansion into Abyssinia and support for Spain's nationalists generated significant traffic for GC&CS to attack. By 1936, GC&CS were also reading Italian diplomatic messages.<sup>51</sup> In April 1936, its first Head Alistair Denniston reported the growing intelligence 'available to all interested departments', but pointed to future funding concerns owing to Admiralty and FO reluctance to support the long-term installation of teleprinter lines to bring raw intercept directly to GC&CS in London.<sup>52</sup> Discussions about the funding of GC&CS's activities were even brought to Eden's attention, though his views are unrecorded, and

the question of funding liability was left to the Treasury to decide.<sup>53</sup> By 1938, GC&CS was producing an average of 240 reports a month with an estimated 20% relating to Italian actions and policy.<sup>54</sup> The growth of intelligence available to the FO, read alongside reports from diplomatic missions and open sources, contributed to the increasingly pessimistic view of Italian policy.<sup>55</sup> GC&CS's decrypts of Italian naval messages especially gave the Admiralty and FO valuable intelligence on the movement of Italian submarines before and during the Nyon conference in September 1937, leading to a short term halt in attacks on shipping, though the agreement did little to halt Italy's support for the Nationalists.<sup>56</sup> As early as October 1937, Eden's Private Secretary, Oliver Harvey, recorded the 'fresh evidence we have that Muss is already breaking his undertaking given since Nyon ... sending further men and aeroplanes'.<sup>57</sup>

In 1938, the growth of intelligence contributed to Eden's open breach with Chamberlain over the policy of appeasement, resulting in the former's resignation; on Germany, Chamberlain and Eden agreed war should be avoided at all costs, yet differed over how to deal with Rome.<sup>58</sup> Chamberlain believed that recognising Mussolini's annexation of Abyssinia would improve relations, disagreeing with his Foreign Secretary, who wanted to see an improvement in Italy's attitude to London first. Writing to the Prime Minister in January 1938, Eden referred to 'certain reports which have recently reached me (and I am asking the most interesting one to be shown to you on your return) indicating that Mussolini ... is not likely to modify his policy in the near future if he gets recognition or not'.<sup>59</sup> Evidence of Mussolini's hostility to Britain came from the decrypted messages of Ishii Kikujiro, Japan's Ambassador to Rome, sent in early December. 'Englishmen over-ate and were surfeited', Mussolini told Kikujiro, while Britain was 'out of touch' with the rest of the world, with Eden described as 'a fool' destroying relations with Rome.<sup>60</sup> Eden subsequently reproduced evidence supporting his pessimistic line, possibly drawing on GC&CS's decrypts of Italian activity in Abyssinia, during a personal meeting with Chamberlain at Chequers, writing in his diary:

... I told him my own views that we should do our best to improve [Anglo] German relations and in the meanwhile continue our negotiations with Germany, but not at the present make any approaches to Italy. Every instinct was against recognition of conquest of [Abyssinia] at this time. I then showed [Neville] file containing latest [Abyssinian] reports. I reminded him that last year, when we made the so-called "Gentleman's agreement" with Italy, Mussolini sent four thousand men to Spain a week after. I feared I had no more confidence in him now.<sup>61</sup>

Chamberlain remained opposed to Eden's line, preferring to engage in talks with Rome – an outcome Eden reluctantly supported. Yet, tensions shortly re-emerged, this time over Italy's support for Nazi Germany's long term aim of *Anschluss* with Austria following Hitler's demands for Nazification of the Austrian government in February. In London, Eden suspected Mussolini had given tacit support, a view rejected by Chamberlain. During a meeting with the Italian Ambassador to London, Dino Grandi, the Prime Minister asked about the existence of a 'secret agreement between the Fuhrer and Duce' where Italy had agreed to growing German influence in Austria in return for support over Italy's aims in the Mediterranean. Grandi replied the information was 'false', with Chamberlain openly contradicting his Foreign Secretary, leading Grandi to describe the two as 'enemies ... like two cocks in true fighting posture'.<sup>62</sup> Eden secretly knew of an agreement, thanks to GC&CS's earlier intercepts of Japanese diplomatic traffic; in October 1937, the Japanese Foreign Ministry learnt that Hitler and Mussolini acknowledged 'the special interests of Italy in the Mediterranean, while Italy recognized those of Germany in regard to Austria'.<sup>63</sup> Unable to confront Grandi over the lies, fearing compromising the source, and faced with a Prime Minister who wanted to continue talks regardless, Eden was increasingly isolated.<sup>64</sup> On 20 February, following intensive Cabinet discussions, Eden resigned citing his opposition to talks with Rome. The resignation was a national and international event, receiving mixed reception from the press, but widespread public support, although Eden did little to attack Chamberlain during the gathering storm of the late 1930s.



Eden's return to government in September 1939 as Dominions Secretary, followed by an appointment as Secretary of State for War in Churchill's coalition in May 1940, would see his access to intelligence resume. In November 1940, Eden's name appears on the distribution list for the JIC's 'Secret Situation Report' drawing on information from 'most secret' sources provided by GC&CS, now based at its war station at Bletchley Park.<sup>65</sup> In August 1940, Eden even complained there was 'no information' from German-occupied France, prompting Churchill to chastise SIS (and the FO) for a 'failure to produce more information'.<sup>66</sup> Since the start of the war, the FO had been a significant consumer of intelligence from SIS, GC&CS and its usual diplomatic channels. Following the death of Sir Hugh Sinclair in November 1939, the department sought to maintain a tight handle on this flow of information, by installing Sinclair's deputy Col. (later Major-General) Stewart Menzies, as 'C' over the alternatives proposed by the service ministries.<sup>67</sup> In August 1940, after claims SIS was failing to provide intelligence to departments, Menzies met Halifax to discuss dissemination. While Halifax acknowledged that much of the day-to-day intelligence produced was of little value, Halifax, owing to similar material going to Churchill, wanted to see 'any reports of particular interest or importance' to stop Churchill producing some 'titbit of information at the Cabinet culled from an S.I.S. report which the Foreign Secretary had never heard of'.<sup>68</sup> As a result, throughout the war Menzies kept the Foreign Secretary, PUS and senior FO officials informed of any significant intelligence.

The management of a sometimes fractious intelligence community placed an additional burden on an overworked Eden, who, from November 1942, was appointed Leader of the House of Commons, in addition to attending the War Cabinet, Defence Committee and other important bodies. The strained and even acrimonious relationship between the FO, SIS and SOE over control of Britain's strategy for sabotage and subversion did little to ease the burden. In many accounts of SOE, Eden and FO officials are painted as villains. SOE's executive head, Sir Colin Gubbins, never forgot how 'Eden once kept him standing at attention for several minutes ... while the Foreign Secretary – velvet-slipped feet on the desk – read a novel'.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, under intense pressure, the Foreign Secretary was famously prone to 'tantrums' and behaved – as one Principle Private Secretary later recorded in his diary – 'like a child', though Eden's temper quickly subsided and 'invariably followed by an access of such kindness'.<sup>70</sup> Cadogan noted that Eden was often in 'a flap' and 'jumpy', but recalled, having re-read his diary, that no Foreign Secretary excelled Eden 'in finesse ... or in knowledge of foreign affairs'.<sup>71</sup> Eden's relationship with the Ministers of Economic Warfare responsible for SOE – Dalton until February 1942 and Lord Selborne (1942–1945) – was one source of antagonism. While Eden maintained a lengthy, if strained, correspondence with Selborne, his relationship with Dalton was often stormy. Personalities were an important factor, but the single most contentious point was the natural difference in outlook between the FO and SOE, with the latter's plans to disrupt the Axis war effort in occupied and neutral countries clashing with Britain's diplomats. Nonetheless, Eden saw SOE as an important arm of wartime strategy, telling the Defence Committee in September 1943 that SOE's operations were important, 'judging that on balance the results ... outweighed the occasional political difficulties'.<sup>72</sup> Eden's temperamental, often vain, personality features heavily in his biographies, yet the Foreign Secretary could also act with kindness towards his staff, colleagues and even members of SOE. For example, in 1944, Christopher 'Monty' Woodhouse visited Eden's country home, Binderton, to discuss Balkan strategy.<sup>73</sup> Eden expressed his 'entire faith' in Woodhouse, writing of his 'excellent work', and pushing Selborne to give him a promotion.<sup>74</sup> Eden would often be dragged into the political fallout from intelligence activities, something that inevitably brought Churchill into FO affairs, fuelling Eden's annoyance. In October 1942, for example, an aircraft carrying Free French officer Louis Daniélou (using the *nom de guerre* 'Clamorgan') crashed in neutral Spain carrying documents revealing SOE operations, an event brought to Churchill's attention by his intelligence advisor, Desmond Morton.<sup>75</sup> The matter caught Eden unaware; during a face-to-face meeting with Churchill, Eden said he knew nothing,

blaming the matter on Morton – a man who Eden later wished ‘at the bottom of the sea’ – and his ‘extravagant language’.<sup>76</sup>

GC&CS’s intercepts also gave Eden and the FO important insights into Axis activities, even if they sometimes exacerbated tensions in the relationship with Churchill. Throughout the war, both men remained close allies; Eden was closer to Churchill than any other Minister. ‘You are my war machine’, Churchill told Eden, ‘I simply couldn’t replace you’.<sup>77</sup> Despite the close bond, there were tensions especially over Downing Street’s repeated interference in the handling of foreign policy – a problem not just restricted, as Eden’s successors would realise, to the Churchill-Eden relationship.<sup>78</sup> In September 1941, having seen a series of messages from the Italian minister to Afghanistan, regarding a British request to expel Germans from the country, Churchill wanted action, explaining to Eden that, in his view, Britain had ‘an open door which you should force at the earliest moment’.<sup>79</sup> Cadogan wrote:

A. in a flap on the telephone ... It’s hopeless conducting business like this. A. sees no papers, he is dragged up to London for 24 hours, dines with P.M. They both happen to see an intercept which makes it look as if we might get Germans out of Afghanistan. So they get on the hop, and I get messages to say that it must be done *at once*. But there are considerations of which they are blissfully ignorant, poor children.<sup>80</sup>

While certainly a cause of tension with Downing Street, intelligence provided the Foreign Secretary and his FO official’s clear insights into German intentions, especially towards the Balkans and Soviet Union. From February 1941, Eden and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir John Dill, were sent on a lengthy, and ultimately futile, Cabinet-backed diplomatic and military mission, travelling to Cairo, Athens, Ankara and Belgrade, to build up an anti-Axis Balkan bloc, driven by intelligence assessments of German plans – with intelligence often kept out of accounts of Eden’s mission. On 1 January 1941, reporting from human intelligence (HUMINT) and SIGINT forecast German moves against Greece in the spring of 1941, citing a German military build-up in neighbouring Romania.<sup>81</sup> Just days after reading the intelligence, Eden told Churchill that Germany was ‘pressing forward her preparations in the Balkans with a view to an ultimate descent on Greece’, suggesting March as the likely start of operations and pushing for British assistance.<sup>82</sup> The Greek government initially rejected an offer from Britain to send military support, fearing the move would provoke Germany, but the death of Prime Minister, Ioannis Metaxas, and his replacement by a pro-British government led the Greeks to ask for help, resulting in a meeting of the Cabinet’s Defence Committee on 10 February. Eden believed the best way to prevent the collapse of Britain’s interests would be to provide ‘effective help’ to Athens, ensuring that Turkey would also be in a position to help, with Churchill arguing that it would be ‘wrong to abandon’ the Greeks, and the Defence Committee agreeing that a sizeable British force should be dispatched, proposing that Eden and Dill fly to the Middle East and Balkans to pave the way.<sup>83</sup>

The bleak prospects facing the Balkan bloc were presented to Ministers the following day by Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) Major-General Francis Davidson; assessments showed a German buildup of 30 divisions, including 5 armored, of which 23 were in place. German forces would be in a position to cross the Greek frontier by early March and would be in Athens within a week.<sup>84</sup> Faced with the intelligence, Eden and Dill’s mission suddenly became a race against time to shore up a Balkan bloc before Germany and her allies struck, Eden concluding ‘we should do everything in our power to bring the fullest measure of help to the Greeks at the earliest possible moment’.<sup>85</sup> Meeting the Greek King, politicians and military figures in Athens, Eden cited the intelligence though disguising the actual source. ‘The Germans had progressed far in the assembling of a striking force in Romania’, he revealed, consisting of ‘at least 23 divisions, 3 of which were armored and two motorised, together with ... 400 to 500 aircraft’. German preparations in Bulgaria were well advanced, with Germany likely to try and pressure Greece into backing down or carry out an all-out attack.<sup>86</sup> During his mission, Eden was kept informed of

decision making in London, including often vague summaries of the latest intelligence from Downing Street. On 1 March, the Prime Minister wrote, 'The obvious German move is to overrun Bulgaria, further to intimidate Turkey by threat of air attacks, force Greece out of the war, and then turn on Yugoslavia, compelling her to obey'.<sup>87</sup> By the middle of the month, Churchill was writing to Eden, now in Cairo, of the German decision to withdraw troops from Rhodes, citing 'A source, of which you are aware'.<sup>88</sup> Other telegrams abased on Churchill's 'reading of the Intelligence' followed, even if this second hand reporting proved far from ideal.<sup>89</sup> A final decision to support Greece was taken by the Cabinet on 7 March, with intelligence suggesting the Germans were unlikely to strike before the end of the month.<sup>90</sup> Intelligence may have hastened Eden's efforts to shore up the Balkan bloc, yet the plan failed dismally. With Turkey unwilling to help and the Yugoslav government ill-equipped, Greece received token British support. When German forces attacked in early April, Belgrade and Athens quickly fell resulting in the hasty withdrawal of British and Commonwealth forces, leaving the Greece and the Balkans under Axis occupation.

Eden and the FO also used SIGINT to warn Moscow of the coming German invasion of the Soviet Union, codenamed Operation Barbarossa. By the spring of 1941, despite rumours of an impending attack, the JIC pointed to growing diplomatic and economic ties between Berlin and Moscow, ruling out the prospect of war in the short-term.<sup>91</sup> This position started to change; in early June, the committee pointed to Germany's aim of removing 'powerful Soviet forces' from their Eastern frontier – an aim that could not, the JIC admitted, be 'achieved without war'.<sup>92</sup> Eden informed the War Cabinet that German troop and air concentrations against Russia were increasingly 'in great haste'.<sup>93</sup> Writing to Churchill, Eden expanded: 'All the information points to German concentrations against Russia being pressed with utmost speed and vigour ... I see in intelligence reports that the Germans are said to have withdrawn a part of their fighter defence force from northern France', pushing for greater RAF activity over Europe.<sup>94</sup> Inside the FO, Deputy Under-Secretary Sir Orme Sargent suggested that Germany's military build-up was part of a war of nerves designed to force concessions, or, at worst, a military gamble designed to solve the 'Russian problem'. The destruction of a sizeable portion of the Red Army would allow Hitler to 'demobilise a considerable portion of his army and thus relieve the labour shortage ... hampering German industry'.<sup>95</sup> Both Cadogan and Eden supported Sargent's view, with the JIC's assessment and ULTRA evidence informing Eden's attempt to tell Soviet Ambassador to London Ivan Maisky of the threat. On the evening of 13 June, Eden, joined by the JIC's chair Victor Cavendish Bentinck, met Maisky at the FO. 'I told the Ambassador', Eden told Britain's Embassy in Moscow:

... that we had been giving careful consideration to the information which had reached us from many quarters of German concentrations against Russia. These reports had increased in significance in the last forty-eight hours. I had already given the Ambassador some indication of our information, and, after consultation with the Prime Minister, I had now a further communication to make him. ... I did not wish to attempt to prophesy as to what might be the purpose of these concentrations, yet there are certain obvious possibilities. They might be for the purpose of a war of nerves, or they might be for the purpose of an attack on Russia.<sup>96</sup>

Cavendish Bentinck recalled talking to the Soviet Ambassador for twenty minutes, even suggesting the attack 'would take place either on 22 or 29 June and that I would put my money on the 22nd'.<sup>97</sup> Maisky remained sceptical of the warnings, telling Eden of his confidence that Germany would not attack, though this self-assurance was quickly demolished during a briefing from Cadogan 3 days later, during which the PUS, armed with a map showing German military concentrations, gave 'particulars' of the build-up.<sup>98</sup> Britain's efforts to warn Moscow of the impending German attack proved futile, thanks to Moscow's continuing scepticism and suspicions that talk of a German offensive were part of a strategy to drive a wedge between the Moscow-Berlin alliance beginning with the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, leading to almost complete surprise when Barbarossa was launched on 22 June.

For all the talk of ULTRA, the FO received little military SIGINT compared with the service departments, with knowledge of GC&CS's success against Enigma restricted to a small circle. Initially, only the PUS and the FO's chair of the JIC knew.<sup>99</sup> Before the invasion of Norway in the spring of 1940, an estimated thirty people across government – the Prime Minister, a select few in the War Cabinet, the Chiefs of Staff and advisors – had been indoctrinated.<sup>100</sup> Cadogan was one of them; in January 1941 he was given a personal tour of Bletchley Park, writing in his diary 'Very interesting – I should like to spend a week there so as to try and understand it. [A] charming young Cambridge professor of Geometry – [Gordon] Welchman did his best with me. A good show, I think.'<sup>101</sup> On a practical level, there was little need for Enigma decrypts in the FO; the diplomats were focused on winning the 'diplomatic war' not the military one, though Eden did receive summaries of ULTRA based on discussions between the Chiefs of Staff and JIC, sent by Cavendish Bentinck.<sup>102</sup> The department remained the main beneficiary of GC&CS's diplomatic reporting, known as 'Blue Jackets' (or BJs) thanks to their distinctive covers. In 1939, diplomatic code-breaking had moved with the rest of GC&CS to Bletchley Park, but in 1942 work on diplomatic and commercial codes moved back to the heart of London at Berkeley Street, Mayfair, under Alistair Denniston, GC&CS's interwar head and now its Deputy Director (Civil), eventually expanding to over 250 staff.

As with SIS's 'CX' reports, responsibility for receiving and distributing GC&CS's products lay with the PUS and their Private Secretaries, acting as a filter for the Secretary of State. While Cadogan never had a passion for intelligence, even sharing his 'misgivings about "Secret" Reports' in 1939<sup>103</sup>, the PUS and his staff were responsible for managing intelligence; Harry Hopkinson, Cadogan's Private Secretary, liaised with the agencies, being replaced by Peter Loxley in June 1941, who remained Cadogan's Private Secretary and an important figure coordinating the FO's relationship with the intelligence services, until his death in a plane crash in 1945.<sup>104</sup> In June 1943, Loxley set out the role of Private Secretary in dealing with diplomatic intercepts. Material produced by Berkeley Street's diplomatic section was sent to him to sift.<sup>105</sup> For Patrick Reilly, who experienced first-hand the pressures Loxley was under while working as Private Secretary to Menzies (1942–1943), the workload was 'frightening':

... To support him he had only John Addis ... and Sir Godfrey Thomas, Private Secretary to the Duke of Gloucester ... In addition there was a devoted team of three supporting women, led by the wise and admirable Mrs Watts, who had ruled us all so efficiently in the League of Nations Delegation ... Over this small band Peter Loxley, although in indifferent health, presided with the calm and cheerful competence and authority which made his tragic death early in 1945 such a grievous loss to the Service.<sup>106</sup>

The volume of diplomatic material was significant; adding to the ever-increasing German military material, Berkeley Street read Italian, Japanese, Vichy (and Free) French traffic and eventually German diplomatic ciphers, in addition to those of neutrals including Turkey, Portugal, Spain, Ireland and Switzerland and others. The ciphers of allies in Latin America (especially Brazil) as well as the Belgians, Chinese, Greeks and Poles were also attacked.<sup>107</sup>

Japanese decodes were especially important in shaping British policy in the Far-East, supporting Eden and the FO's efforts to deter a Japanese attack against Britain's Far-Eastern possessions. Since early 1941, thanks to help from American codebreakers, GC&CS had been able to read high-level diplomatic messages from Japan's diplomatic cypher, Purple.<sup>108</sup> These reports gave the British government important indications of tensions with Tokyo, which grew in intensity after a 'war scare' in February 1941, when phone tapping against the Japanese Embassy in London picked up warnings to '*leave London at sudden notice*'.<sup>109</sup> Cadogan noted in his diary that the intelligence looked 'very ominous'. Eden wrote to Churchill: 'You should see these'.<sup>110</sup> More bad news followed; the next day, after talks at in the Admiralty, Cadogan noted 'more very bad-looking Jap telephone conversations, from which it appears they have decided to attack us. A. was seeing Hopkins and I went in and guardedly gave them the news'.<sup>111</sup> Eden read the transcripts, telling the War Cabinet:

... on the previous day most secret information had been received that Japan had warned her Embassy staff in London to reduce their contacts with the British authorities to a minimum, and be prepared to leave the country at short notice. He had sent a telegram to Washington containing this information.

Acting on this intelligence, Eden proposed to see the Japanese Ambassador, Shigemitsu, and 'give him a frank review of the present position as we saw it', despite the risk to intelligence sources.<sup>112</sup> In his diary, Eden wrote the intelligence 'seems to show Jap preparations for some coup, perhaps against us'.<sup>113</sup> Seeing Shigemitsu, Eden spoke 'slowly from a brief, so that he might take it all down. He appeared taken aback at what I had said [and] doubted whether Tokyo would like The [sic] message. He told R.A.B. [Butler] later that I had been very firm. I only hope it has some effect ... I am a bit worried about it, I admit'.<sup>114</sup> Eden returned to the passage in September 1941, adding: 'Many months afterwards we learnt that ... warning given ... only caused them to change their plans – we do not know what exactly they were planning, only that it was against us'.<sup>115</sup> It is uncertain whether Eden's entry was inspired by more Japanese intercepts, as the nature of the archive yields little on what the Foreign Secretary saw day-to-day, but it is hard to believe that such information, often sent to Churchill, would not have reached Eden's desk, especially given the Foreign Secretary's aim of deterring a Japanese assault in the Far-East.

In late 1941, Loxley wrote to Menzies that 'the material we receive from B.J.'s and other secret sources about the Far-East is so important these days', and copies of diplomatic intercepts were distributed widely.<sup>116</sup> Three sets went to the FO; as Loxley's successor Tom Bromley explained, 'One of these sets is kept on file by my secretaries (the most important being shown direct to Sir. A. Cadogan and the Secretary of State for their immediate information)'.<sup>117</sup> Copies were also sent to the FO's Political Intelligence Department (PID – later renamed the Foreign Office Research Department), the Admiralty, War Office, Colonial Office, India Office, Air Ministry, Cabinet Secretary and other parts of Whitehall.<sup>118</sup> The problem for Ministers, officials and the military was that the intercepts were often open to interpretation. In July 1941, following an Imperial Conference, GC&CS decrypted a message from Tokyo to Japan's Berlin Embassy suggesting that that Tokyo would strike southwards against French Indochina, leaving options for a strike into Eastern Siberia.<sup>119</sup> Shortly afterwards, in a memorandum prepared for the War Cabinet, Eden told colleagues of the 'sure information to the effect that the Japanese Government, while preparing for all eventualities in Eastern Siberia, do not intend to take action there in the immediate future; but that they have decided to acquire *points d'appui* in Indo-China in order to increase pressure upon Great Britain and the United States', possibly through diplomatic means, though 'force' remained an option. This information could not be 'utilized publicly without compromising its source', with Eden presenting a series of options for British policy, ranging from economic to political sanctions and the improvement of defences in British-held Malaya.<sup>120</sup> Later in the month, BJs showed that Japan had decided to 'seize bases in Indo-China – by the 20th' threatening Malaya. On 15 July, during a meeting in Downing Street, Eden and Cadogan met with Churchill, Menzies and the First Sea Lord to discuss the response, with Cadogan noting 'P.M. approved our proposed action – publicity, and consultation with U.S. ... if and when Jap move becomes patent'.<sup>121</sup> British policy, guided by the intelligence, aimed to deter Japanese expansion with measured responses to Tokyo's belligerency, even if Churchill and others thought an attack highly unlikely, rejecting Eden's plans to coordinate defence with the Dutch East-Indies. During Cabinet on 21 July, Eden again used intelligence ('we know that the Japanese have it in mind ... seize bases in Indo-China, which can only be a threat to Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, we cannot hesitate longer') to give a political commitment to the Dutch.<sup>122</sup> Churchill balked at the move, Cadogan writing that the Prime Minister was 'frightened of nothing but Japan ... tiresome discussion. A. fought him and, of course, no support'.<sup>123</sup> Beyond tensions in the Far-East, diplomatic intercepts also revealed contacts between members of Churchill's inner circle and the Japanese Embassy in London in September 1941, prompting Churchill to ask Eden for 'information'. Five individuals were in contact with the Embassy, replied Eden, including William Forbes-Sempill, 19th Lord Sempill, a pioneer inter-war

aviator with links to Japanese officials, currently employed at the Admiralty, despite security concerns since the 1920s. Eden went on to act as a conduit for Downing Street in sending the results of MI5 bugging of Sempill's telephone, revealing clandestine contacts with Japanese officials, resulting in efforts to remove Sempill's access to secret information.<sup>124</sup> Even in late 1941, the BJs reaching Whitehall were often ambiguous; while war seemed one option, the intercepts also gave details of Japan's diplomatic approach to the United States, luring policymakers into a false sense of security. It was only by December 1941 that Japan's true intentions began to emerge.

GC&CS's diplomatic reporting remained an important source of information throughout the war. By mid-1943, the serial numbers of circulated decrypts reached one hundred thousand and the FO received a monthly average of eight-hundred to one-thousand messages. From April to September 1944, for example, Berkeley Street produced over 6,700 reports, averaging over 1,000 each month.<sup>125</sup> In May 1944, roughly 21% of all reports were Japanese, 12% German and 13% Vichy (and Free) French. In June alone 22% of intercepts were Japanese, with 16% coming from Free and Vichy French ciphers. Roughly 8 to 10% were Portuguese, while around 8% came from Turkish traffic, proving useful in interpreting Ankara's policy as a neutral.<sup>126</sup> Loxley and his staff sifted the latest intelligence, marking out the most important for the relevant heads of department. Circulation was fairly wide; in 1945, Bromley reported that papers were delivered to departments in red boxes by messenger and that nearly all departments saw intercepts.<sup>127</sup> In 1943, Colonel Alfred McCormack, then deputy head of the US Army's Special Branch, responsible for the War Department's SIGINT, reported to Washington, that everything 'goes to [the] Foreign Office ... what impressed us was the pains that are taken to see that all information gets out to those who can make use of it'.<sup>128</sup> Other than circulating relevant intelligence around the Foreign Office, the PUS's Private Secretary also had the task of reading entire sets of 'flimsies' and selecting the 'most interesting' for Cadogan, who submitted 'any which he thinks are of sufficient importance to our Secretary of State'.<sup>129</sup>

The impact of this intelligence is hard to assess. Unlike military reporting which had a clear cause and effect, diplomatic intelligence contributed to 'long-term' knowledge.<sup>130</sup> Reporting to Washington, McCormack said it was 'impossible to exaggerate how many surprises you would get from looking at these records'.<sup>131</sup> For all the difficulties in judging impact, the FO and Eden certainly valued the information. In October 1942, following Berkeley Street's first break into Germany's diplomatic cipher, Eden sent a congratulatory message:

It is a very remarkable achievement on the part of the Code and Cypher School to have broken this cypher. I have heard something of the months, and indeed years, of labour which members of the School have put into their task and I am more than delighted to know that their efforts have at last been rewarded with the success which they deserved. Will you please convey my warmest congratulations and thanks to all concerned?<sup>132</sup>

Cadogan was equally impressed, 'I suppose the wizards who do these things (and have already done so much in this ...) make a big own individual contribution to the winning of the war as anyone else'.<sup>133</sup> The letter was well received; Menzies replied that GC&CS's German section was 'highly gratified'.<sup>134</sup> By 1943, showing his appreciation for Berkeley Street's work, Eden gave Denniston a dinner at the Café Royal in central London, followed by tickets for a show.<sup>135</sup> In June 1944, Loxley pressed for another congratulatory message for Berkeley Street after the interception of a message from Japan's Ambassador in Berlin, General Oshima Hiroshi, detailing discussions with Hitler, setting out his views on the forthcoming allied invasion of Europe. According to Oshima, Hitler believed the Allies would launch diversionary raids, before a cross-channel assault in Normandy or Brittany. The 'real second front' would soon follow in the Pas-de-Calais, showing that Hitler, and German intelligence, had been fooled by Allied deception. 'GERMANY would like nothing better than to be given an opportunity of coming to blows with ... the enemy as soon as possible', he confidently told Oshima.<sup>136</sup> Loxley wrote that Denniston's

team provided a 'first class service'. A follow up message, drafted and sent by Cadogan with Eden's blessing, acknowledged the importance of the work ('the material which they handle is frequently of the greatest interest and importance and we are greatly indebted to them both for the excellence of their translations and for the speed which they furnish them') and conveyed the Foreign Secretary's 'warm congratulations'.<sup>137</sup>

Releases confirm the educational role of diplomatic reporting, with very few actions resulting from the BJs handed to diplomats. In part, this seems to stem from attempts to protect the source. In July 1943, referring to the use of diplomatic intelligence, Loxley explained that BJs would only be used as the basis for action in the 'rarest possible cases' and only if the information could be ascribed to a 'completely different source'.<sup>138</sup> In many cases, Eden was shown the text of intercepts initialling them or scribbling short comments. In January 1943, for example, the Foreign Secretary saw a Turkish diplomatic intercept reporting that President Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill were meeting at an undisclosed location.<sup>139</sup> Only in a few cases was the information actionable; in June 1942, GC&CS provided the FO with information that the Spanish Foreign Minister, Ramón Serrano Suñer, was to meet his Italian counterpart (and Eden's long-term nemesis) Count Galeazzo Ciano, near Leghorn. In a letter to the Chief of the Air Staff, Cadogan said Eden wanted the meeting 'warming up' and asked whether anything could be done; Portal replied that aircraft flying from Malta would be out of effective range, and that British aircraft were already 'fully engaged on a vitally important operation'.<sup>140</sup> A year later, following a bombing raid on the German V-Weapons facility at Peenemunde, Eden instructed Cadogan to send Portal a copy of an Oshima message suggesting that 'the damage had been in some degree repaired and that work had been resumed'.<sup>141</sup> The flow of diplomatic intelligence also gave Eden, Cadogan and a select few in the FO a unique window into the work of Britain's diplomatic missions; in October 1943, German diplomatic intercepts revealed Vice-Consul John Whitfield, attached to Britain's Embassy in Madrid, believed the Western allies need to 'get to BERLIN before the Russians' – an anti-Soviet statement concerning FO officials trying to protect the Anglo-Soviet alliance.<sup>142</sup> The next month, reports from Japan's Ambassador to Moscow suggested that Britain's flamboyant Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr had personally insulted Foreign Minister Molotov during a reception: 'KERR had fallen over. Plates and glasses were laying in confusion and it was evident that something must have happened between MOLOTOFF and KERR, who were arguing violently together ... MOLOTOFF had turned livid'.<sup>143</sup> The Turkish Embassy reported that Kerr had been drunk, prompting London to ask for clarification from diplomats in Moscow.<sup>144</sup> During the war, over 72,000 reports were circulated to the FO, offering an important window into the foreign affairs of Britain's enemies, neutrals and allies.<sup>145</sup> Diplomatic reporting gave the FO behind-the-scenes access to the views of neutrals, while the high-level Japanese traffic, especially Oshima's reports, provided up-to-date information on all aspects of Axis military and political thinking, helping to win the war against the Axis.

Eden's biographers shed little light on the subject of intelligence before the events of 1956, shaping our understanding of Eden as an intelligence consumer. Nonetheless, this article suggests that during his early career, Eden was a diligent reader of intelligence, often interpreting ambiguous reports to shape British diplomacy. In effect, Eden, Cadogan, and other senior FO officials (as in the case of other Secretaries of State) assessed the intelligence themselves, far from easy in the absence of an experienced central intelligence staff. Meeting for the first time in July 1936, the JIC, strengthened by an assessments staff, over time grew to become an 'integral part' of Britain's war effort supporting 'decision making in all aspects of war planning'. The very survival of the JIC marked the beginnings of intelligence professionalisation, but historians must not anachronistically see the JIC as playing a central role in all aspects of wartime intelligence, nor see policymakers as just recipients of carefully worded assessments.<sup>146</sup> Even in the 1950s, when the JIC was placed in the Cabinet Office, providing strategic assessments to Ministers and senior officials, much of SIS's reporting bypassed the JIC with intelligence sent direct to 'the customer'. In wartime, the practice remained the same. In Downing Street, Churchill became his own

intelligence assessor, reading a range of decrypts selected by Menzies, with mixed results.<sup>147</sup> In the FO, the interpretation of 'CX Reports' and diplomatic flimsies was left to the political departments, PUS or Secretary of State. As the experiences of Lord Curzon and Austen Chamberlain show, the use of intelligence in these circumstances could be hit and miss. Yet, Eden's grasp of the intelligence – as well as those of his FO officials – proved remarkable, becoming a gifted reader of the multiplicity of information moving across his desk, integrating secret intelligence into government decision making, while becoming a supporter of foreign intelligence gathering. Like other Secretaries of State, Eden was largely divorced from the day-to-day details of intelligence work, but regularly saw the products of GC&CS and SIS's efforts. From Mussolini's inter-war foreign policy to German wartime decision making and Japanese policy in the Far East, intelligence gave Eden and the FO important insights into the diplomatic battle against the Axis, even if much of the diplomatic intelligence was not actionable. Eden's case also highlights the role of intelligence in the FO-Downing Street relationship, exacerbating and already fractious relationship at times over the conduct of foreign policy. For Eden, intelligence was a double-edged sword, giving unrivalled insights into the policies of enemies, allies and neutrals alike until the end of war in August 1945, but also offering Churchill the opportunity to encroach on Eden's ministerial brief. In this respect, Eden's experience appears to be shared by other Secretaries of State who have suffered from the unwanted attention of Downing Street. In looking at Eden and intelligence, this article suggests that the study of Foreign Secretaries and intelligence is important in understanding how foreign policy is crafted. It also begins to fill a significant gap in the literature on Eden, looking at his relationship with British intelligence. The picture presented so far is that Eden and his officials used intelligence to good effect in crafting British foreign policy when 'Facing the Dictators'.

## Notes

1. Avi Shlaim, Peter Jones, Keith Sainsbury (eds.), *British Foreign Secretaries Since 1945* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1976), 15. On the position of the Foreign Secretary, see also Lord Strang, *The Foreign Office* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), 152.
2. For examples, see Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (London: Allen Lane, 2018). GC&CS was an amalgamation of the Admiralty's Room 40 and Army's MI1(b).
3. Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 146.
4. Detail from James Bruce, "'The Most Important Branch of Our Confidential Work": The Government Code and Cipher School, 1919–1927' (postgraduate dissertation, University of Salford, Salford, October 2009), 15. Keith Jeffery (ed.), 'The Government Code and Cypher School: A Memorandum by Lord Curzon', *Intelligence and National Security* 1/3 (1986), 454–8. See also Christopher Andrew, 'Secret Intelligence and British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939' in Christopher Andrew and Jeremy Noakes (eds.), *Intelligence and International Relations, 1900–1945* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1987), 16.
5. References to The National Archives (TNA) Unless Otherwise Stated: CAB 301/133, 'The Secret Intelligence Service: Report of Enquiry by Sir Horace Seymour, June 1952', 12. Intelligence Services Act 1994, original as enacted, [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/13/pdfs/ukpga\\_19940013\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/13/pdfs/ukpga_19940013_en.pdf) (accessed 31 January 2019). See also, *National Intelligence Machinery*, November 2010, 16–8, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/61808/nim-november2010.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61808/nim-november2010.pdf) (accessed 11 June 2019).
6. Christopher Andrew, 'Intelligence, International Relations and "Under-Theorisation"', *Intelligence and National Security*, 19(2) (2004), 173.
7. See Richard Smith, '1968 and all that: The Creation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office', *History of Government Blog*, 17 October 2018, <https://history.blog.gov.uk/2018/10/17/1968-and-all-that-the-creation-of-the-foreign-commonwealth-office/> (accessed 13 February 2019).
8. David Owen, *Time to Declare* (London: Michael Joseph, 1991), 343.
9. *Ibid.*, 348. On IRD's Disbandment I am Thankful to Jane Goddard-Crawley for Access to 'The Dissolution of the Information Research Department', (MA dissertation, University of Salford), 2016.
10. Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty* (London: Pan Macmillan, 1995), 349. On Gordievsky, read Ben Macintyre, *The Spy and Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War* (London: Viking, 2018).
11. BBC 2: The Great Offices of State, Part 2: The Palace of Dreams', aired 3 March 2011



12. On intelligence and Bevin, see Daniel W.B. Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments, 1945–1951: An uneasy relationship?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
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16. On PUSD, read 'Introduction' by Gill Bennett, *From World War to Cold War: Records of the Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary's Department, 1939–1951*, 1–3 and Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments, 1945–51*, 144–5, footnote 88.
17. Lord Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 397–8.
18. See Philip H. J. Davies, *The British Secret Services, Vol. 12* (Oxford: ABC-Clio Ltd., 1996), xxi–xxii.
19. On Curzon, read Keith Jeffery and Alan Sharp, 'Lord Curzon and Secret Intelligence' in Andrew and Noakes (eds.), *Intelligence and International Relations, 1900–1945*, 103–26 and Andrew, *The Secret World*, 582–4.
20. Alan Judd, *The Quest for C: Mansfield Cumming and the founding of Secret Service* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 420.
21. Jeffery, *MI6*, 146.
22. See Victor Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear: The Anglo-Russian Intelligence Wars, 1917–1929* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 96.
23. Gill Bennett, *Churchill's Man of Mystery: Desmond Morton and the World of Intelligence* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 98. See also Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*.
24. Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938–1939* (London: Pimlico, 2001), 100–1. See also FO 1093/86, Jebb to Mounsey, 31 March 1939. In pressing cases, Cadogan explained 'I decide what the S. of S. (and the P.M.) sees' (*Ibid.*, Note by Cadogan, 31 March 1939).
25. On the Foreign Secretary–Downing Street relationship, read Nicholas Henderson, *Inside the Private Office: Memoirs of the Secretary to British Foreign Ministers* (Chicago, IL: Academy Chicago, 1987), 114.
26. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 7.
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28. See Anthony Adamthwaite, 'Introduction: The Foreign Office and Policy-Making', in John W. Young (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration, 1951–1955* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 12.
29. Churchill Archives Centre (CAC): Lawford papers, LWFD 4/1: 'Three Ministers'.
30. Gill Bennett, *Six Moments of Crisis: Inside British Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37.
31. Danny Steed, *British Strategy and Intelligence in the Suez Crisis* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 89. See also Tom Bower, *The Perfect English Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War, 1935–90* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), 189, W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis* (London: Sceptre, 1991), 109, 116, 325–6 and Cormac, *Disrupt and Deny*.
32. Percy Cradock, *Know Your Enemy: How the Joint Intelligence Committee Saw the World* (London: John Murray, 2002), 116. Lord Owen, 'The effect of Prime Minister Anthony Eden's illness on his decision-making during the Suez crisis', *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine* 98/6 (2005).
33. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 194 and Michael S. Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Vol. 1: From the approach of the Second World War to the Suez Crisis* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 382.
34. Eden's official biographer Robert Rhodes James and Thorpe briefly mention pre-war intelligence, while Rhodes James suggests that Eden was, in wartime, one of the inner circle who knew Britain's codebreakers had broken Germany's Enigma cypher. Thorpe's more recent study briefly refers to Eden's warnings to Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador to London, about Germany's impending invasion in June 1941. Elsewhere, Victor Rothwell argues that the 'most remarkable of Churchill's wartime actions ... towards Eden was not informing him of the full facts about the breaking of the German Enigma', linking with his overall assessment that Eden was of secondary importance to Churchill in crafting wartime diplomacy. Other studies by David Carleton and David Dutton give passing reference to Eden's relationship with Britain's wartime sabotage and subversion organisation, the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

For major studies of Eden, see Sidney Aster, *Anthony Eden* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1976), David Carleton, *Anthony Eden: A Biography* (London: Allen Lane, 1981), Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1986), Victor Rothwell, *Anthony Eden: A Political Biography, 1931–1957* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), David Dutton, *Anthony Eden: A Life and Reputation* (London: Arnold, 1997), D.R. Thorpe, *Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden First Earl Avon, 1897–1977* (London: Pimlico, 2004).

35. Avon Papers, Cadbury Research Library (CAD), Birmingham: AP 20/1/21, entry for 21 April 1941.
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37. H. Matthew Hefler, "'In the way": intelligence, Eden, and British foreign policy towards Italy, 1937–38', *Intelligence and National Security* (2018), 14; Ben Wheatley, *British Intelligence and Hitler's Empire in the Soviet Union, 1941–1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
38. Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London: Penguin, 2010), 309. Writing to Petrie, Eden wrote: 'The Service, and you yourself, can take legitimate pride in what has been achieved, and I am glad to have this opportunity of offering my congratulations, and good wishes for the future' (KV 4/87, Eden to Petrie, 7 July 1944).
39. Chamberlain papers, CAD: NC 7/11/30/46, Eden to Chamberlain, 12 December 1937.
40. FO 1093/193, 'The Secret Services: Inquiry by the Minister Without Portfolio', March 1940.
41. See Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, 2–3.
42. Read Wesley Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
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44. AIR 40/2102, P.S. to S of S. to C.A.S., 12 February 1936. On German airpower, read Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy*, 80–123. See also Earl Avon, *The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), 483–5.
45. CAB 24/260, C.42 (36), 'Germany', 3 February 1936. Read Ferris, 'Vansittart, intelligence and appeasement'.
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## Notes on contributor

*Dr. Dan Lomas* is author of *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments, 1945 – 1951* published by Manchester University Press (2016), and co-authored *Intelligence and Espionage: Secrets and Spies* (Routledge, 2019, with Dr. Christopher J. Murphy), teaching on intelligence and security issues at the University of Salford. His research looks at intelligence and policy making in Britain.