

## British Institutions and Actors

Externally, the British government could appear a bureaucratic, institutional system creating a single, defined policy. Internally, however, this was a much less coherent process. As Young argues, ‘the Whitehall system sounds rational and tidy, but it does not prevent overlap, confusion and disagreement’.<sup>1</sup> The British government was actually several interlocking institutions of different departments which could have differing, sometimes competing, priorities, and did not always work in harmony; and, as well as formal departmental structures, personal and individual ties also mattered. This necessitated internal bargaining and negotiation before reaching decisions which became government policy. The British ideal of a distinction between politicians who made decisions and civil servants who supplied information and then followed policy did not entirely represent reality. Nonetheless, this was a bureaucratic system. British officials all worked within limits and a set of defined rules. General attitudes and assumptions were framed consensually, although policy in the sense of decisions on particular issues could still be subject to negotiation. The dynamics of decision-making—and therefore of policy—were fundamentally different from those in Kenya.

Institutions were made up of individuals, and the characteristics and experience of these individuals could influence decisions and planning. A 1978 report expressed the ideal of diplomacy: ‘the defence of our interests is mainly a matter of patient persuasion and skilful negotiation ... it is precisely because our power as an individual nation is diminished, while our interests remain global, that Britain’s future is more dependent than

ever on the skills of those who represent us abroad.<sup>2</sup> Those making policy towards Kenya were most commonly diplomats and civil servants rather than ministers, and tended to share similar backgrounds. Heclo and Wildavsky have argued that civil servants had a sense of joint community, describing this as Whitehall 'Village Life', so that 'despite department allegiances, all officials are part of a greater civil service society'.<sup>3</sup> These people owed their loyalty to the organisation of the civil service, and this encouraged a shared understanding of the British government and its interests.

Still, there could be differences of opinion and divergent viewpoints. These were particularly apparent in cases where departmental priorities diverged, but also occurred between individuals within departments. Nonetheless, this does not challenge the existence of a Whitehall official mind. As Self has argued about a different period, 'within the small and cohesive elite that decided this question of British foreign policy ... such tactical departmental disagreements were contained and resolved within the parameters defined by a set of more fundamental beliefs'.<sup>4</sup> Disagreements were kept within bounds and limits which, although generally not discussed, were widely known—Joll's 'unspoken assumptions'.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will explore the government departments which focused on Kenya, recognising that departmental interests were complicated by structural change, with the creation and reforming of departments. It will also analyse the civil servants who worked on Kenya, particularly noting the disputed importance attached to ideas of local knowledge and experience.

## POLITICIANS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

Multiple groups within Britain had a potential influence on foreign policy, including the prime minister, Cabinet, political parties, ministers, pressure groups, parliament and public opinion. In practice, however, Cabinet tended to agree to decisions; there has often been consensus between political parties, and rarely has foreign policy been such a public issue as domestic policy.<sup>6</sup> Regarding Kenya, there was ministerial and prime ministerial involvement at certain times, as well as parliamentary and public concern over some issues. British political interest in Kenya was most pronounced prior to independence when colonial policy was under scrutiny. After independence, ministers were less involved, as Kenya was typically less of a priority. However, on certain key issues ministers did become engaged once more, particularly concerning Asian immigration, as well

as military policy, Europeans and land.<sup>7</sup> Ministers were especially involved in formal meetings to determine aid and military agreements, and personal contact with British ministers was valued by leading Kenyans. In 1972, one British businessman recommended ‘that the visit of a senior Cabinet Minister, if not of the Prime Minister himself, would produce important results very quickly’.<sup>8</sup> Ministerial visits encouraged personal relations, and demonstrated that Britain attached value to Kenya.

However, during the 1960s and 1970s, most policy was directed and organised by the civil servants and government departments. The roles of civil servants and ministers were understood to be different: politicians were to design policy; civil servants, who were apolitical appointments remaining in office regardless of changes to government and thus meant to be impartial, were to implement it.<sup>9</sup> Feltham’s *Diplomatic Handbook*—intended ‘to provide a concise but comprehensive source of information’ for future diplomats—argued that ‘formulation of foreign policy ... is the task of the politician, while the management of international relations and the reconciliation of diverse foreign policy priorities is the task of the diplomat’.<sup>10</sup> Yet in practice, as has often been recognised, civil servants have a role as policy-makers rather than simply policy-implementers, active in designing and creating policies.<sup>11</sup> This was particularly true regarding Kenya, which was rarely a ministerial priority compared to concerns such as the American or European relationships. Ministers did not have the same depth or breadth of knowledge as civil servants, who built up experience and knowledge of foreign affairs over the course of their careers.

Recommendations were made at civil service level before being passed up the hierarchy of authority to head of department, Under-Secretary or minister where necessary.<sup>12</sup> Given the size of government ministries, ministers could not be appraised of all of the workings of their departments, and thus ‘the majority of internal politicizing occurs between civil servants rather than between civil servants and ministers’.<sup>13</sup> As Birch suggests, ‘there is a well-established hierarchy of decision-making, so that a principal knows what he can decide on his own account and what he must refer up’.<sup>14</sup> Civil servants were aware of how much autonomy they had and when they needed higher approval. They hoped to reach consensus, before ministerial level if possible, in a style labelled ‘bureaucratic accommodation’ by Jordan and Richardson.<sup>15</sup> Civil servants sought to avoid involving politicians in their disputes where possible: ‘I really do dislike sending you a series of nagging letters but there is yet another example before me of a difference of view between our two Departments which was not discussed

at senior official level before being put to your Secretary of State.’<sup>16</sup> On most concerns about Kenya there was substantial autonomy for decisions made at civil service level before seeking ministerial approval.

## OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS

In the 1960s, there was considerable institutional change in how the British government related to overseas countries. The move from colonial empire to Commonwealth, and thereafter ‘the British government’s disillusionment with, and scepticism about, the Commonwealth’,<sup>17</sup> affected the structure of policy-making. Britain’s empire had been such a large and important part of external policy that until the 1940s there were three offices devoted to it: the India Office, Dominions Office and Colonial Office (CO); the Foreign Office (FO) meanwhile dealt with the rest of the world. The Dominions Office became the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) in July 1947, with the India Office being disbanded a month later as India and Pakistan became independent and responsibility moved to the CRO.<sup>18</sup> Thereafter, British contact with former colonies moved from the CO to the CRO as territories became independent. Kenya had been within the remit of the CO since 1905, but at independence in December 1963 moved to CRO responsibility. The CRO had been intended for the small number of Dominions; and as Joe Garner, CRO Private Under-Secretary, noted, decolonisation was ‘an increased burden on the CRO for which it was not well prepared’.<sup>19</sup>

This encouraged the idea of merger between overseas departments. In 1962, Duncan Sandys became Secretary of State for both the CO and the CRO, the first time one person held both positions, although when Wilson became prime minister in 1964 he made two separate appointments. A key step towards amalgamation, despite its indecisiveness, was the report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas, or the Plowden Report, published in 1964. This highlighted the ‘different character’ of the Commonwealth connection, but simultaneously argued that ‘division of responsibility is becoming an anachronism’.<sup>20</sup> It therefore recommended creating a unified Diplomatic Service, bringing together the Foreign, Commonwealth and Trade Commission Services, and this was established on 1 January 1965.<sup>21</sup> In the longer term, Plowden argued, a CRO and FO ‘amalgamation ... must, in our view, be the ultimate aim. However, to take such a fundamental step now could be misinterpreted as implying a loss of

interest in the Commonwealth partnership'; the report thus 'hesitate[d]' to actually recommend immediate amalgamation.<sup>22</sup>

Although it had not been the Plowden Report's recommendation, Wilson's government increasingly favoured merger between the CO and the CRO. The Private Under-Secretaries of the departments, Garner of the CRO and Poynton of the CO, were the most powerful civil servants involved. Both valued the distinctive role of their own departments and were concerned for the careers of their staff. Poynton in particular 'fought the Colonial Office corner'.<sup>23</sup> Poynton's attitude influenced the pace of the merger—an interesting example of how a bureaucratic system could be affected by such personal considerations. Poynton recognised in 1964 that the CO 'is bound to shrink further and has no long-term future as a separate Department',<sup>24</sup> but wanted this to 'be described as a "merger" or "amalgamation" ... not be spoken of in terms of the Colonial Office being absorbed'.<sup>25</sup> Poynton hoped 'to avoid the impression that the Colonial Office is a piece of carrion which had better be buried as quickly as possible'.<sup>26</sup> The Colonial Secretary liked the title of 'Commonwealth Office' for the new department, and Garner liked that its acronym would continue with the Colonial Office 'CO'.<sup>27</sup> Decision-makers were trying to satisfy everyone and ensure a sense of collective civil service solidarity. Merger occurred on 1 August 1966, coinciding with Poynton's retirement, and Garner became Private Under-Secretary for the new Commonwealth Office.

Quickly thereafter, the new department's amalgamation with the FO was considered. By the mid-1960s, the differentiation of foreign from Commonwealth policy was being challenged. As Garner argued in 1967, 'no-one would pretend that our relations with Commonwealth countries are more friendly than our relations with the United States or, indeed, that our relations with African countries are more friendly than our relations with Western Europe'.<sup>28</sup> However, this did not mean that merger was necessarily popular. Colin Imray of the CRO recalls being 'horrified to learn in 1965 that the FO and the CRO were to be merged. My first reaction was to write to the Australian Public Service Board to ask if I could transfer to the Australian Government Service', although he did not do so.<sup>29</sup> Others, however, did not expect merger to 'be quite such a traumatic experience as some people fear'.<sup>30</sup> Plans were made for amalgamation in 1969 or 1970. Some joint internal departments were created and by March 1968, eighteen of seventy-two were combined.<sup>31</sup> But the timing was sped up by political events; at the resignation of George Brown as Foreign Secretary in March 1968, the prime minister announced that merger would

occur in October. Wilson argued that he had done so 'to make it clear that the decisive option in this matter had then been taken'.<sup>32</sup> More quickly than had been anticipated, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) was created in October 1968.

One issue arising from the mergers was the number of personnel transferred from the CO and the CRO. This was often seen as an FO absorption; Wallace has argued that the 'FCO was still, recognizably, the Foreign Office, absorbing other Departments and Services without losing its character'.<sup>33</sup> Leonard Allinson, originally from the CRO, recalled that 'everyone at the Foreign [and Commonwealth] Office is Foreign Office based and nobody in the Commonwealth Office sat in a senior position there for very long after the merger'.<sup>34</sup> That it is still typically referred to as the 'Foreign Office' rather than FCO is a sign of this primacy. Part of the rationale for the mergers was a reduction in staff numbers. In 1968, the merger committee hoped to 'cut out about ten of the 55 Departments'.<sup>35</sup> A CRO civil servant who worked on staffing at the time recalled that 'the pressure was to reduce CRO staff because it was believed, and I think it was true, that the CRO had been more lavishly staffed than the Foreign Office, certainly in some of the bigger missions'.<sup>36</sup> It was explicit policy that CRO rather than FO staff were more likely to lose their jobs due to merger; Lloyd notes that 'thirty who were considered not up to FCO work were given early retirement'.<sup>37</sup> As this makes clear, the FO staff were thought to be more qualified, with the CRO staff potentially 'not up to' it. One diplomat thought that 'most of the more capable CRO officers adapted quickly to Foreign Office realism'.<sup>38</sup> However, as this makes explicit, it was the CRO staff who had to adapt. There were indeed reductions: 'over one hundred posts have been saved in the first phase of the merger, in addition to the 398 previously saved at home since the unified Diplomatic Service was set up'.<sup>39</sup> The choice of language that the posts had been 'saved' was clearly intended to appeal to an external public and government concerned by staffing costs rather than those who worked within the departments, who would be unlikely to relish their posts being 'saved'. The movement of personnel through the offices is further discussed below in the section entitled 'Diplomatic personnel'.

## OTHER DEPARTMENTS

In the second half of the twentieth century, diplomacy increasingly involved other departments, as the divisions between domestic and foreign policy became less clear-cut.<sup>40</sup> Policies towards Kenya could affect and be

influenced by multiple departments. The three most significant were the Treasury, Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM). These departments had different and sometimes conflicting priorities. The Treasury was crucial, as it controlled the budgets of each department and thus had greatest oversight. Britain's economic weakness during these years meant a strict control of budgets. Wallace has described Treasury 'involvement [as] the most direct, the most ancient, and the least amenable to Foreign Office direction'.<sup>41</sup> Different departmental priorities were clear, as typically the Treasury wanted to restrict spending while other departments hoped for the maximum amount possible to finance their desired outcomes. This could lead to conflict, but Thain and Wright have highlighted that departments 'cannot allow relations to break down' as they needed to keep a good working relationship with the Treasury.<sup>42</sup> For the Treasury, Kenya was a very small part of the sum of their work, but control of the finance allocated to the country ensured that its role was crucial to foreign policy-making.

The MOD had a substantial interest in Kenya. During these two decades, defence finance was cut and perceptions of British defence policy shifted. The key decisions were to leave east of Suez and to focus on a 'smaller, professional armed forces, and a potent nuclear strike force' rather than a large conventional army.<sup>43</sup> The MOD was created in 1964 from the separate service departments.<sup>44</sup> There was also some overlap between foreign and defence policy-making: FCO had a Defence Department, while the MOD had 'its own "foreign service" in the 150 or so service attachés and their substantial staffs stationed in overseas missions in nearly seventy foreign countries'.<sup>45</sup> The role of these attachés was to ensure military relationships 'by exchanging military information, to do what can be done to sell military equipment of British manufacture, [and] to act as the immediate go-between in strategical planning'.<sup>46</sup> Defence and air attachés were stationed in Kenya and provided an alternative route of communication directly to the MOD.<sup>47</sup>

The ODM was the other crucial department regarding Kenya. It was created by the incoming Labour government in 1964, and, as Pollitt argues, was 'another example of the implicit theory that creation of a new, separate department could give a new emphasis and impetus within an established policy field'.<sup>48</sup> The creation of a new department recognised the increasing prominence of aid as 'a major activity of Government', a continuation of the idea that Britain had a responsibility and interest in development.<sup>49</sup> In 1970, the Conservative government merged the ODM

into the FCO as the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), before Labour re-established the ODM in 1974, though this time without a Cabinet minister.<sup>50</sup> Killick has argued that ‘the contrasts between the two situations were not in practice as dramatic as might have been expected’, but where the department was placed and whether its minister was in Cabinet was a symbolic statement about the primacy attached to the government’s aid programme.<sup>51</sup>

The key issue was the relationship between departments. Foreign policy-making was ‘a shared concern’ and often entailed seeking cooperation between departments to find agreement.<sup>52</sup> Communication between officials was vital and, according to one former Private Under-Secretary at the MOD, there were ‘major and complex negotiations to hammer out policies’.<sup>53</sup> In another context, Pieragostini has argued that how ‘departments interact as they seek to impose their images and protect their interests can be crucial for the nature of the decision that finally emerges’.<sup>54</sup> There could be friction and misunderstanding between departments with competing priorities and different views; as Allison has neatly summarised, ‘where you stand depends on where you sit’.<sup>55</sup> One revealing example was the unhappy relationship between High Commissioner Eric Norris and the ODA in 1971. Those in the ODA ‘were not altogether happy with the way British High Commission, Nairobi were handling our affairs’.<sup>56</sup> They were internally criticising because they felt their interests in Kenya were not being met. Norris, in March 1972, also voiced criticism about having ‘missed important opportunities’—implicitly blaming this on the ODA.<sup>57</sup> This was quite an opaque critique, but in the FCO there was

little doubt that his comments were directed mainly at the ODA. Relations between the High Commission and the ODA have not been happy recently and there have been some sharp exchanges ... In our view Sir E Norris has usually, but not always, had good grounds for his complaints and we have supported him as far as possible.<sup>58</sup>

There was clear tension between the High Commissioner and the ODA, with the FCO trying to play a moderating role. This also encouraged some further criticism from the FCO: ‘ODA have at times been obstinate and inflexible, and their processes are long-winded ... I find their tendency to dispute our *political* judgements and conclusions (sometimes enlisting Treasury aid against us) very irritating and time-wasting’.<sup>59</sup> The Planning Staff in the FCO used Norris’s critique to highlight their own problems



with ‘other Departments—particularly that Anti-Foreign Office, the Aliens Department of the Home Office—who strive perpetually to impress upon distinguished foreigners their equality of insignificance in British eyes’.<sup>60</sup> The implication was that the FCO should control foreign relations and its staff were guarding their departmental responsibility. Yet other departments were engaged as their interests—aid, finance, military, immigration—became involved and departments had to negotiate policies and accord priorities. Viewed up-close, the British government was not a single smoothly functioning organisation, but an assembly of different institutions in which differences in institutional culture or personal rivalries could produce considerable frictions.

### EAST AFRICA DEPARTMENT

Kenya’s place in Whitehall altered as departments merged (Table 2.1). Until independence, the country was covered by the CO’s East Africa Department. This department was wound up after Kenya became independent, as the last of Britain’s East African territories. The years 1964–1968 were those of greatest institutional flux and the changing departments which covered Kenya reflected this uncertainty about how exactly to organise relationships with former colonies. In 1964, responsibility for Kenya was split between two departments in the CRO, one economic and one political. These were united in 1966. Kenya was additionally included in the FO for ‘questions affecting the FO’ in the North and East Africa

**Table 2.1** Kenya’s place in the overseas offices

	<i>Colonial Office</i>	<i>Commonwealth Relations Office</i>	<i>Foreign Office</i>
To 1963	East Africa Department		
1964–1965		East Africa Economic Department; East Africa Political Department	North and East African Department
1966–1968	Commonwealth Office: East Africa Department		North and East African Department From 1967: West and Central African Department
1968 onwards	Foreign and Commonwealth Office: East Africa Department		

Department, curiously transferred in 1967 to the West and Central African Department.<sup>61</sup> With the creation of the FCO, the East Africa Department (EAD) was created.<sup>62</sup> The mergers thus simplified the policy-making process by limiting Kenya to one department and one set of people.

EAD was the most important London department where staff focused on Kenya. In 1969, EAD's responsibilities were described as 'political and bilateral economic relations with Burundi, Ethiopia, French Territory of the Afars and Issas (French Somaliland), Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda. Organisation of African Unity.'<sup>63</sup> The EAD also took the role of coordinating policy, and its staff viewed themselves as most knowledgeable, with some level of oversight. In 1976, 'we are monitoring carefully the activities of other Whitehall Departments ... in order to ensure that the importance of preserving good Anglo-Kenyan relations is well understood in the formulation of their policies'.<sup>64</sup> Clearly, EAD policy-makers thought that they knew best what policy should be, and were keen to ensure that others followed their advice.

Initially, seven Africa Departments were planned in the new FCO: East, West, North, Southern, Central, Rhodesia Political and Rhodesia Economic, with the latter two intended 'to merge with Southern Africa [Department] when [the] situation allows'.<sup>65</sup> This compares to plans for nine Middle East, South Asia and General departments, four for dependent territories, five for America and the Far East, six for Europe and the UN, as well as the non-geographical departments.<sup>66</sup> This indicates a reasonably large commitment to Africa, even allowing for the effect of the Rhodesian situation. This remained under review by the Post-Merger Committee, which aimed to reduce the number of departments. In 1969, they suggested that the 'ultimate aim should be to cover Africa by two main departments'.<sup>67</sup> This implies a reduced priority being accorded to Africa, but this recommendation was not implemented and EAD remained separate.

The head of department was the highest authority within EAD. The FCO prescribed that heads of department 'remain the pivotal officers of the organisation on whom its good functioning essentially depends'.<sup>68</sup> One former diplomat regarded head of department as 'one of the best jobs available ... senior enough to give responsibility for policy and advice to Foreign Office ministers while junior enough to keep one's feet firmly on the ground'.<sup>69</sup> During the years 1963–1980, there were twelve heads of EAD: one in the final CO years, three within various CRO and Commonwealth Office departments, three within FO and five in FCO (Table 2.2). All those within the FCO and several from the FO and CRO

Table 2.2 Heads of East Africa Department (CO, CRO, FO and FCO)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>Date of leaving</i>	<i>Immediately prior career</i>	<i>Immediately following career</i>	<i>Previous office experience</i>	<i>Previous African experience</i>
Fernley Douglas Webber	Head of CO East Africa Department	1958	1963	Establishment Officer	Deputy High Commissioner, Kuching	CO	
Walter Geoffrey Lamarque	Head of CRO East African Economic Department	1964	1965	Deputy High Commissioner, Eastern Nigeria	Seconded as Head of ODM East Africa Department	Indian Civil Service, CRO	Nigeria
Norman Aspin	Head of CRO East African Political Department	1963	1965	Deputy High Commissioner, Freetown	Counsellor and Director of British Information Services, Delhi	CRO, Treasury CO, CRO	Rhodesia, Sierra Leone
Michael Scott	Head of CRO, then Commonwealth Office, East African Political Department	1965	1968	Counsellor and Director of British Information Services, Delhi	Counsellor, Nicosia	CO, CRO	
Ronald Stratford Scrivener	Head of FO North East African Department	1963	1965	FO	Counsellor and Consul-General, Bangkok	FO	
Denis James Speares	Head of FO North African Department	1965	1968	Counsellor, Nicosia	Head of North African Department	FO	
Charles Martin Le Quesne	Head of FO West and Central African Department	1964	1968	Chargé d'Affaires and Consul-General, Bamako	Department Ambassador, Algiers	FO	Mali, Algeria

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>Date of leaving</i>	<i>Immediately prior career</i>	<i>Immediately following career</i>	<i>Previous office experience</i>	<i>Previous African experience</i>
Eric George Le Tocq	Head of FCO East African Department	1968	1972	Head of Atlantic Department	High Commissioner, Mbabane	CRO	Ghana, Uganda
Simon Yelverton Dawbarn	Head of FCO East African Department	1972	1973	Counsellor, Athens	Consul-General, Montreal	FO, Treasury, FCO	Algeria
Martin Kenneth Ewans	Head of FCO East African Department	1973	1977	Counsellor, Dar es Salaam	Deputy High Commissioner, New Delhi	CRO, FCO	Nigeria, Tanzania
Alan Gordon Munro	Head of FCO East African Department	1977	1979	Consul-General, Rio de Janeiro	Head of Middle East Department	FO, FCO	Libya
John Adam Robson	Head of FCO East African Department	1979	1982	Head of Chancery and Consul-General, Oslo	Ambassador, Bogota	FO, FCO	Zambia

Source: *The Colonial Office List (1962)* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 459; *The Foreign Office List (1965)* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1965), 382; DSL 1966, 287-288; DSL 1967, 252, 313; DSL 1969, 271, 371; DSL 1970, 355; DSL 1972, 229, 329; DSL 1973, 245; DSL 1977, 306, 389; DSL 1978, 302; DSL 1979, 334; DSL 1980, 110, 165, 181, 283, 316, 323; DSL 1986, 284; *Who's Who (1990)* (London: A & C Black, 1990), 1078; *Who's Who (1994)* (London: A & C Black, 1994), 488, 607, 1374, 1636, 1703, 1706; *Who's Who (2000)* (London: A & C Black, 2000), 1214; 'BHC to retired to Dacre', *Chumberland and Westmorland Herald*, 5 August 2011, <http://www.cwherald.com/a/archive/british-high-commissioner-who-retired-to-dacre.375739.html>, accessed 12 November 2016; 'Sir Martin Le Quesne', *Telegraph*, 10 April 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1458935/Sir-Martin-Le-Quesne.html>, accessed 12 November 2016

had experience in Africa prior to this appointment. Among those appointed in the FCO, there was a mixture of backgrounds, with two coming from the CRO with East African experience and three from the FO. All of them were of a similar age at the time of their appointment, and most came directly from, and many went on to, overseas postings, often as ambassadors or High Commissioners. Length of tenure varied. The longest was 7 years for Fernley Webber in CO, followed by 5 for Martin Ewans in FCO; excluding Webber, the mean was 2.8 years.

### BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, NAIROBI

The British High Commission in Nairobi (BHC) was the other main site of British interaction and policy-making. A High Commission was equivalent to an embassy and ambassador, but was a specific form for Commonwealth representatives—initially conferring separate advantages, though by the 1960s essentially the same.<sup>70</sup> The BHC was one of the largest British missions in Africa. In 1966, it consisted of thirty-two diplomats in Nairobi and one in Mombasa, compared to eighteen in Tanzania, seventeen in Uganda and thirty-eight in Nigeria.<sup>71</sup> The BHC was also a large mission compared to other foreign missions in Kenya. In 1972, the BHC was Kenya's largest foreign mission, with twenty-four diplomats, compared to twenty from America, twelve from France and ten from the Soviet Union, with all other missions having fewer than ten.<sup>72</sup> This clearly indicates the priority the British government accorded to their relationship with Kenya.

The staff in the BHC included a High Commissioner, Deputy High Commissioner and Head of Chancery, who was 'the main political officer ... [and] coordinated the running of the High Commission'.<sup>73</sup> There were also counsellors and first, second and third secretaries, who could have specific focuses such as information, economics, commerce, agriculture, capital aid or administration. There could also be advisors and, depending on what was required, these included labour, passport, agricultural, immigration, aid and commercial advisors. The size and composition of the BHC remained reasonably similar. From 1965 (when the Diplomatic Service was created) to 1980, the BHC ranged from a high of thirty-two to a low of twenty-two diplomats, with an average of twenty-six (Table 2.3). There was also a further staff of lower-ranking civil servants, as well as locally employed staff, although it is harder to find accurate numbers of these. In 1976, there was a total of 115 locally employed staff, focusing mostly on consular work, immigration, registry, secretarial and

**Table 2.3** Number of diplomats in the BHC

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total in BHC</i>	<i>Counsellors and High Commissioner</i>	<i>First secretaries</i>	<i>Second secretaries</i>	<i>Third secretaries</i>	<i>Defence advisors</i>	<i>Others<sup>a</sup></i>
1965	28	4	11	9	0	2	2
1966	32	5	10	10	2	2	3
1967	31	5	11	8	2	2	3
1968	24	4	11	6	1	2	0
1969	27	3	14	7	1	2	0
1970	27	3	12	9	1	2	0
1971	24	3	12	5	2	2	0
1972	24	3	9	8	1	2	1
1973	22	3	8	6	2	2	1
1974	23	3	8	8	2	2	0
1975	29	3	10	10	0	2	4
1976	26	3	8	8	1	2	4
1977	28	3	10	8	1	2	4
1978	24	3	10	6	0	2	3
1979	24	3	6	7	0	2	6
1980	26	3	8	5	2	2	6

<sup>a</sup>Includes variously: Agricultural Advisor, Chief Clerk, Passport Officer, Immigration Officer, Commercial Officer, Accountant, Archivist, Labour Advisor *Source* DSL 1966, 27–28; DSL 1967, 30–31; DSL 1968, 31–32; DSL 1969, 32; DSL 1970, 32; DSL 1971, 32; DSL 1972, 32–33; DSL 1973, 32–33; DSL 1974, 33; DSL 1975, 33; DSL 1976, 66–67; DSL 1977, 67; DSL 1978, 65; DSL 1979, 65; DSL 1980, 41–42

administrative work.<sup>74</sup> There were also clearly members of the Security Services among the diplomats, although it is hard to identify them and the absence of intelligence documents means it is difficult to write about this part of the relationship.<sup>75</sup>

London gained information about Kenya from the BHC, and one of the key roles of the BHC was to report events and their analysis of these. In debates and discussion over policy, BHC diplomats were expected to provide local knowledge, and it was this which gave them such influence as they had. The BHC reacted to events in Kenya, decided what was important to share, who should be spoken to in the Kenyan administration and whose ideas would be valued. As one civil servant recalled, ‘if a High Commissioner could demonstrate that he and his staff had a good local understanding, and if the host country was not at the top of the political agenda in the UK, the recommendations of the post could ... carry great influence in London’.<sup>76</sup> Personal relationships were crucial to claims of

knowledge and influence. Studies of diplomacy have widely recognised this; as one former diplomat described regarding his time in India, ‘much the most important thing I had to do there was to get to know a lot of Indians—the largest number possible—and to get to know a certain number of them really rather well’.<sup>77</sup>

The functions of diplomatic missions were ‘the promotion of friendly ties, the negotiation of agreements, lobbying, clarifying intentions and promoting trade, as well as propagandising, political reporting and providing policy advice to their government’.<sup>78</sup> Wevill has written extensively about the workings of the British embassy in America and he argues that ‘it was the regular reporting and the conducting of negotiations which made up the daily and systematic part of the embassy’s activities that underlined its strength’.<sup>79</sup> Table 2.4 shows the division of work the BHC themselves believed they carried out during 1979. As this indicates, consular and immigration work, aid and exports took most time. Civil servants were ranked according to grades, with ten in total and grade 1 the highest, and the division among grades shows that the highest grades spent most time on political work, with defence handled exclusively by the middle grades.

There were multiple forms of communication between British civil servants in London and diplomats in Nairobi. These included telegrams, tele-letters and letters, as well as ‘the regular flow of papers, telegrams and files, telephone calls, and informal meetings’.<sup>80</sup> Moorhouse estimated that, in 1977, 600,000 telegrams were sent between London and missions abroad.<sup>81</sup> Telephone calls between London and Nairobi in the 1960s were infrequent; during Edward Peck’s 2 years as High Commissioner, 1966–1968, he received only one phone call, ‘to ask the whereabouts of Malcolm MacDonald, to which I was able to reply that I had no idea’.<sup>82</sup> Communication between policy-makers could be both formal and personal, and was never purely institutional. In his first letter to a new member of the EAD, Timothy Bellers in the BHC handwrote a ‘PS’ to his formal letter on ‘East German links with Kenya’: ‘Welcome to East Africa Department—I look forward to much active (and I hope from us stimulating) correspondence between us’.<sup>83</sup> One of the most formalised methods of communication was the despatch. These were formal communiques sent at the highest level of foreign policy-making between High Commissioner and Secretary of State.<sup>84</sup> High Commissioners (and their staff) typically wrote an introductory despatch, annual reviews and periodic

**Table 2.4** Functional analysis of BHC work, compiled by the BHC in 1979

<i>Function</i>	<i>Grades 1–4 (High Commissioner, Deputy, Counsellors)</i>	<i>Grades 5–8 (First and Second Secretaries)</i>	<i>Grades 9–10 (Third Secretaries)</i>	<i>Locally engaged staff</i>	<i>Percentage of time (%)</i>
Consular	8	13	16	14	33.5
Immigration	2	9	14	9	23.0
Aid	17	15	14	5	18.0
Export promotion	7	12	14	3	12.0
Political (including labour affairs)	21	9		1	5.0
Defence		15			5.0
Economic (including scientific and technical)	16	3		1	2.5
Support of UK domestic policies	1	1		1	0.5
Culture	1	1		1	0.5

*Source* Country Assessment Paper: Kenya, 1979, TNA FCO 31/2605/24

despatches on important events, and outgoing High Commissioners sent a valedictory ‘parting shot’.<sup>85</sup> These could be widely circulated within Whitehall as one of the ways that knowledge about Kenya was disseminated.

## HIGH COMMISSIONERS

The role of the High Commissioner was a crucial one. Onslow has argued that ‘a Governor could make a marked contribution to the process and tone of political transition ... Old fashioned diplomacy and diplomats therefore should not be airbrushed from history as key individuals navigated the rocky terrain of decolonisation.’<sup>86</sup> The role of High Commissioners differed fundamentally from that of Governors. Nonetheless, their position as those on the ground reporting from post meant that there were similar expectations of expertise, and individuals could be influential, while the language of ‘man on the spot’ continued to



be used.<sup>87</sup> Young has argued that ‘the days of “the man on the spot” pushing policy in a certain direction were not necessarily over ... the twentieth-century ambassador was no mere “marionette”’.<sup>88</sup> The importance of diplomats ‘on the spot’ will be highlighted throughout this book, with High Commissioners able to influence assessments and actions.

The High Commissioner was the highest ranking British diplomat in Kenya. The Nairobi posting was a significant one in the hierarchy of ambassadorial positions. Moorhouse has argued that ‘a nation sends its most talented representatives to those places abroad which, for one reason or another, are of the most concern to it’.<sup>89</sup> At ambassadorial level in mid-1975, fourteen countries had grade 1 ambassadors, with Cairo and Lagos the two African posts; in grade 2 were twenty-three, including Cape Town and Nairobi.<sup>90</sup> This offers an indication of the African priorities of the British Foreign Service, and of Kenya’s primacy in British relationships with East Africa. Those who became High Commissioner in Kenya had progressed to almost the highest grade, and all received the KCMG.<sup>91</sup>

The choice of High Commissioners after independence is thus revealing (Table 2.5). Although the role was the same, ‘some do of course carry more weight than others’.<sup>92</sup> The first two were political appointments, and will be discussed in some detail. These ‘non-professional’ heads of mission were fairly rare in British diplomatic practice, appointed most often to America and important missions at key times.<sup>93</sup> The following High Commissioners were more conventional career diplomats (although Antony Duff later became head of MI5), though there was no single model and they came from FO, CRO and CO backgrounds. Three High Commissioners—Peck, Eric Norris and Duff—were appointed in their early fifties, and all three returned to become Deputy Under-Secretary of State in FCO. For Stanley Fingland and John Williams, Nairobi was their final posting before retirement, and both also had the most African experience. For Peck and Norris, it was their first ambassadorial and first Africa posting, while the others had experience as High Commissioner or ambassador and had previously worked in Africa.

The most significant of these in his ability to shape policy in the metropole was Kenya’s final Governor, only Governor-General and then High Commissioner, Malcolm MacDonald. MacDonald went to Kenya in 1963 and had a crucial role in reshaping perceptions in London about Kenya and Kenyatta. He replaced the previous Governor, Renison, who had struggled to adjust to Kenya’s changing political realities. Renison’s

Table 2.5 British High Commissioners in Nairobi

<i>Name</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>Date of leaving</i>	<i>Immediately prior career</i>	<i>Immediately following career</i>	<i>Previous office experience</i>	<i>Previous African experience</i>	<i>Previous ambassadorial postings</i>
Geoffrey de Freitas	1963	1964	High Commissioner, Ghana	Council of Europe	MP	Ghana	Ghana
Malcolm MacDonald	1964	1966	Governor-General, Kenya	Special Representative in Africa	MP	Kenya	Canada, India
Edward Peck	1966	1968	Assistant Under-Secretary of State	Deputy Under-Secretary of State	FO		
Eric Norris	1968	1972	Assistant Under-Secretary of State	Deputy Under-Secretary of State	CRO		
Anthony Duff	1972	1975	Deputy High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur	Deputy Under-Secretary of State	FO, FCO	Egypt	Nepal
Stanley Fingland	1975	1979	Ambassador, Havana	Retired	CRO, FCO	Nigeria, Rhodesia, Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone, Cuba
John Williams	1979	1982	Assistant Under-Secretary of State	Retired	CO, FCO	Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Benin	Fiji, accredited Benin

*Source* DSL 1967, 285; DSL 1970, 320; DSL 1976, 222; DSL 1978, 234, 342–343; DSL 1980, 173; DSL 1982, 338; *Who's Who* (1994), 547, 1416; *Who's Who* (1996) (London: A & C Black, 1996), 638, 1502; *Who Was Who* (1981–1990) (London: A & C Black, 1990), 471. See also and based on: Kirk-Greene, 'Accredited to Africa', 79–128

preference for KADU was apparent and he seemed particularly reluctant to reassess Kenyatta. Poynton argued bluntly that ‘he hasn’t really the suppleness of mind to cope with the highly charged political situation’.<sup>94</sup> MacDonald came from an earlier career as Colonial Secretary and roles in Canada, Malaya, Singapore and India, key imperial responsibilities around decolonisation. According to his biographer, MacDonald ‘hadn’t wanted to come [to Kenya] at all ... [and] told Sandys that he really knew nothing about modern Africa and African politics’.<sup>95</sup> But his political background and experience of decolonisation encouraged his appointment. As independence approached, he was asked by Europeans, Kenyan MPs and Kenyatta to remain in Kenya as Governor-General after independence, with Kenya becoming independent as a monarchy.<sup>96</sup> According to MacDonald’s report of his conversations with Kenyatta: ‘I had quickly won the complete confidence of all the new Ministers as Governor, and they wanted me to stay in Kenya to help them through the initial stages of Independence, and if possible longer.’<sup>97</sup> This makes strikingly clear the support MacDonald had from leading Kenyans.

At independence, a High Commissioner also went to Kenya. Geoffrey de Freitas, a former Labour politician, went with the anticipation that he would become High Commissioner to the proposed East African Federation. He was there briefly and unsuccessfully; as Sanger tactfully put it, ‘he did not endear himself to the Kenyans’.<sup>98</sup> In July 1964, MacDonald wrote to Sandys: ‘I am very sorry indeed to say that Geoffrey de Freitas is doing great harm to relations between the British Government and the Kenya Government, and between Britain and Kenya ... he is now an unfortunate liability.’<sup>99</sup> MacDonald advocated that de Freitas leave sooner than planned and suggested ways of orchestrating this.<sup>100</sup> Garner’s response made clear that those at the top in the CRO were also concerned by de Freitas’s behaviour.<sup>101</sup>

It seems that de Freitas was finally withdrawn at Kenyatta’s request. Certainly, rumours later circulated that ‘previous High Commissioners had actually been removed from Kenya because the Kenyans had got upset’.<sup>102</sup> According to Malcolm McBain, in the BHC at the time, the withdrawal occurred after Kenyatta visited London in 1964 and ‘a former white settler emerged from one of these clubs, rushed up to him and kicked him’, following which ‘angry, slightly tipsy, African MPs ... demanded to see the High Commissioner’; de Freitas refused ‘and the word got round that the High Commissioner was a coward’.<sup>103</sup> The choice of the next High Commissioner was therefore a matter of particular concern. CRO needed

someone, as MacDonald put it, 'to try to undo the awful damage that Geoffrey has done and continues to do'.<sup>104</sup> When MacDonald informed Kenyatta that de Freitas would leave, Kenyatta 'hoped a really good man would come here, and remarked with a mischievous laugh that he trusted it would be no one like my predecessor'.<sup>105</sup> The decision that MacDonald would become High Commissioner was supported by Kenyan leaders.<sup>106</sup> Kenyatta publicly welcomed this and described MacDonald as 'a warm friend to me personally as Prime Minister'.<sup>107</sup> Richard Beeston in the *Sunday Telegraph* compared de Freitas's 'dignified and correct behaviour' to the attitude of MacDonald who 'believes in a policy of making friends and influencing people without too much regard for protocol'.<sup>108</sup> This difference between the formal and the more personal approaches was significant, and MacDonald had better and closer relations with leading Kenyans than de Freitas. In 1965, however, Garner wrote to MacDonald that 'in some ways, Kenya is too small for you ... when there is a bigger job to be done'.<sup>109</sup> MacDonald left as High Commissioner in 1966, but remained based in Nairobi as Special Representative in Africa until 1969. Thereafter, he continued to be engaged in the relationship, visiting Kenya and meeting Kenyatta, invited to events when Kenyan politicians were in London and attending Kenyatta's funeral.<sup>110</sup>

### DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL

This section will consider the individuals within the EAD and the BHC. These were the (almost all) men who were making decisions and thus British policy. The following analysis is drawn from the *Diplomatic Service Lists*, *Foreign Office Lists*, *Colonial Office Lists*, *Who's Who* and *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* to analyse the backgrounds and careers of the British civil servants and diplomats engaged with Kenya. It will take into account those working in the BHC from 1965—the creation of the Diplomatic Service—to 1980, including first secretaries (grade 6) and above, and those involved at the higher levels of the EAD from 1963 as head of department, Assistant and Under-Secretaries with oversight of the EAD. It is not possible to find information for all of those involved, but a total of seventy-nine staff from the BHC and thirty-four from the EAD are included in this study.

Recruitment differed between departments. The key area of colonial experience was the former Colonial Service, renamed Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service (HMOCS) in 1954.<sup>111</sup> HMOCS was recruited

personally during the period 1910–1948 by Ralph Furse, ‘the father of the colonial service’.<sup>112</sup> This was distinct from the CO, whose staff were home civil servants. Jeppesen’s work on recruitment to the Colonial Administrative Service highlights the importance of background, so that recruiters preferred ‘vacancies should be left unfilled rather than appoint the “wrong type of man”’.<sup>113</sup> Recruitment to the FO was seen as the most elite, and ‘the Service was regarded as socially exclusive and arrogant. This view may not have been entirely justified ... But there was undoubtedly something in it.’<sup>114</sup> There were two recruitment methods into the FO in the 1950s:

One was Method A, which was a kind of test of your general civility, urbanity, ability to get on socially with everybody, and included three compulsory papers. The other was Method B, which involved a far wider range of optional written papers plus the other three compulsory ones. That’s the method I chose; I knew I’d never survive the house party test.<sup>115</sup>

As this indicates, the ability to make personal connections was a key indicator of job suitability. One diplomat recalled that: ‘the Diplomatic Service was held [in] particularly high esteem; thus for the modest salaries which government offered they could command applications from a talented market and they took advantage of it.’<sup>116</sup> This rigorous process allowed entry only to a select group.

Many of these men had similar backgrounds, and tended to fit a general mould (Tables 2.6 and 2.7). A high proportion had seen military service, either in the Second World War or through national service. Most in the EAD were aged between forty-one and fifty-five on starting their position: well established in their careers but not at the zenith. In the BHC, most were aged between thirty-six and fifty-five, as first secretary positions

**Table 2.6** Age of civil servants on starting role

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number in the BHC</i>	<i>Number in the EAD</i>
<30	2	0
31–35	7	1
36–40	10	4
41–45	16	7
46–50	19	12
51–55	17	8
56–60	6	2
60+	1	0

**Table 2.7** Background of diplomats and civil servants in the BHC and the EAD

	<i>Number in BHC</i>	<i>Percentage in BHC (%)</i>	<i>Number in EAD</i>	<i>Percentage in EAD (%)</i>	<i>Number in BHC and EAD</i>	<i>Percentage of total EAD and BHC (%)</i>
Military service	47	59.5	22	64.7	69	61.1
Oxbridge <sup>a</sup>	19	77.0	23	79.3	42	77.8
Other government departments	28	35.4	5	14.7	33	29.2
CO background	4	5.1	7	20.6	11	9.7
CRO background	26	32.9	16	43.2	42	36.2
FO background	36	45.6	15	40.5	51	44.0

<sup>a</sup>University education known for only 29 of those in the EAD and 25 in the BHC

could be reached at an earlier age. The outlier over sixty was MacDonald, as usually there was compulsory Diplomatic Service retirement at sixty. Those two who were first secretaries in the BHC aged below thirty were high-fliers: Imray had moved from third secretary in Canberra in 1958 to first secretary in 1962<sup>117</sup>; Chris Crabbie joined the FCO as second secretary in 1973 and went to Nairobi as first secretary on his first overseas posting in 1975.<sup>118</sup> Most were in position for between 2 and 4 years. Almost 30% had experience working in other government departments, this being more common among those in the BHC than the EAD. They had worked in a range of departments, including the Post Office, India Office, Cabinet Office and Ministry of Education. This experience would have given wider exposure to the priorities of other departments and encouraged a sense of institutional belonging and collective identity, with a shared Whitehall culture and sense of British interests.

A particularly high proportion had been to university at Oxford or Cambridge. This fits a widely recognised bias of the overseas service at this time. As Young has highlighted, civil servants ‘were still predominantly male, upper class and Oxbridge educated’.<sup>119</sup> In 1965, the proportion of successful entrants to the Diplomatic Service from Oxbridge was twenty-eight of forty-three; in 1966, thirty-one of forty-one. Even more

notable were the CRO successes, where in the years 1960–1964, only one successful candidate of the twenty-eight appointed had not attended Oxbridge.<sup>120</sup> A 1967 paper on the image of the Diplomatic Service highlighted that:

We should not, however, be too concerned about the present preponderance of Oxbridge entrants. We need the best brains and personalities from all walks of life in the country, and Oxbridge still seem able to attract the highest proportion of these.<sup>121</sup>

By 1978, this was changing so that ‘one in three’ were recruited from other universities.<sup>122</sup> This Oxbridge recruitment meant, however, that many shared similar backgrounds and would have been educated with a similar outlook. As one Treasury official described, ‘the Civil Service is run by a small group of people who grew up together’.<sup>123</sup>

Issues of personnel management and timing were key to appointments. One example of this is Alan Munro who, in his words, ‘was an Arab specialist, not an Africa one’, and became head of EAD in 1977 because ‘they wanted me to go, and I did eventually go, to the Middle East department, but it wasn’t available’.<sup>124</sup> Finding people who were free at the right time was essential in a process of shuffling people between roles. Experience and training were not always priorities; Richard Tallboys recalled being:

greeted with words along the lines of ‘Ah, Tallboys, yes, you are to be Desk Officer for Kenya, Uganda and the East African Economic Community in East Africa Department—go away and do it’. This was I suppose in the best traditions of the Diplomatic Service, that seemed to work then on the principle that if a person was intelligent enough to be appointed to the Administrative Grades then he must be intelligent enough to do any job without delay.<sup>125</sup>

Another recalled that ‘my education in the Foreign Office was reading all the despatches coming from all the worldwide posts, which obviously taught you a lot about the countries they were writing on but also taught you an awful lot about your colleagues’.<sup>126</sup> Training by reading others’ despatches meant that diplomats were inculcated into the methods and ideas of their predecessors: what had been viewed as important was likely to remain unchallenged if this was how new members were educated. Those higher up

were given more briefing, and when Williams was High Commissioner designate, a list of briefing calls included the minister and three others from FCO, representatives of the Department of Trade, Defence Sales, Export Credits Guarantee Department, Bank of England, Crown Agents, British Council, Commonwealth Secretariat and commercial contacts at five firms.<sup>127</sup> As this suggests, commercial and economic connections were highly significant, and there was a sense of necessary preparation. Prior to leaving London to become High Commissioner, Peck additionally took Swahili lessons and read Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya*.<sup>128</sup> But training was typically not extensive, and diplomats were expected to be adaptable.

Another key issue in organising personnel was knowledge and experience. There was an evident tension between the notional premium on knowledge and the reality that the FCO wanted generalists who would be flexible. Kirk-Greene has highlighted that

generalists have traditionally been the very foundation and pride of the Diplomatic Service, men and women who have successfully built up a professional repertoire of diplomatic knowledge and practice by regular (or at least frequent) postings between the FCO in London and UK missions around the world, without single country continuity or sustained regional clustering.<sup>129</sup>

Diplomats needed to be adaptable to different situations and countries. Following the creation of the Diplomatic Service, official policy encouraged that diplomats should serve in countries previously covered by the other department. By 31 December 1967, 409 former Foreign Service personnel had served in Commonwealth Office posts, and 262 vice versa.<sup>130</sup> This helps to explain the higher proportion of FO rather than CRO backgrounds in the BHC. Thus, despite the emphasis on knowledge, what mattered most was actually a shared set of assumptions, with the sense that diplomacy was everywhere performed and practised in similar ways.

Prior to the mergers, levels of African experience necessarily differed between departments. Garner argued in 1964 that the CRO had

built up a volume of expertise in Commonwealth Relations; we have not only a corpus of knowledge but a very wide range of intimate personal contacts and friendships with our opposite numbers ... it would be absurd to dissipate this at once and to throw away the experience of a lifetime.<sup>131</sup>



The FO, for obvious reasons, did not contain much African experience; at the time of the merger to FCO, 'only one of its senior officers had any substantial African experience'.<sup>132</sup> Some in CRO valued colonial expertise; for example, John Hickman, working in EAD in 1963–1964, recalled that in a crisis he 'could only go to the Colonial Office to tell us who was who and what was what'.<sup>133</sup> The CO and HMOCS were where greatest expertise about former colonies existed, and it was those who had worked there who had knowledge to pass on.

However, after a country's independence, CRO was 'resolute in its refusal to accept any lateral transfer from HMOCS', and although HMOCS staff could reapply, they had to take the same exams as new recruits.<sup>134</sup> CRO also preferred not to appoint people from HMOCS to the same country, viewing this as implying that little had changed, although there is some suggestion that the new rulers of former colonies were not necessarily opposed to having continuing personnel.<sup>135</sup> This was different from French post-colonial policy where several former Governors remained as ambassadors, and civil servants as advisors; MacDonald was unusual in doing this in Kenya. Some individuals expressed a sense of difference between departments and some suspicion about colonial experience. David Goodall, in the BHC in the late 1960s and from an FO background, 'would like to think that maybe I was more objective', while a former CO official in the BHC at the time:

was immensely knowledgeable about Africa. I mean, he was very good, he was very tough and so on, but I couldn't say his view was particularly objective. It was just a different sort of mind-set. I don't mean that he was arrogant or imperialistic or anything, but he was used to managing and running an African territory. Whereas we were supposed to be observing it and negotiating with it where necessary.<sup>136</sup>

A difference in attitude and mentality was, at least sometimes, perceived to exist, and some diplomats seemed to fear that their colleagues who had too much local knowledge might somehow be out of line institutionally.

This attitude meant, as Garner later recognised, that the 'chance therefore was missed of recruiting any considerable body of men with experience in depth of life in the new Commonwealth countries'.<sup>137</sup> One who moved from the CO to the CRO thought CO staff were:

very hurt by the outlook of the CRO, who took the view that Colonial Office people couldn't really serve in CRO posts, and there was a lot of feeling about that, because quite a lot of CRO people were over-promoted to take jobs as High Commissioners and Deputy High Commissioners, which should have gone to some very good Colonial Office people, most of whom ended up in Home Civil Service Ministries.<sup>138</sup>

After the FCO was formed in 1968, only one staff member in the EAD had previous experience in the CO, suggesting that many within the CO and HMOCS left overseas policy-making with the department's end.

Despite this, there was also continuity and transfer. Hodge has argued that the careers of colonial officials formed 'an important thread of continuity across the seemingly fundamental rupture of decolonization and independence'.<sup>139</sup> Some members of HMOCS transferred to the FCO: Kirk-Greene suggests that by the mid-1970s more than 125 were in the FCO, fifty from East Africa.<sup>140</sup> Of those who worked in the EAD and BHC, fourteen had worked in HMOCS, of whom eleven in Africa (Table 2.9). The experience of former CO staff was not entirely lost as some moved through the merged offices. Williams, who became High Commissioner in Nairobi in 1979, had worked in the CO, CRO, Commonwealth Office and FCO.<sup>141</sup> The two most significant colonial officials who worked on Kenya in the years before independence were Webber and Leslie Monson. Webber's career moved away from Africa after the CO's closure, but Monson's did not. He became High Commissioner to Zambia, then Assistant and later Deputy Under-Secretary for Africa, supervising the EAD until 1969, when he oversaw the remaining dependent territories.<sup>142</sup> He has been described as 'one of the most experienced and able members of the former Colonial Office'.<sup>143</sup> Some knowledge and institutional memory from the CO was thus transferred through the mergers.

In terms of African experience, a total of 58.4% of the EAD and BHC sample had prior experience (including in HMOCS) of working in Africa (Table 2.8). This was a majority, but by no means an overwhelming one. Of these, seventeen had experience in East Africa and twenty-four had worked in two or more African countries, with Nigeria and South Africa the most common. These were countries with larger and highly graded missions and thus higher staff numbers. Working in London departments which dealt with Africa could also be a way of gaining experience. It is notable that twenty-one had been working elsewhere in Africa prior to

**Table 2.8** African experience

	<i>Number in the BHC (total 79)</i>	<i>Number in the EAD (total 34)</i>	<i>Number from both the EAD and the BHC (total 113)</i>
HMOCS	13	1	14
HMOCS in Africa	10	1	11
African experience	48	18	66
Two or more countries of African experience	18	6	24
East African experience	14	3	17
Nigeria	12	3	15
South Africa	8	5	13
Tanganyika/Tanzania	10	1	11
Ghana	7	2	9
Egypt	4	1	5
Uganda	3	0	3
Kenya	1	0	1
Immediately prior job in Africa	13	8	21
Immediately following job in Africa <sup>a</sup>	7	2	9

<sup>a</sup>Known only for 70 from the BHC and 31 from the EAD

their role in Nairobi or EAD. This does suggest that at least some were building up African expertise. But still, the FCO valued experience within the department and habits of mind over real ‘local knowledge’. Table 2.9 also shows that a lack of African experience was not a bar to working in the BHC, and a larger number of previous postings did not necessarily mean an increased likelihood of African experience. Norman Standen, on his eleventh placement in Nairobi, had worked extensively in South East Asia, with Nairobi his only African posting.<sup>144</sup>

Former head of EAD Munro argued that to be a specialist, on Africa or elsewhere, ‘you would be expected to have 70 or 80% of your time, either from home or abroad, in that area’.<sup>145</sup> Many did not develop this kind of specialism, but some did spend most of their working lives focused on Africa. Some even had a more specifically East African focus. Consular first secretary Winefred White (née Durbin), one of the few women to work in the BHC at this level, began her career in the Ministries of Labour and Food and then moved through the CO, CRO, Commonwealth Office and FCO, with overseas postings in Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Spain and

**Table 2.9** BHC overseas postings

<i>Posting number</i>	<i>Number in BHC</i>	<i>Number with African experience</i>	<i>Percentage with African experience (%)</i>
First	4	n/a	n/a
Second	10	4	40
Third	12	6	50
Fourth	16	11	69
Fifth	15	12	80
Sixth	10	7	70
Seventh	6	6	100
Eighth	2	1	50
Ninth	2	0	0
Tenth	1	1	100
Eleventh	1	0	0

Kenya.<sup>146</sup> She thus had substantial experience in East Africa, as well as in the different overseas departments in London. Several individuals worked in the EAD in several capacities or in both the EAD and the BHC. Norman Aspin, head of the CRO's East Africa Political Department 1963–1966, became Assistant Under-Secretary of State for EAD in 1974 until 1976, and again in 1980.<sup>147</sup> Martin Le Quesne was head of the West and Central African Department in the FO, 1964–1968, and was later Deputy Under-Secretary of State with responsibility over EAD from 1971 to 1974.<sup>148</sup> Allinson was Head of Chancery in BHC in 1970, then Deputy High Commissioner, 1972–1974, and then Assistant Under-Secretary of State with responsibility over the EAD in 1980 (he returned to Nairobi as High Commissioner in 1982).<sup>149</sup> Clearly these women and men who worked in the EAD and then supervised it, or worked on Kenya from both London and Nairobi, would have built up a detailed knowledge and awareness of Kenyan events, people and places.

## CONCLUSION

Relations between and within departments are crucial to understanding how and why policies emerged. British government attitudes may have appeared coherent and stable from a Kenyan perspective, but internally there was conflict and negotiation between departments pursuing their own agendas. Different departments could have differing priorities, and even within the FCO the views of its Defence Department, EAD, BHC

and Economic Department could diverge. Plans were the work of multiple sections of government working sometimes cooperatively and sometimes obstructively as they pursued the interests of their own department, as well as broader British interests.

For the policy-makers involved, a key question was how much emphasis to place on local knowledge and how far to privilege experience. The FCO favoured both specialists and generalists, and even specialists were expected to have wider experience. There was tension over this issue; yet in discussions and making decisions, most believed that local knowledge mattered, and this was what the BHC was supposed to provide. Diplomats were expected and required to have some local knowledge, and even influence. But, as one former diplomat argued:

there is a possibility that active and sensitive officials will come to understand too well the preoccupations of the foreigners with whom they deal, and give them disproportionate weight. They need the counterweight of the endlessly repeated question, 'Where do Britain's interests lie?'<sup>150</sup>

Local knowledge was essential, but could not be allowed to prejudice British interests. There was also some scepticism about CO and HMOCS personnel and the value of their knowledge following the empire's independence. Yet, as this book will make clear, the idea of local knowledge itself is also problematic, as those Britons who made claims to this frequently understood less of Kenyan politics and society than they believed.

Staff within the BHC and EAD had a reasonable degree of autonomy, and heads of the EAD and High Commissioners were able to exercise influence over the decisions which in effect made policy. But all worked within institutional confines. As Allison and Halperin have argued, those involved in making policy were 'individual[s] in a *position*'.<sup>151</sup> It was their position which made them significant in this context rather than their individual characteristics. The British involved were primarily functionaries, for whom Kenya was one element of a wider career of public service. Therefore, changes in personnel tended to make marginal difference to the direction and pursuance of British policy. Those coming to the office adapted to the knowledge which had built up in files and people, and to the aims and objectives which had been set—or accepted—by their predecessors. The culture of the departments and civil service in general encouraged cooperation and the pursuance of shared goals. Similar backgrounds, outlooks and ideas of British interests meant that disagreement tended to

be over detail rather than the broad scope of policy. There were rivalries, but plans were framed within a Whitehall consensus and shared culture of bureaucracy. This was not necessarily because policy and aims were clearly defined, but rather because a broader sense of what British politicians, civil servants and diplomats wanted to achieve from their relationship persisted. Despite internal departmental and individual disputes, this was, ultimately, a bureaucratic system.

## NOTES

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