



# The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers From Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson

*Edited by*  
Michael Patrick Cullinane  
Martin Farr

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Michael Patrick Cullinane • Martin Farr  
Editors

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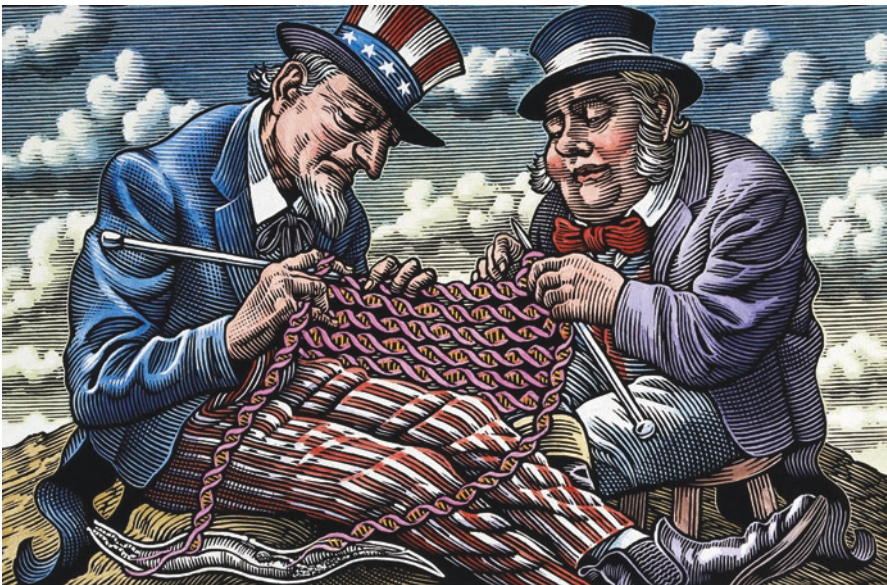


## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

*Michael Patrick Cullinane*



Bill Sanderson. “Anglo-American Research on the Human Genome.” 1990 [scraperboard drawing], Wellcome Collection

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When Winston Churchill first referred to the United Kingdom's relationship with the United States as "special," he did so after wartime ally President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. In his eulogy, Churchill declared that Franklin Roosevelt was "the greatest American friend we have ever known, and the greatest champion of freedom who has ever brought help and comfort from the new world to the old."<sup>1</sup> Naturally, his encomium shrouded their differences—and they had plenty. Instead he projected a personal relationship that remains, for many, the apogee of transatlantic rapport and the template for future relations in the postwar era. Throughout the war, the United States and the United Kingdom forged an alliance that led to a sense of national camaraderie and shared mission, which Roosevelt and Churchill exemplified. In short, the "special-ness" of the Anglo-American relationship derived, at least in part, from that personal relationship.

Talk of the special relationship has endured, even if successive presidents and prime ministers do not share the positive regard or the wartime circumstances that forge eternal bonds. John Major barely concealed his support for President George H. W. Bush's reelection bid in 1992, and when Bush lost to Bill Clinton, the special relationship appeared in danger of a precipitous decline. State relations did sour when John Major refused to speak with Clinton for weeks in 1994 after the United States issued a visa for Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams.<sup>2</sup> That public dispute reveals how frosty the bond between a president and a prime minister can get, and how such clashes can give rise to a sense of contrasting ambitions or, perhaps even worse, fractures in the Anglo-American special relationship. Amity among leaders bears promise. Ill-will signifies discord. Yet, this does not scupper long-standing military, intelligence, diplomatic, or economic cooperation. The institutional relationship, in this case, transcended personal relations.

Scholars, pundits, and the public have long queried the effect and power of personal relations in statecraft, and a rift exists in how we interpret the importance of personality in diplomatic relations between nations and states. On the one hand are those who put a high value on the systems and circumstances at play, or that of context and the material interest of state actors, institutions, and of security or trade commitments made by treaty or pact. For others, the circumstances of global politics derive from human agency, and the personal or emotional connections that diplomats make with other diplomats to define foreign relations. In the study of Anglo-American relations, this remains an ongoing debate, even in the analysis of the most convivial relationships like that

<sup>1</sup>Winston Churchill, "The Greatest Friend of Freedom," 17 April 1945 (<http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/DthRovlt.html>).

<sup>2</sup>Tim O'Brien, "Major 'Refused' to Speak to Clinton after Adams got US Visa," *Irish Times*, 16 August 2013; Caroline Davies and Owen Bowcott, "Major Apologised to Bill Clinton over Draft-dodging Suspicions," *Guardian*, 28 December 2018.

of Churchill and Roosevelt.<sup>3</sup> Did these leaders catalyze the special relationship because the survival of the Anglo-American way of life depended upon it, or did their personal connection facilitate the wartime alliance and sense of shared ideology? Getting to the bottom of that historiographical riddle might be impossible or inevitably lead to a synthesis that brings our interpretation somewhere between the two sides, but investigating the personal affairs of presidents and prime ministers takes us closer to a fuller picture of Anglo-American relations by recognizing the strategic context of geopolitics, national security, and economic interests of the United Kingdom or the United States alongside the emotional and individual associations made by the power brokers of these states.

Media adds another variable in assessing personal relations as it plays an important role in shaping the appearance of harmony or discord. While Churchill and Roosevelt set the high watermark for comity, the public presentation of two like-minded allies obscured substantial differences and belied the changing nature of their relationship. At the time of Roosevelt's death, the president had gravitated toward Stalin and away from Churchill on many strategic matters facing the wartime alliance. The special relationship between these men suffered, as a consequence. Outwardly, however, Churchill and Roosevelt conjured the image of an inseparable coalition. Their speeches intoned narratives of kindred peoples and shared values.<sup>4</sup> In some cases, the public image and underlying realities can prove even more difficult to understand. In January 2017, when Prime Minister Theresa May visited the White House weeks after Donald Trump assumed the presidency, she congratulated Trump on the 2016 election and pushed for new trade deals in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum. She also sought to enhance existing security commitments and reaffirm the special relationship. These policy matters vanished almost entirely from the media coverage when Trump gripped May's hand as they walked along the colonnades outside the West Wing. Public interest in the handholding overshadowed all other details of May's trip. Editorials speculated on the gesture's meaning, wondering if their personal fondness symbolized the shared ambitions of their countries. Less obvious in photos were all the ways Trump frustrated British efforts at a closer relationship: his administration's threat of tariffs, his unorthodox opinions on Brexit or knife crime in London, and his support of conspiracy theories that accused the United Kingdom of spying on Americans, thereby breaking a central tenet of the special relationship. The image of the two leaders holding hands endured, as

<sup>3</sup>For an excellent insight into the debate on human agency versus strategic realpolitik in scholarship about Roosevelt and Churchill, see Fraser J. Harbutt, Petra Goedde, William I. Hitchcock, Wilson D. Miscamble, Kimber Quinney, and Frank Costigliola, "A Roundtable on Frank Costigliola's Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War," *Passport: The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Review* 44, no. 1 (April 2013): 8–21.

<sup>4</sup>David Woolner, *The Last 100 Days: FDR at War and Peace* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 171, 225–6.

emblematic, and as *the* act that captivated public consciousness. It remained so iconic that they repeated the scene when Trump visited the United Kingdom in 2018.<sup>5</sup>

Whether a president and a prime minister are cordial or acerbic, and whether their image is real or exaggerated, there can be no denying that the relationship matters. The aim of this volume is to demonstrate that personal relationships have bearing on the transatlantic world and, in some instances, on the global order. Although the notion of a special relationship formally dates to the 1940s and the wartime alliance, this book extends the scope to the 1890s when, as historian Bradford Perkins points out, the United States and the British Empire began their “great rapprochement.”<sup>6</sup> From this time, in the late nineteenth century, no bilateral relationship between states has proven more important to international relations. As leaders of their respective nations, the personal relationship between president and prime minister has taken on great significance since then. The long history—before and beyond World War II—allows for an expansive view of the Anglo-American relationship and the changing nature of the offices of president and prime minister. In the late nineteenth century, when Britain commanded a vast empire, the United States was a junior partner, even subordinate, but two world wars transformed the United States into an undisputed global leader that outranked the United Kingdom. The dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship changed and with them the dynamics between the president and the prime minister. While we might debate when exactly the tables turned in favor of the United States through economic histories, IR theories, and quantified assessments of military power, the power brandished by successive presidents and prime ministers offers an alternative approach to this question.

The personal relations between a president and a prime minister divulge much more than a general assessment of bilateral power dynamics or a profile of transatlantic relations. Because presidents and prime ministers rarely enjoy overlapping tenures and typically interact with multiple counterparts, their personal rapport can add interesting contours to the history of Anglo-American relations, and they can demonstrate continuities and change in policies. For instance, Margaret Thatcher, who is often associated with Ronald Reagan as crusading conservative ideologues, took the keys of 10 Downing Street when Jimmy Carter was president and left office when George H. W. Bush was president. President Warren G. Harding corresponded with four prime ministers over a truncated term in office, writing to David Lloyd George, Andrew Bonar Law, Stanley Baldwin, and Ramsay MacDonald. The variations in bonhomie,

<sup>5</sup> Heather Stewart, “Theresa May Says NATO has 100% Support of Donald Trump,” *Guardian*, 27 January 2017; Hilary Weaver, “Theresa May Gives Her Perspective on That Awkward Hand-Hold with Donald Trump,” *Vanity Fair*, 20 March 2017; Catriona Harvey-Jenner, “Donald Trump Held Theresa May’s Hand Again and it’s Painfully Awkward to Watch,” *Cosmopolitan*, 13 July 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895–1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 5–6.



or lack thereof, can give us a greater sense of how presidents and prime ministers operate as diplomats; we can draw distinctions between political views and leadership styles. Clinton's poor relationship with Major contrasted with his chummy relationship with Tony Blair. Why and how could Blair move seamlessly from an affinity with Clinton as a Democrat, to an apparently equal closeness to his successor, Bush, a conservative Republican? Churchill served nonconsecutive terms as prime minister. How did his statecraft differ between Roosevelt and Eisenhower? Equally, personal relations can tell us much about domestic politics and how heavily they weigh upon foreign policy and its formulation. Do leaders get along any better when they come from similar political backgrounds? Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan were cut from the same ideological cloth, but does that explain their connection? Barack Obama and Gordon Brown hailed from a similar center-left background, but never hit it off. Can we attribute personal camaraderie with times of crisis, as might be the case with personalities as different as Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George, who faced the emergency of the World War I?

Context necessarily shapes personal relationships between leaders. In this book we show what no other book does: that personal relationships between any given prime minister and president play a part, however negligible, in the evolution of Anglo-American relations. Occasionally, personal rapport has even broader implications for geopolitics, international trade and commerce, peace and security, or global culture and human rights. In short, this book contends that people matter. Institutions, systems, heritage, and tradition must not be ignored, but the focus of this book, perhaps unfashionably, falls squarely on the personalities and the individuals that take the reins of leadership, seeking to put those characters and their dispositions at the forefront of transatlantic relations. Given the deliberately broad chronology covered, that personal relationship can be understood through a number of lenses. Like Trump and May holding hands, media functions as a regulator of public perception. Whether gleaned from the print media of the late nineteenth century or social media of the twenty-first, a sense of solidarity or dissonance can often derive from journalists and commentators, or even political cartoonists, photographers, and video producers. The reality of these personal relationships might differ considerably from those images. Memoirs, correspondence, government documents, and "hot-mics" often provide a better indication of how presidents and prime ministers felt about each other. Personal relationships here do not preclude those leaders who never met. Grover Cleveland and Lord Salisbury never did; neither did Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, or Herbert Hoover meet their British counterparts; Theodore Roosevelt and Arthur Balfour only met after leaving office. Yet even without this face-to-face contact, these presidents and prime ministers still established a relationship, and, in some cases, developed strong feelings about the other. With the advent of aviation and telecommunications, personal statecraft became more common, and since the 1940s presidents and prime ministers have always met in person. The distinction between leaders who have met and those who built relations by distance might offer

further insight on the extent to which a president or a prime minister builds a friendship without shaking (or holding) hands with their equivalent across the ocean.

In the following chapters, seventeen leading scholars take a look at these various questions about the Anglo-American relationship and the presidents and prime ministers who helped define their period in office. Rather than elaborating further on the specific chapters in this introduction, one of the foremost historians of Anglo-American relations—Professor Kathleen Burk—provides an overview of the historical context in the first chapter and the way in which each contributor grapples with presidential and prime ministerial leadership. Burk's long list of publications covers Anglo-American relations from the colonial era to the present day, and no one is better placed to set out the political, strategic, economic, or sociocultural circumstances that existed in any given era. Following that initial chapter, each successive chapter examines a pair, or multiple pairs, of presidents and prime ministers. In total, the handbook offers a comprehensive account of the key relationships, followed by a lengthy reference appendix that includes biographies of the presidents and prime ministers, a timeline that visualizes any overlap in their offices, and a glossary of events central to the Anglo-American relationship. By way of a conclusion, Gill Bennett, the chief historian of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, considers the special relationship from the perspective of British diplomats, gleaned from the UK Foreign Office archives. In a neat close to the book, Bennett finds the same complexities below the level of president and prime minister. Stereotypes of Americans as brash and assertive seeped into diplomatic exchange, as did the sense of a rising power eclipsing a dwindling empire.

More than a century of relations prove that personal relationships matter at every level of statecraft. Regardless of who occupies the White House or Downing Street, people make policy. Common interests and values has kept the United States and the United Kingdom close, a truism that belies a less-predictable accord between presidents and prime ministers. The relationship among policymakers highlights power dynamics and ideological fault lines. Regardless of how staged and choreographed their meetings, visits provide opportunities to understand disparities. Crises can cement shaky relations or weaken strong bonds. National interests, geopolitical circumstances, and prevailing ideas shape the Anglo-American relationship, as do the people on both sides of the Atlantic, and no two are more important than the president and the prime minister.

## Presidents and Prime Ministers

*Kathleen Burk*



William Allan and J. B. Herbert. "John Bull and Uncle Sam." Chicago: S. Brainard's Sons, 1898 [sheet music cover], Library of Congress

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*Looking at the record, it's hard to find too many examples of one leader, for the sake of personal rapport, deciding to do something which he or she might not otherwise have done. Nations rarely do each other favours, at least not favours that cost anything.<sup>1</sup>*

The overarching question that this book seeks to answer is, to what extent do individuals matter in international relations? This case study has Anglo-American relations as its context, considering whether the relationships of the individual presidents and prime ministers with each other exert any influence when conflicts arise. The answer seems to be that they can be significant but not determining. This should not be surprising. The primary duty of a leader of his or her country in the international arena is to work for the national interest. This can be the successful outcome of the specific issue in question; or, it is possible that immediate concessions can serve a larger national interest. Both examples are demonstrated in these chapters.

The significance of the Anglo-American relationship was predicted by former Chancellor of the German Empire Otto von Bismarck just before his death in 1898 when he was asked what was the decisive factor in modern history. He replied: "The fact that the North Americans speak English."<sup>2</sup> This is true. Both the British and the Americans are famously monolingual, and it should rather be said that in most cases they only speak English. This common language is important because even superpowers need someone with substantial international experience with whom to talk. However, it should also be pointed out that a common language can allow criticisms to be immediately understood. Yet at least, if not more, important are common interests and approaches, and a supportive public opinion. On the whole, these have been the case in the modern relationship.

Nevertheless, the whole idea of a "special relationship," a term whose usage is widespread, causes some difficulties. First of all, only weaker states claim a special relationship. Stronger states do not need to do so. It can be embarrassing. Remember the story that former US ambassador to the United Kingdom Ray Seitz retails in his memoir *Over Here*, published in 1998. He had arrived in London after the end of the Gulf War, at which time the very idea of a particularly close Anglo-American relationship appears to have occasioned some hilarity at the White House. A few weeks after Clinton's inauguration in 1993, Prime Minister John Major went to Washington. According to one account

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Seitz, *Over Here* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), 324.

<sup>2</sup> Winston Churchill, *News of the World*, 22 May 1938.

repeated by Seitz, “Just before the Prime Minister arrived at the White House, Clinton was sitting with a few aides in the Oval Office. ‘Don’t forget to say “special relationship” when the press comes in,’ one of them joked—a little like ‘don’t forget to put out the cat.’ ‘Oh, yes,’ Clinton said. ‘How could I forget? The ‘special relationship!’ And he threw back his head and laughed.”<sup>3</sup> There was also the later episode of Prime Minister Gordon Brown in the United States going through the kitchen in an attempt to be seen talking with President Barack Obama.

To a certain extent, the term is a journalistic construct: whenever one leader is crossing the Atlantic to meet the other, the press looks out for, and practically counts, if, and how many times, the phrase is used. David Cameron’s attempt to rename it as an “essential relationship” quite probably had the support of the Foreign Office, since the last person to describe the Anglo-American relationship as special is a British diplomat: it sounds too much like supplication—and this was certainly the case with Winston Churchill when he came up with the phrase.

Thinking about any international relationship would be enormously enhanced by looking over a longer rather than a shorter *durée*. There is no event, no tradition, no relationship without roots. The idea of using the relationship between heads of governments as a way of approaching the country relationship in a user-friendly manner, combining as it does policies and personalities. But before looking too much at specific couples, a short overview of the development of the Anglo-American relationship until about 1900 might be useful, both to demonstrate its roots and to provide context. In institutional terms, it all began in 1783, with the establishment of the United States. The subsequent years were spent trying to locate the boundary between the United States and Britain’s North American colonies, which would only be completed in 1903.<sup>4</sup> As a side issue for Great Britain during the Napoleonic War, the two countries fought a second war, the War of 1812—contemporaneously called the American War in Britain—which, thanks to the fact that on the day after the battle of New Orleans, notification of the signing of the peace treaty in London arrived in the United States, the Americans promptly proclaimed victory. Some US historians refer to it as the Second War of Independence. It certainly released a tide of frenzied nationalism. The United States then turned inward whilst the United Kingdom turned outward. However, since “inward” included trying to gather Canada into the American embrace, Canada was invaded twelve times by Americans over the century, and the Anglo-American relationship remained tense.

Meanwhile, during the nineteenth century, the United States remained a literary and economic colony of Great Britain. Englishman Sydney Smith, first editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, published a book review in January

<sup>3</sup>Seitz, *Over Here*, 322.

<sup>4</sup>Kathleen Burk, *The Lion and the Eagle: The Interaction of the British and American Empires 1783–1972* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), Chapters 1 and 2.

1820 in which he asked, “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?”<sup>5</sup> That was humiliating, but Americans consoled themselves by bellowing that they wrote MUCH better books than the English did. But in the nineteenth century, American publishers seldom published a book that had not already been published and reviewed in London: Why should they take a chance on an unknown book which might not sell, when they could publish books which had already been reviewed favorably in London? Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* and Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* were first published in London for this reason, but also because there they had more copyright protection, something that was absent in the United States.<sup>6</sup> In August 1908, the poet Ezra Pound came to London, later writing that the United States was “still a colony of London so far as culture was concerned [and] Henry James, Whitman and myself all had to come to the metropolis, to the capital of the US, so far as arts and letters were concerned.”<sup>7</sup> But then the pendulum began to swing towards the United States, and thereafter—and especially after 1945—going to the United States for fame and experience, but especially for money, became, according to Peter Conrad, something of a rite of passage for American writers.<sup>8</sup> W. H. Auden, “as a campus-hopping poetic superstar,” was quite straightforward about this.<sup>9</sup> He admitted in his poem “On the Circuit”:

I see  
 Dwindling below me on the plane,  
 The roofs of one more audience  
 I shall not see again.  
 God bless the lot of them, although  
 I don’t remember which was which:  
 God bless the USA, so large  
 So friendly, and so rich.<sup>10</sup>

Looking at the economic relationship, during most of the nineteenth century, the United States was essentially a developing country. It exported raw materials and foodstuffs to Britain, especially cotton, wheat, and tobacco, whilst British exports to the United States were predominantly manufactured goods. Matters began to change in the last quarter of the century. For example, before then, on an international index of steel production, the United States

<sup>5</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 33 (January 1820), 78–80.

<sup>6</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans: Picked Up by a Travelling Bachelor*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey, 1833), 106–7; Kathleen Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown, 2007), 353–60.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Spender, *Love-Hate Relations: A Study of Anglo-American Sensibilities* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), 146.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Conrad, *Imagining America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 194.

<sup>9</sup> Steve Clark and Mark Ford (eds.), *Something We Have That They Don’t: British and American Poetic Relations since 1925* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>10</sup> W. H. Auden, “On the Circuit” ([http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/w\\_h\\_auden/poems/10129](http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/w_h_auden/poems/10129)).

did not feature. But with the so-called second Industrial Revolution—that is the American one—the United States by 1910 produced more iron and steel than all of Europe combined.<sup>11</sup> However, when it came to financing the building of steel mills, or building the railways, British financial power was vital. Initial investment bonds were largely bought by Americans, but many were then bought by English investors, and it did not take long before they were being traded in London. By the 1900s, there was a separate category of American railway securities in at the London Stock Exchange to facilitate trade in them.<sup>12</sup>

America's development into an economic power was important because, in order to carry out a foreign policy outside of the Western Hemisphere, they had to have the wherewithal to finance embassies and diplomats. Even more funding was required to build and support military and naval forces. The disparity between the size of the British and American armies was significant. The British forces were notably small, in 1880 about 130,000; indeed, as Bismarck commented, if the British army landed on the German coast, he would send the local police force to arrest it.<sup>13</sup> Fortunately for Britain, she could also call on the Indian army, which had a ratio of two Indian soldiers to one British and was officered exclusively by the British. These land forces stabilized at about 120,000 and were used primarily in the empire for conquest or police action.<sup>14</sup>

But small as the British land forces were, the American forces were tiny. No more than the British did the Americans want a standing army, and by fifteen years after the end of the civil war, the numbers stood at 38,000, where they remained until the Spanish-American War, at which point they shot up to a quarter-million. Thereafter until 1917, the numbers remained at about 100,000. As a quick comparison, in 1890, the British plus Indian Army was roughly seven times the size of the American.<sup>15</sup>

Even greater was the disparity between the two navies: in comparison with the Royal Navy, the condition of the US Navy was pathetic. When in the early 1880s, the Royal Navy had 367 modern warships, the US Navy had fewer than ninety ships, thirty-eight of which were made of wood, and only forty-eight of which were capable of firing a gun. It was a near war with Germany over Samoa in 1889 that brought to Americans the disturbing realization that their navy

<sup>11</sup> A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), Table 9.

<sup>12</sup> Mira Wilkins, "Foreign Investment in the US Economy before 1914," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 516 (July 1991): 14.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Cook and Brendan Keith, *British Historical Facts 1830–1900* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 185; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 201.

<sup>14</sup> David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 2000), 18.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Budget, *Historical Abstracts of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 736–7. The British regular army in 1890 numbered 153,483 and in 1895, at the time of the Venezuela crisis, 155,403. Cook and Keith, *British Historical Facts*, 185.

ranked twelfth in the world, below those of the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian empire, and China, none of which was a celebrated naval power. The following year, Congress agreed to fund the first three modern armored warships.<sup>16</sup> As with the army, it took the Spanish-American War, plus the arguments of the American Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1889), to jolt the Americans into building up the Navy.<sup>17</sup> Mahan's book was of great influence in London, Paris, Berlin and Tokyo as well. The captain's efforts worked. In 1904, a British visitor to the United States saw fourteen battleships and thirteen armored cruisers being built simultaneously in American shipyards.<sup>18</sup>

The point of giving some indication of the comparative economic and military strengths of the two countries is to provide a bit of background to what was the turning point in Anglo-American relations, and this was the Venezuela crisis in 1895–1896. That is why this handbook begins with Andrew Ehrhardt and Charlie Laderman's chapter on Grover Cleveland and Lord Salisbury. Ehrhardt and Laderman discuss the postcrisis attempts to repair the relationship and spread peace, but in general their assessment of the personal relationship was that it did not exist. This chapter, however, concentrates on the strategic questions and how they were resolved. The question was the position of the border between Venezuela and British Guiana.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to a first-class publicist, it came to the attention of the American public in 1895, when Venezuela, not for the first time, invoked the Monroe Doctrine against the claims of Great Britain for its own colony, British Guiana. Heretofore, the US government had pretty well ignored Venezuela, but this time, there was a response. Democratic president Grover Cleveland was in political difficulties thanks to Republican attacks, and the new secretary of state Richard Olney was determined to assert himself and bring Great Britain to heel. The United States offered arbitration. The British—led by Salisbury—declined it. Fundamentally, he argued, the conflict had nothing to do with the United States, and Olney replied with a dispatch of some brusqueness. After setting out the history, as he saw it, of the dispute, Olney issued a stark warning: "Today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition. Why? It is not because of the pure friendship or good will felt for it. It is not simply by reason of its high character as a

<sup>16</sup>Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 114–6.

<sup>17</sup>Captain A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660–1783* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1889). Fundamentally, Mahan argued that great power rivalries had been decided on the sea, not the land, from which he deduced that what was required were large battle fleets to control the oceans, supported by bases on islands or the edge of continents, not large land masses. Overseas colonies were vital for a nation's prosperity, and the blockade was a very effective weapon.

<sup>18</sup>Kennedy, *British Naval Mastery*, 183.

<sup>19</sup>Burk, *Old World, New World*, 396–411.



civilized state, nor because wisdom and justice and equity are the inevitable characteristics of the dealings of the United States. It is because, in addition to all other grounds, its infinite resources combined with its isolated position render it master of the situation and practically invulnerable as against any or all other powers.”<sup>20</sup> The problem for Olney and Cleveland was that an aggressive European power—such as Great Britain—on the South American continent could threaten this isolation.

Later known as the Olney Doctrine, this came very close to claiming that might makes right, which alarmed and infuriated the Canadians and Latin Americans. The Chilean minister to Washington observed that “if Washington won its point with Salisbury, the United States will have succeeded in establishing a protectorate over all of Latin America.”<sup>21</sup> The history displayed in the dispatch, which was 12,000 words long, was bad and the language intemperate, but Olney later explained that the note was designed “effectually even if rudely” to dispel complacency. Its phrases were of a “bumptious order,” Olney’s biographer later explained, but the “excuse was that in English eyes, the United States was . . . so completely a negligible quantity that it was believed only words the equivalent of blows would be really effective.”<sup>22</sup> The British response was heavy with gravitas and ripe with the very sort of *de haut en bas* tone that might have been calculated to outrage the Americans, which it did.<sup>23</sup> Upon the reception of the two dispatches sent by the British, Cleveland blew up. He spent the night in the white heat of composition, read the result to the Cabinet, and sent it to Congress. He had decided that the British had challenged the Monroe Doctrine and that the United States had to take things in hand. His message was received with applause in the Senate, but in traditional diplomatic exchanges between countries, the message was a call for war, and war might well have been the consequence.<sup>24</sup>

But war was not the consequence. Salisbury, both prime minister and foreign secretary, certainly wanted to ignore the Americans, assuming, as he remarked to a Cabinet colleague, that “the American conflagration will fizzle away,” and that they should just wait until “Cleveland’s electioneering dodge” had blown itself out. Salisbury very much disliked America and Americans, having written in 1850 that “[t]he Yankee, whose life is one long calculation, appears to have bombast for his mother tongue.” What he feared was not her military and naval prowess but her democracy, presumably that it might be contagious. He did not entirely dismiss the American threat, writing on the

<sup>20</sup> Olney to Bayard, No. 222, 20 July 1895, Microfilm 77/reel 90, fols. 305–6, Department of State Papers, U.S. National Archives.

<sup>21</sup> LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 126.

<sup>22</sup> George G. Eggert, *Richard Olney: Evolution of a Statesman* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), 212.

<sup>23</sup> Salisbury to Pauncefote, 26 November 1895, No. 15, Cmnd Paper United States, No. 1, *Parliamentary Papers*, February 1896, Correspondence Respecting the Question of the Boundary of British Guinea.

<sup>24</sup> Henry F. Graff, *Grover Cleveland* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 125.

2nd of January 1896 to the Chancellor Sir Michael Hicks Beach that “A war with America—not this year but not in the distant future—has become something more than a possibility.”<sup>25</sup> It did not, because he could not take the Cabinet, an uneasy coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, with him. In any case Salisbury was losing the unquestioned control he had exercised over foreign policy in previous Conservative governments.

Was there any direct contact between the president and the prime minister that influenced the decision of the Cabinet? The answer, as demonstrated in Ehrhardt’s and Laderman’s chapter, was no. What, therefore, did influence the Cabinet? The answer primarily lies in the geopolitical danger in which Britain found itself. The government had to deal with problems with the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and France, as well as clean up the mess left by the embarrassing Jameson raid in South Africa.<sup>26</sup> In comparison, America was small beer. The Cabinet, against the strongly expressed opposition of Salisbury, decided that the United States had the right to intervene; the Foreign Office now concentrated on limiting the amount of territory involved. A boundary commission was set up to decide where it actually meandered, an arbitral tribunal was set up, and on the 3rd October 1897 the tribunal handed down its award. As Olney had rather expected, barring two substantial alterations in favor of Venezuela, the boundary in the main followed that claimed by Britain. But the land had not been the point for Olney: rather, it was to bring Britain to acknowledge that the Western Hemisphere, barring the territory held by Britain, was the United States’ sphere of influence, and in 1904 Theodore Roosevelt, by means of the so-called Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, would openly proclaim the right of the United States to enforce order within the hemisphere.<sup>27</sup>

The decisions taken by Britain in Latin America, which would include ceding rights to the building and running of an isthmian canal, were far more important to the United States than to Britain. The United States was a regional power, but Britain’s concerns were global. Britain needed to protect the empire and safeguard the sea lanes, the highways for her trade and for vital imports of raw materials and food. In 1885, Britain imported four-fifths of its food—and the pressures were becoming very great. In short, Britain needed to

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 46, 617.

<sup>26</sup> T.G. Otte, “A Question of Leadership: Lord Salisbury, the Unionist Cabinet and Foreign Policy Making, 1895–1900,” *Contemporary British History* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2000), 4–9; Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 24; Burk, *Old World, New World*, 406–8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 408–11. The 1904 Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine—part of Theodore Roosevelt’s Annual Message to Congress—the president said that American “interests and those of our southern neighbors are in reality identical ... While they ... obey the primary laws of civilized society they may rest assured that they will be treated by us in a spirit of cordial sympathy. We would interfere with them only in the last resort, and then only if it became evident that their inability or unwillingness to do justice at home and abroad had violated the rights of the United States or had invited foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations.”

consolidate resources. In response to the alarming enlargement of the French fleet, the Cabinet in 1889 adopted the principle that the Royal Navy must be larger than the next two threatening navies, a decision made even more crucial with the signing of the Dual Alliance between France and Russia.<sup>28</sup> Germany in its many guises over the centuries had tended to be a British ally; the Reich was a land power and Britain a sea power, and they were not in competition. But with the combination of its ferociously pro-Boer activities, its challenges to Britain in China, the Middle East, and Africa, the proclamation in its Navy Bill of 1900, “there is only one way of protecting Germany’s commerce and colonial possessions: Germany must possess a fleet of such strength that a war with her would shake the position of the mightiest naval Power,” and that meant Germany had joined France and Russia as huge threats to Britain. The rise of two extra-European powers—the United States and Japan—meant that a balance of power in Europe no longer protected the British Empire.

As a result, there was a reconfiguration of British relations with other powers between about 1898 and 1907 by two successive foreign secretaries, Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Grey. At the same time, by September 1901, the First Lord of the Admiralty Lord Selborne had decided that Britain no longer enjoyed the naval superiority that it had enjoyed for nearly three-quarters of a century, and changed the shape and deployment of the Royal Navy to meet the new realities. A primary reason for the changes in geopolitical relationships was that the elimination of imperial crisis points would considerably lessen the need for the Royal Navy to maintain fleets around the world and would allow for a reduction in expenditure.<sup>29</sup> This was a real concern of the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. By 1903, with the growing German naval threat, the Royal Navy would account for 25 percent of government expenditure. The organizing principle of both strategies was to make changes on the peripheries in order to concentrate resources nearer the home islands.<sup>30</sup>

The first change, both diplomatic and strategic, was fundamental: in 1902, Britain signed a peacetime alliance for the first time in centuries (the last one was the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1373) with the Japanese and renewed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1905 and 1911. The purpose was to commit the

<sup>28</sup> 336 H.C. Deb., 3rd Series, 1171. The Naval Defence Act was passed on 21 May 1889. Curiously, although the second largest navy was Italian, not Russian, no one thought that Italy and Great Britain would go to war.

<sup>29</sup> Chancellor of the Exchequer, “Financial Difficulties: Appeal for Economy in Estimates,” October 1901, CAB 37/58, Vol. 109, p. 8; Cabinet Papers, The National Archive, Kew, London; Table 3-1, “Gross Expenditures 1887–1907” in Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 131.

<sup>30</sup> Selborne to Joseph Chamberlain, 21 September 1901; “The Naval Estimates and the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Memorandum on the Growth of Expenditure”; Selborne to A. J. Balfour, 4 April 1902, Add. MSS 49709, fol. 105, Balfour Papers, British Library; “Memorandum for the Cabinet,” 26 Feb. 1904, written by Selborne, signed by Lansdowne; “Cabinet Memorandum: Distribution and Mobilization of the Fleet,” 6 December 1904” in D. George Boyce (ed.), *Selborne, Second Earl, The Crisis of British Power: The Imperial and Naval Papers of the Second Earl of Selborne, 1895–1910* (London: The Historians’ Press, 1990), 126, 129–36, 170–3, 184–90.

Imperial Japanese Navy to combining with the Royal Navy to contain the other great powers, particularly the combined Russian and French fleets, in the Far East.<sup>31</sup> This allowed the Royal Navy to withdraw five battleships and place them in the Mediterranean. The second diplomatic agreement was with France, and by the so-called Anglo-French Entente—not an alliance—of 1904 the two countries settled outstanding imperial conflicts in Africa as well as the question of French access to the rich fishing grounds off of Newfoundland. In due course, the French assumed responsibility for the Mediterranean and the British were able to withdraw ships from that area to station them in the Channel. The negotiations with Russia were much more difficult than those with France, because the imperial rivalry with Russia in Central Asia, which put India at risk, was more ferocious than that with France in Africa. The outcome of the negotiations was the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, by which Persia was divided into spheres of influence, Afghanistan would be neutral, but with British overlordship, and Tibet would remain neutral. Russia, however, saw this as a breathing space whilst she built up her power after her defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, and thus the British had constantly to keep watch on her activities.<sup>32</sup>

The place of the United States in this “revolution” is clear. Because the value of British commercial interests in the Western Hemisphere was high, and the extent of colonial possessions was larger than the territory of the United States, the British did not like resigning its position to the United States. However, the British did not fear that the United States would attack its colonies; furthermore, if it claimed hegemony, the United States, the British felt, also took on the responsibility of keeping unruly countries in order, which could only benefit those with financial and commercial interests there. Thus, in the face of greater dangers elsewhere, Britain accepted that the United States would dominate the continent. Because there had been a series of agreements, which, almost without exception, reflected American demands, there were virtually no points of conflict left. In recent years, changes in public opinion in both countries meant that both governments had accepted that war between them was unacceptable. The advice of the British War Office was that “the contingency of war with the United States should be avoided at all hazards,” and Arthur Balfour compared war with the United States to a civil war.<sup>33</sup> In this situation, each could hope for at least neutrality from the other. The Cabinet had, by 1900, decided that if there was war with the European powers, the United

<sup>31</sup> It was also to prevent an imminent Russo-Japanese rapprochement. George Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900–1907* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1963), 47. Japan was to destroy the Russian Pacific and Baltic fleets in the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War.

<sup>32</sup> Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 188–201.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America 1815–1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 362. Balfour stated in 1896 that “the idea of a war with the United States of America carries with it something of the unnatural horror of civil war.” See, W. T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World, The Review of Reviews Annual* (1902–1903): 14.

States might come in on the European side, and, as a result, the British would probably be defeated. This was a driving concern in sorting out problems between the two countries.

Decisions were taken about where the stationing of a Royal Navy battle fleet was vital and where it was no longer necessary. Already in December 1903 it had been decided that the Royal Navy would withdraw from the Halifax (on the east coast) and the Esquimalt (on the west coast) naval bases, thereby handing over the defense of Canada to the Canadians themselves. The Pacific and South Atlantic Squadrons completely disappeared. Three of the four battle fleets were concentrated in European waters, one based on England, one based on Gibraltar, and one based on Malta. The China, East Indies, and Australia Squadrons were based at Singapore, whilst all but a flagship and an armored cruiser, and their smaller supporting craft, were withdrawn from the North America and West Indian Station.<sup>34</sup>

There was really nothing to be done about any putative American threat, because, in the Western Hemisphere, “the United States,” Selborne wrote, “are forming a navy the power and size of which will be limited only by the amount of money the American people choose to spend on it.”<sup>35</sup> And, of course, as a rapidly growing economic power, they had increasing amounts of money available should they wish to spend. Fortunately, not only was there not believed to be a threat from that quarter, but the Cabinet, and probably most of the political class, believed that Great Britain and the United States shared most values and interests. And so, as a by-product of the threats from Europe, Britain had, after centuries, finally withdrawn the Royal Navy from the Western Hemisphere, leaving the Caribbean an American lake. (It is worth pointing out that the implication of the withdrawal from both of the Royal Navy’s bases in Canada was that if it became necessary, Canada arguably was largely under American rather than British protection.) This, at least, was how the Americans saw it, but the British viewed it differently: they had turned over to the Americans the task of defending the hemisphere, thereby incorporating the US Navy into the British defense strategy. But, regardless of how one viewed it, the power of Great Britain to exert virtually unencumbered influence in Central America had ceased. In South America, however, their informal empire remained intact.

<sup>34</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in British North America*, 364–5; Boyce (ed.), “Distribution and Mobilization of the Fleet” in *The Crisis of British Power*, 184–90. After the destruction of the Russian fleet by the Japanese at Tshushima in May 1905, as well as the Anglo-French defeat of the Germans in the 1905 Moroccan Crisis, there was a further redistribution of the fleet, with the object of countering the German threat. Previously, there were sixteen battle-ships deployed as part of the Channel and Home fleets and seventeen in the Mediterranean and on the China Station. Afterward, there were nine in the Mediterranean, none on the China Station, and twenty-four deployed with the Channel and Atlantic fleets. David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1868–2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 159.

<sup>35</sup> Boyce, (ed.), “Distribution and Mobilization of the Fleet” in *The Crisis of British Power*, 184–5.

What effect did any relationship between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Balfour have on these developments? Theodore Roosevelt thought that the British empire was a good thing, even if not always up to snuff, and that it was not a threat to the United States.<sup>36</sup> It is clear from Michael Patrick Cullinane's essay on Theodore Roosevelt and A. J. Balfour that they never met, they never corresponded, and that whilst they shared a desire for a warming of the Anglo-American relationship, any contact came through intermediaries. Therefore, in the discussions and rearrangements described above, the relationship between the two leaders was virtually irrelevant because, as he points out, a close relationship was not necessary to effect policies.

With the First World War, the world changed for both the British and the Americans. Certainly, because of the acquisition of territories in the Middle East which had been part of the Ottoman empire, and in Africa which had been part of the German empire, the British empire in 1919 was substantially larger than it had been in 1914. On the other hand, because of the need to finance the wartime purchases in the United States for Russia, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Rumania, partly for France, and for itself, the pound sterling was severely damaged, and, by the spring of 1919, had exchanged places with the dollar, with the latter replacing the pound as the strongest international currency. For the United States, British purchases had helped finance and accelerate industrialization of the American economy.<sup>37</sup> In short, in financial and economic terms, the United States replaced Great Britain as the stronger power. President Woodrow Wilson had intended to use this power to force Britain to accept the American insistence on his Fourteen Points and particularly the "freedom of the seas" clause—in other words that Britain surrender her right to impose restrictions on neutral nations during wartime. In July 1917, Wilson wrote that "When the war is over we can force them to our way of thinking, because by that time they will, among other things, be financially in our hands."<sup>38</sup> This particular comment was made specifically with regard to the peace terms, but also when demanding freedom of the seas. Wilson would soon discover that financial power does not automatically translate into political or diplomatic power. At Versailles, Wilson and the British prime minister David Lloyd George clashed ferociously over these two issues, but when his bluff was called, Wilson backed down. Lloyd George also fought off Wilson's attempts to include the British empire in his call for the self-determination of peoples.<sup>39</sup>

In his chapter, John A. Thompson makes the point that Wilson and Lloyd George were not close: there were obvious differences in style, but more

<sup>36</sup> William N. Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft* (Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan, 1997), 241–3.

<sup>37</sup> Kathleen Burk, "Financing Kitchener's (and Everyone Else's) Armies," in Keith Neilson and Greg Kennedy (eds.), *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856–1956 – Essays in Honour of David French* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 257–76, 260–1.

<sup>38</sup> Wilson to House, 21 July 1917, Box 121, E.M. House Papers, Yale University Library.

<sup>39</sup> Burk, *The Lion and the Eagle*, 373–8; Burk, *Old World, New World*, 457–8.