In recent years, the expansion of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office network into new countries has generated increasing interest in the role of the places and spaces where diplomacy is made, in the international outreach of the United Kingdom and in the interactions between state and non-state actors and initiatives in delivering foreign policy objectives. What has received perhaps less sustained attention is the impact of diplomatic departures in Britain and in the British diplomatic network on the rethinking of Britain’s influence and power (hard, soft and smart).

Considering a wide-range of diplomatic actors, and reflecting on the influence of the socio-economic and geopolitical dynamics of the host countries as well as the financial and political directions defined by the Foreign and Commonwealth office, this one-day conference reflects on the adaptability and resilience of Britain’s international networks. It assesses what characterises both British diplomacy and Britain as a diplomatic space, by looking at several types of departures:

- departures at times of crisis, when heads of mission resigned, were expelled or were reposted under pressure from the host government or were removed by the home government
- departures, in policy and style, which also occur in less dramatic circumstances, when a mission is relocated within the same country, or when British offices are expanded
- the establishment of multilateral missions and the pooling of resources, subsuming or redeploying specifically national offices

As the United Kingdom negotiates its new relationship with the European Union, this conference also seeks to bring diplomatic departures into historical perspective whilst assessing the contemporary dynamics at the heart of the actual and possible reorientations in British diplomacy.

Organised by CORPUS (UR UPJV 4295) and CREW (UR 4399), and with the support of the Institut universitaire de France

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Welcome

Introduction (Lauriane Simony & Mélanie Torrent)

Global Britain, Global reach? The history of a shifting network
Chair: Lauriane Simony, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3
Richard Smith, Principal Historian, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

10.30-11.00 Coffee break

Cultural diplomacy and diplomatic cultures: safeguarding Britain's influence beyond empire
Chair: Marie Ruiz, Université Picardie Jules Verne
Lauriane Simony, Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3
Cultural diplomacy in times of crisis: the British Council departure from Burma during the military dictatorship (1962-1966)

Mélanie Torrent, Université Picardie Jules Verne / IUF
Failing to ‘do a de Gaulle’? The break in Anglo-Algerian relations and the reformulation of Britain’s African policy after 1965

12.30–13.30 Lunch

Keynote lecture
Chair: Mélanie Torrent, Université Picardie Jules Verne / IUF
Britain and Africa: modern engagement in a changing world
Robert Dewar CMG, former UK diplomat & associate fellow, Chatham House

Departures and the management of Cold War politics
Chair: Alice Byrne, Aix-Marseille Université

Bent Boel, Aalborg University
Avoiding (unwanted) departures: British diplomats and Soviet Bloc dissidents during the Cold War

Lori McGuire, Université Paris 8
Farewell to North Vietnam: The Valedictory Despatches of Three British Consuls at the End of the Vietnam War

16.15-16.30 Tea break

Departure as re-engagement and re-deployment? Diplomatic challenges and assets in the “Brexit” transition
Chair: Amal El Founti, Université Picardie Jules Verne

Adrien Rodd, Université Versailles Saint Quentin / Sciences Po Saint Germain en Laye
British diplomatic re-engagement in the Pacific: More than just words?

Thibaud Harrois, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3
‘Global Britain’ and the EU: what role for non-member states in CFSP?

Amelia Hadfield, University of Surrey, Centre for Britain and Europe
Entente Cordiale Redux: The Impact of Brexit on British and French Foreign and Security Policy