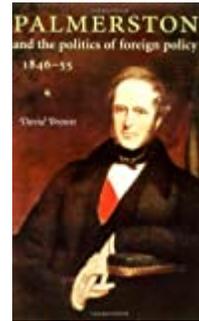
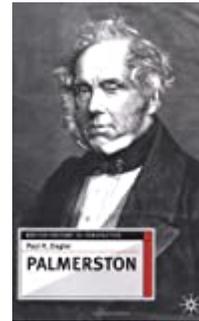


David Brown. *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-1855.* Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002. x + 239 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7190-6199-8; \$26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7190-6392-3.



Paul R. Ziegler. *Palmerston: British History in Perspective.* New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. viii + 156 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-333-67625-7.



Reviewed by T. A. Jenkins (History of Parliament, London)

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David Brown's excellent book, a revised version of his doctoral dissertation, covers the relatively neglected phase of Palmerston's political career between his appointment as foreign secretary in 1846 and his securing of the Premiership in 1855, which he went on to hold with one brief interruption until his death in 1865. Three analytical chapters deal with the structure of politics and Palmerston's relations with the Crown and the Cabinet. They are followed by four narrative chapters focusing on the period from the Don Pacifico debate of 1850 through to Palmerston's triumphant rise from the ashes of Lord Aberdeen's administration five years later, when he was identified as the only man capable of successfully prosecuting the war effort in the Crimea. Rather than examining the details of Palmerston's diplomacy, Brown's

interest is in the way foreign policy was used in a domestic context, where it became "central to popular politics" (p. 217). He shows how Palmerston strengthened his personal position by connecting his foreign policy to a long-evolving sense of British national identity, based on Protestantism, constitutionalism and commercial expansion. But public opinion, for Palmerston, was that of the educated, newspaper-reading middle classes, including many businessmen, and Brown appears wary of Antony Taylor's claims regarding the depth of support for Palmerston amongst Chartists and other plebeian radicals.[1] Similarly, while Brown agrees that Palmerston played an important role in expanding the political nation, he draws back from endorsing E. D. Steele's contentious view that Palmerston consciously inaugurated a

new era of democratic politics.[2] Occasionally, Brown's approach means that he provides insufficient explanation of what Palmerston's foreign policy actually was, as in the reference to his "failed Italian policy" (p. 88), and the book will be of most value to students with some background knowledge of the subject. Altogether, this is a well-researched book full of interesting new material.

A good, concise account of Palmerston's long life and career would be welcomed with relief by students, but Paul Ziegler's book is a disappointment. In his desire, presumably, to be as brief as possible, Ziegler begins abruptly with Palmerston's entry into politics in 1806, and he provides no real characterization either of the man himself or of the social and political world he inhabited. For example, whereas Brown has a useful section (pp. 4-5) on the significance of Palmerston's studies at Edinburgh University, which inculcated in him the ideal of a responsible governing elite acting in the national interest, an appreciation of the importance of public opinion and a belief in evolutionary social progress, Ziegler has nothing to say on the matter. Nor can Ziegler's portrait of Palmerston be considered satisfactory in its own narrowly conceived terms. His general surveys of the political background in each chapter are often poorly organ-

ised and difficult to follow. Chapter 1, in particular, contains a breathless account of numerous unexplained issues, which readers lacking a comprehensive knowledge of early-nineteenth century Britain will find bewildering. More serious still is Ziegler's extraordinary carelessness with factual details: he dates Palmerston's dismissal from Russell's ministry to 1850 instead of 1851 (p. 73), and the famous Liberal meeting at Willis's Rooms to 1858 rather than 1859 (p. 133), while in a paragraph on the Great Reform Bill (p. 39), much of the information is inaccurate or misleading. There are far too many other errors to list here. Ziegler makes some promising observations, in his introduction and conclusion, about Palmerston's contribution to defining national consciousness, and his role as a "harbinger of governmental modernisation" (p. 129), but these are not fully substantiated. Unfortunately, this book cannot be recommended as a reliable guide to Palmerston's remarkable political career.

Notes

[1]. Antony Taylor, "Palmerston and Radicalism, 1847-1865," *Journal of British Studies* (1994), pp. 157-79.

[2]. E. D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

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