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1

Introduction

President George W. Bush Visits London

When Queen Victoria visited Dublin in 1901 during the Boer War, she was famously greeted by a resentful, sullen and silent city. Over one hundred years later, in November 2003, President George W. Bush visited London on what was, rather extraordinarily, the first official state visit accorded to an American president during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. Bush's visit, like Victoria's, had the trappings of an imperial progress. Some 14,000 British police officers were reportedly assigned to cover the London stage of the presidential trip. An excursion to Prime Minister Tony Blair's constituency in Sedgefield cost the Durham police authorities over one million pounds. Disagreements were reported between British and American security personnel, with the latter requesting that large sections of London's West End be sealed off to traffic. The Queen apparently vetoed the positioning of a Black Hawk helicopter over Buckingham Palace. This particular feature of the US security presence was deemed by royal decree to be 'too noisy' (Osborne, 2003, 14).

In 2003, of course, President Bush found, not a silent city, but one seething with noisy protest against the direction of US foreign policy and against what was widely seen America's neo-imperialist relationship with Britain. Like Victoria in 1901, he was also forced to defend an unpopular war. Some nine months before the Bush visit, prior to the invasion of Iraq, London had witnessed the largest anti-war demonstration in British history. A public opinion poll published in *The Sunday Times* on 16 February 2003 had seen roughly equal numbers of respondents citing Bush and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein as the 'greatest threat to world peace'. Bush's

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November 2003 trip to London had been arranged well before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq: an invasion, of course, in which British forces had participated. The day before the visit, on 18 November, Lindis Percy, a veteran peace protester, clambered up the gates of Buckingham Palace to unfurl an inverted American flag replete with anti-Bush slogans.

The 2003 state visit was the occasion of an extraordinary outpouring of a range of anti-Bush and anti-American emotion. Rational condemnation of the invasion became obscured in raw hatred of the US president, often also by a vaguer, generalized anti-Americanism and a visceral resentment of British subservience. On 17 November, the *New Statesman* editorialized: 'Nobody should apologise for being anti-American; if you don't like what America does, wear the badge with pride.' Playwright Harold Pinter addressed George W. Bush: 'I'm sure you'll be having a nice little tea party with your fellow war criminal, Tony Blair. Please wash the cucumber sandwiches down with a glass of blood, with my compliments' (*The Guardian*, 18 November 2003). A Merseyside hospital porter interviewed by *The Observer* (16 November 2003) identified the 'thing that really needles me' as the fact that 'Britain has become America's tart'.

Yet, even in this emotional and sometimes hysterical national response to the 2003 Bush visit, the complexity of US–UK relations, not least in the realm of sentiment, had to be recognized. The 16 November *vox pop* exercise by *The Observer* elicited the following comment from a Liverpoolian secretary: 'My Nan remembers the Americans coming here in the war to rescue us, and I think we owe them.' Many Iraq War critics were keen to distance themselves from comprehensive anti-Americanism. Polly Toynbee insisted that she was an opponent of the president, not a foe of his country: 'Apart from the left fringe and the mohican fringe, we are broadly pro-American and always have been. No, this is personal.' Timothy Garton Ash, looking forward to the 2004 US presidential elections, estimated that 'perhaps one in twenty British people ... are in some meaningful sense "anti-American"'. He advised Bush that Britain simply hated conservative America: 'Most of the people on the streets of London, whether actively demonstrating or privately muttering, are not against America; they just want the other America. Think of them as Democrats, casting an early overseas vote' (*The Guardian*, 18 November 2003). It should also be

remembered that the visit was by no means the utter disaster that Downing Street must have feared. The sting of the protests was drawn to some degree by the simultaneous bomb attacks on British economic targets in Turkey. Public opinion, as revealed in polls published around the time of the visit, remained stubbornly complex. General British approval ratings of the US certainly dropped significantly (from about 75 to 40 per cent) at the time of the Iraq invasion; by the Summer of 2003, however, they had returned to around 70 per cent (*The Observer*, 9 November 2003). A poll published in *The Guardian* on 18 November saw a majority of Labour voters actually welcoming the Bush visit and 62 per cent of all respondents believing the US to be ‘generally speaking a force for good, not evil, in the world’.

A Special Relationship

The early years of the twenty-first century saw an extended debate about the nature of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States. The controversies surrounding the foreign policies of the first George W. Bush Administration, and the Blair government’s support for them, generated degrees of passion which cried out for rational, historical analysis of Anglo-American relations. It is the prime purpose of this book to provide such an analysis.

A few fairly obvious points will set this analysis in motion. The United States in the early part of the new century was indeed a formidable power: in some senses, probably the most powerful nation state in world history. As Robert Cooper, sometime foreign policy adviser to Tony Blair and subsequently a senior European Union diplomat, put it in 2003, there ‘is an imperial tinge to American policy’, even if ‘America is not imperial in the usual sense’ of seeking annexation and formal domination of territory abroad. It is certainly hegemonic’. To quote Cooper once more: ‘The hegemony is essentially voluntary, part of a bargain in which America provides protection and allies offer bases and support’ (Cooper, 2003, 48). Despite the abuse hurled at him on the streets of London in November 2003, George W. Bush was an emperor in no formal sense. Quite unlike Victoria in 1901, he had no formal, juridical authority over the country he was visiting. The United

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States and the United Kingdom are sovereign allies, not states bound together by the imperial knot. Blair's support for Bush's foreign policy was certainly at one level the product of the historic habits of cooperation between London and Washington which are a major subject of this book. London's support, however, was also freely given and was, as much as any other factor, the result of Blair's personal belief both about the obligations surrounding the US–UK 'special relationship' and about the fundamental rightness of the George W. Bush administration's reaction to the terror attacks of 11 September 2001. Blair's support was neither inevitable nor determined by the prior history of US–UK relations. What is clear, however, is that little sense can be made of contemporary transatlantic controversies without a prior understanding of the various forces that have tended to bind Britain and America together over the past half century.

Though drawing on prior cultural, linguistic and historical links, the roots of the 'special relationship' between the United States and Britain which is the subject of this book are widely and correctly seen to lie in the period of collaboration between the allies during the Second World War. Following the Arcadia conference with Franklin Roosevelt in 1942, Winston Churchill told King George VI that 'Britain and America were now married after many months of walking out.' On his way to meet the US president, Churchill put it even more colourfully: 'Previously we were trying to seduce them. Now they are securely in the harem' (Jenkins, 2001, 676). After 1945, the relationship, by turns, developed, thrived and stuttered against a background of an, admittedly, frequently strained community of interests in the conditions of the Cold War. Shifts in international power necessitated a reworking of the power relationships as understood by Churchill. By 1960, London was certainly not in the business of running international harems. Though driven by common interests – essentially common perceptions of the Soviet communist threat – the relationship was nevertheless sustained by cultural sharing, by personal friendships, by institutionalized exchange of information and by complex and sturdy networks of military and diplomatic cooperation.

The main concern of this book is with the later Cold War and the immediate post-Cold War era. Detailed attention is given particularly to events after 1960. The post-1960 era constitutes a distinct phase of the 'special relationship' and a phase which, in comparison

to the well-researched period of 1941–60, has not yet received its fair share of scholarly attention. The restoration of close US–UK cooperation following the 1956 Suez crisis inaugurated a distinct stage in the relationship. Especially, but not entirely, in nuclear issues, the era of President John Kennedy and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (the years 1961–3) began a period of Anglo-American closeness which lasted, albeit in attenuated form, into the post-Cold War years. Major tensions in the relationship emerged in the later 1960s and early 1970s, with firm and close leader relations being restored to some degree in the late 1970s, but fully re-established only in the 1980s with the coming to power of President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. This book reviews the apparent peaks and troughs in the Cold War relationship. It argues that, even in the conspicuous peaks of closeness – the eras of Kennedy and Macmillan and of Reagan and Thatcher – there were significant misunderstandings, squabbles and, indeed, near breakdowns in the relationship. By the same token, in periods of apparent coolness, for example, in the early 1970s, networks of bureaucratic cooperation continued to flourish.

We will also assess the evolution of the US–UK relationship through not one, but two fundamental international transformations: the end of the Cold War and the onset of the post-9/11 War on Terror. The Cold War's end removed much of the rationale for intimate and 'special' US–UK cooperation. The sharpening, in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, of the European integration agenda also set what remained of the 'special relationship' in a new and unpredictable environment. By 2003, however, with the two allies engaged in the conflict in Iraq and Tony Blair widely regarded as by far the most influential of foreign leaders in Washington, obsequies for the relationship seemed very premature. A major purpose of this book is to explain the continuation of close relations in international conditions very far removed from those to which the 'special relationship' traced its origins and initial sense of purpose. At various stages in its recent evolution, the US–UK relationship has been surrounded by 'end of the affair' literature. The Cold War's end stimulated one such eruption. At one level, perceptions of the US–UK affair ending were bound up with European integration. In the mid-1990s, Margaret Thatcher began publicly to bemoan the fact that John Major, her successor as British prime minister had 'chosen' Europe over America to the extent that the 'special relationship' was

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now marginalized, if not actually destroyed (Gilmour, 1995). Many observers argued that, following the Cold War, Washington no longer had any need for special relations with London. For John Dickie (1994), the demise of the Cold War had removed the fundamental purpose of the alliance. Another rash of 'end of the affair' commentary emerged at the very time that Blair was offering close support to the US in Afghanistan and Iraq. It was now argued that, far from demonstrating the resilience of special relations, Blair's policies represented a stubborn refusal to recognise that times had changed. As David Marquand (2004) put it: 'Europe no longer needs a guardian angel. There is nothing to guard against.' Perhaps future historians will come to see the Blair-George W. Bush relationship as something of a last hurrah for Anglo-American closeness. From the perspective of the early years of the twenty-first century, however, it is the resilience of the closeness, not its demise, which requires emphasis and explanation.

A major preoccupation in the ensuing pages is with the interplay between culture, sentiment and interests in the later Cold War and post-Cold War eras. To numerous commentators, the US and UK are united primarily by values and habits of outlook and attitude: by, for example, attachment to the rule of law, including of course property rights, to religious toleration, basic human freedoms of expression. For Raymond Seitz, US ambassador to London in the early post-cold War years, 'end of the affair' jeremiads were inappropriate because the shared Anglo-American 'joint moral perspective', despite the different 'constitutional and structural expression' each country gives to their belief in 'tolerance and equity' and 'the basic freedoms' (Seitz, 1993, 86). It will be argued below that shared culture (especially, but not entirely, shared elite culture) has been an important and sustaining influence in the 'special relationship': not in some quasi-mystical sense of a sentimentalized 'Anglo-America', but as a practical and quotidian bolster to cooperation rooted in interests. The book is concerned also with the degree to which the 'special relationship', in its Cold War and post-Cold War incarnations, has signified partnership and mutuality, rather than simple US dominance.

By way of background to further explanation of the 'special relationship' in recent history, the next section of this chapter provides a brief, thumbnail review of Anglo-American relations up to 1945.

Anglo-American Relations to 1945

The English were not the first Europeans to settle in North America. The first attempt by English settlers to found an American colony took place on Roanoke Island, off the coast of present-day North Carolina, in the 1580s. This was one hundred years after Christopher Columbus's voyage of discovery and after a Spanish empire had been established in the Americas. In 1607, English settlements were established in Virginia, at Jamestown and Sagadahoc. English religious dissenters had a unique role in founding and shaping the emerging colonial, and especially the New England, identity. In 1620, the *Mayflower* landed at Massachusetts Bay. The *Mayflower* pilgrims, who founded the colony of Plymouth Plantation, were Puritans who had separated from the established Church of England and who had subsequently sought refuge in the Netherlands. For English Puritans, New England would be, in John Winthrop's famous phrase, a godly 'city upon a hill': a model for the world. Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, however, colonial society did become increasingly heterogeneous. In 1700, the English and Welsh population made up 80 per cent of the population in the British American mainland colonies; by 1755, the percentage had dropped to 52. Germans, Scots-Irish, Irish and African slaves all grew in number.

The revolution against British rule famously involved the airing of political ideas derived from the English radical and republican traditions. It rested on a growing sense of nationhood and impatience with London's imperial tug. The year 1776 saw the publication of both the Declaration of Independence and of *Common Sense*, the radical republican tract written by Thomas Paine, an Englishman who had come to America two years previously. The outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1803 began an era of trade disputes between London and the (neutral) United States of America. The War of 1812, between the US and Great Britain, grew out of trade and territorial disputes, as well as grievances resulting from the Royal Navy's continued impressment of American seamen. The War of 1812 resulted in a new awareness on London's part of the degree to which the US now had to be taken seriously as a territorial and trading competitor. The two powers clashed over access to Latin American and West Indian trade, and over the future of the Canadian provinces. By 1850, various accommodations had been

made concerning these issues, along with Anglo-American tension over Central America, Oregon and British efforts to suppress the slave trade. Benjamin Disraeli gave his opinion of American territorial expansion in 1856; it was ‘not injurious to England ... (let me say this in a whisper lest it cross the Atlantic) – more than that – it diminishes the power of the United States’ (Campbell, 1974, 94–5). The years immediately preceding the American Civil War were actually ones of considerable Anglo-American amity and interdependence.

During the American Civil War (1861–5), the Confederacy made several attempts to win British support. In 1861, the British vessel, *Trent*, which was carrying Confederate emissaries to London, was intercepted by the US Navy. The South’s ‘cotton diplomacy’ – using Britain’s needs for southern cotton to extract recognition from London – collapsed. London increasingly judged that the Southern cause would fail and Britain was able to buy cotton from non-American sources. Following the war, however, anti-British feeling in the Northern states was intense. This was linked to the fact that Southern warships had been constructed in British shipyards, as well as to the growing influence of Irish-American republican groups. ‘Old’ immigration from Northern and Western Europe, including Britain, did continue. English immigrants arrived in considerable numbers in response to economic depressions in 1873 and 1883. From the mid-1890s, however, ‘new’ immigration, from Southern and Eastern Europe, permanently changed US demography.

Partly in reaction to this putative ‘de-Angloing’ of America, elites on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1890s advanced ideas of the desired unity of English-speaking peoples and of ‘Anglo America’. Such ideas profoundly influenced the young Winston Churchill. In 1898, US Secretary of State Richard Olney wrote that Anglo-American ‘close community’, based on ‘origin, speech, thought, literature, institutions, ideals’, would obviate any future conflict between the two countries, and would indeed cause them to stand together against common enemies (Campbell 1974, 201). The Spanish American War of 1898 and the Second Boer War (1899–1902) saw a considerable degree of Anglo-American cohesion. The period between 1894 and 1914 involved new accommodations, especially during the expansionist presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1901–9). The rise of US power, despite Roosevelt’s global ambitions, was still primarily in the Western hemisphere and

limited – in Anne Orde’s words – ‘so far, to areas where British interests were not thought vital’ (Orde, 1996, 40). John Young (1997, 26) describes a new ‘policy of friendship’, despite ‘the fact that, in some ways, the US represented a potential threat’. By 1907, in tonnage terms at least, the US was the world’s second largest naval power. By 1900, America had overtaken Britain in terms of share of world manufacturing output.

Between 1914 and 1917, Woodrow Wilson (president, 1913–21) urged Americans to be neutral in thought and action as Europe abandoned itself to war. Cultural and economic links between the US and Britain were strong, and consciously emphasized by London. There was in Washington a clear ‘British party’, which felt American entry into the conflict on Britain’s side to be inevitable. Robert Lansing (US secretary of state, 1915–19) certainly saw an Allied victory over Germany as a vital American interest, yet the US remained neutral for the first three years of the First World War. Neutrality was generally supported by the American public (not merely by German-Americans and Irish-Americans). The route to American intervention was punctuated by various German violations of American neutrality rights (as defined by Wilson) and the granting to Britain of American loans. The Zimmerman telegram, given by London to Wilson, raised tension further in February 1917. The telegram, from Germany’s foreign secretary, proposed an anti-US alliance of Germany, Mexico and Japan in the event of American entry into the conflict. During 1917–18, US and British naval forces operated under a joint (British) command, yet wartime relations were strained by personal rivalries and by differing British and American views on the future world order.

The stage for the postwar era was set by the US Senate’s 1919 rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and by American non-participation in the League of Nations. Anglo-American relations in the 1920s focused on issues of war debts and naval rivalry. The Washington Naval Arms Conference of 1921–2 involved an agreement by the US, Britain and Japan to reduce battleship tonnage. John Callaghan (1997, 43) comments: ‘Economy and *realpolitik* ruled out a war with the United States and this was what really mattered to the British decision-makers, though some of them indulged in the rhetoric of “Anglo-Saxondom”.’ The issue of belligerent maritime rights raised tensions in the late 1920s and dominated the 1929 meeting between President Herbert Hoover (1929–33) and Ramsay MacDonald

(Labour prime minister, 1924, 1929–35). This period of Anglo-American relations was ended by the onset of global economic depression and the rise of international trade protectionism: notably, the 1930 Hawley-Smoot Act in the US and the British ‘imperial preference’ system, adopted in 1932.

The rise of fascism in Germany, Italy and Japan took place against a background of Anglo-American introversion and unwillingness to act in defence of European or Far Eastern security. Neville Chamberlain (Conservative prime minister, 1937–40) was personally distrustful of the US and rebuffed a suggestion in 1938 by President Franklin Roosevelt (1933–45) that a conference be organized by the world powers on disarmament and economic cooperation. Writing in January 1937, however, British Ambassador to Washington R.C. Lindsay offered an upbeat assessment of Anglo-American relations as Europe began its slide into war. Debts and reparations deriving from World War One constituted ‘the only actively sore place in Anglo-American relations’. Regarding future European conflicts, he wrote that it was ‘widely held in America that the issue in Europe is the clash between the democratic and the totalitarian or autocratic philosophies of government, and on that question every American is whole-heartedly in sympathy with the former’ (Adams (ed.), 1995, Annual Report for 1936, 290–91). Lindsay wrote as if US engagement on Britain’s side in a future war against Britain was inevitable. It was not. The US was brought into World War Two by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. As late as 1939, the American pro-Hitler German-American Bund held a rally in New York City which attracted over 20 000 people. However, following the 1939 outbreak of war, and especially following his victory in the 1940 presidential election, Franklin Roosevelt’s own course did seem clear. US defence spending increased. In December 1940, FDR declared that the US would be the great arsenal of democracy. The destroyers-for-bases deal of September 1940 and, especially, Lend Lease (the aid for Britain programme begun in March 1941) ended US neutrality well before Pearl Harbor.

Anglo-American cooperation in war conditions was organized almost immediately at the White House Arcadia conference between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Roosevelt. At this conference, Churchill also disclosed the degree to which Britain in the ULTRA programme had broken German ciphers. Only in the

Pacific theatre did General Douglas MacArthur succeed in keeping Anglo-American cooperation at relative arm's length. The intensity and success of wartime cooperation did not mean that tensions were absent. There were disputes over the South American naval blockade and over the Middle East. Churchill resisted American pressure to dismantle the imperial preference trading system. Roosevelt felt, with some justification, that London was excessively preoccupied with rescuing and enhancing its control of the Empire. The two allies clashed over future roles for Britain in the Balkans. Though Churchill was to emerge in the late 1940s as a strong advocate of high-level negotiation with Moscow, his attitude towards the Soviet Union and its intentions was consistently more antagonistic than Roosevelt's, and his view of the future role of the United Nations more sceptical. The British leader's opinion of President Harry Truman (1945–53) was little short of openly contemptuous. US wartime and immediate post-war diplomacy was increasingly geared to the achievement of a liberal world order, with consequent opposition to British economic protectionism a clear part of Washington's agenda. American use of atomic weapons in Japan in August 1945 seemed to symbolize US domination of a world order in which Britain could enjoy only a junior role. Britain had collaborated in the Manhattan Project, the wartime programme to develop the atom bomb, but in a clearly subordinate capacity.

Special Relations

The term 'special relationship' appears to have been coined during the Second World War. Prime Minister Winston Churchill used it in 1943 in a private communication. Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax wrote in July 1940 about 'the possibility of some sort of special association' between Britain and the US. It was, of course, in Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech, delivered at Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946, that the term came to public attention. The British ex-prime minister advocated 'the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples'. This involved 'a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States'. The US–UK relationship constituted one of 'three circles of influence' for Britain. Within these circles – the other two involved Britain's relationship with the Commonwealth and with Europe – the

UK could operate as a swing power: not totally integrated into any one circle, but wielding power as a fulcrum within a wheel (Reynolds, 1989, 94). ‘Three circles’ thinking, which has been enormously influential for the development of post-1945 British foreign policy, tends to insist that the UK does not need to choose between the circles. Successful policy results rather from the simultaneous commitment to all three dimensions. In the post-1960 era, the ‘Commonwealth circle’ has tended to be replaced by a commitment to influence on a global scale beyond Europe. Andrew Gamble has also made the point that there were always four circles rather than three: ‘Once the automatic identity of England and Britain is broken the assumption that the British state is a permanent and inviolable unity dissolves, making the British Union itself a fourth circle of England, and the first in time’ (Gamble, 2003, 30). However conceptualized, ‘circles’ thinking has greatly contributed to the idea that, for British foreign policy, closeness to Washington serves always to enhance, not to destroy, other dimensions of international British influence.

Churchill foresaw the fact but not the extent of the post-war decline in Britain’s international power. As America negotiated the early Cold War treaty system, it, not Britain, emerged as the swing power: the centre of the non-communist wheel. Churchill’s vision, however, provides the essential starting point for discussion of Anglo-American relations since 1960. Churchill was, as John Charmley (1995, 3) has put it, ‘fugleman and midwife’ for the Anglo-American alliance. The present book is concerned with various themes which flow from these early visions of Anglo-America and the ‘three circles’: the nature of the Cold War ‘special relationship’; the balance within it between interests and sentiment; the degree to which the relationship, though profoundly asymmetrical, embodied mutuality; the rise of the ‘European circle’; and prospects and developments after the Cold War and in the era of the global War on Terror.

This study contends, rather uncontroversially, that a ‘special’ US–UK relationship did exist, certainly in the Cold War era. Its heart lay in defence and intelligence cooperation, but the relationship extended also to foreign policy. Here it is important to distinguish the ‘special relationship’ as policy and the ‘special relationship’ as a state of international interaction. ‘Special relationship’ as policy has always been almost entirely a British affair.

For David Reynolds (1989, 95–6), the ‘special relationship’ was largely a British diplomatic strategy to cope with and benefit from American power. As such, it dated back to the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: ‘the use of the special cultural connection to help manage this new and unpredictable actor on the world stage’. It is also salutary to appreciate that the value (real or perceived) of the ‘special relationship’ was greater to London than to Washington. In 1942, Churchill wished to entice Roosevelt into the British harem, not *vice versa*. It certainly is the case that US–UK closeness is resented by other American allies. French suspicion of ‘Anglo-Saxonism’ is a long standing diplomatic reality. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Mexican ambassador to the United Nations, declared in 2003 that, compared to its ‘special’ commitment to Britain, America saw its relations with Mexico as ‘*un noviazgo de fin de semana*’ (‘a casual weekend fling’) (*The Economist*, 18 June 2005, 91). Washington has long enjoyed ‘special relationships’, in various senses, with many countries: Israel, as well as Mexico, springs to mind. The US certainly has ‘special’ security and intelligence closeness to Canada. Despite all this, and especially during the Cold War, there certainly was an institutionalized ‘special relationship’ with Britain, centring on patterns of consultation, nuclear sharing, defence and intelligence cooperation. The Cold War relationship was sustained by what Dean Rusk, US secretary of state under presidents Kennedy and Johnson, called ‘the transaction of common business’ (Ashton, 2002, 7).

To many diplomats of the Cold War era, the ‘special relationship’ seemed almost a fact of nature. For James Callaghan (British prime minister, 1976–9) it was obvious after World War Two that ‘Anglo-American joint decisions would shape the future’ (Callaghan, 1981, 89–90). In the view of Henry Kissinger (national security adviser to President Nixon and secretary of state, 1973–7), the ‘special relationship’ involved ‘a pattern of consultation so matter-of-factly intimate that it became psychologically impossible to ignore British views’ (Kissinger, 1979, 90). For Kissinger, the ‘special relationship’ was ‘not a favour the United States granted to the British; rather it was earned, first by conduct during the war and later by the enormous contribution in helping shape the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and what generally came to be identified as the Cold War pattern of international relations’. To the conduct of Cold War international relations,

according to Kissinger, Britain brought ‘experience in a multipolar world, a global orientation of mind, an experienced leadership, a commitment to security, overseas ties of not insignificant proportions, and the English language’ (Kissinger, 1995, 99).

The ‘special relationship’ was not a fact of nature. It was constructed at a particular historical period, the Second World War and continued, indeed thrived, in the conditions of the Cold War. It was certainly rooted in interests. In 1952, Secretary of State Dean Acheson informed the British-American Parliamentary Group that he would not bother ‘language, history and all of that’: ‘What I do wish to stress is one thing we have in common, one desperately important thing, and that is that we have a common fate’ (Danchev, 1996, 739).

The ‘special relationship’ suited the anti-Soviet foreign policy of both countries. The dominant school of interpretation of the ‘special relationship’ is what Alex Danchev has called ‘functionalist’: a view which stresses shared interests, as well as frequent friction and negotiated compromises. ‘Functionalists’ play down the role of sentiment and shared culture. They tend to align themselves with realist interpretations of international relations: the view, that the consolidation and improvement of their power position constitutes the goal of national foreign policies. For Christopher Thorne, there was no need to pursue explanations for US–UK cooperation which ‘wander off, however well-meaningly, into mythology’. Implicit in much mainstream interpretation of transatlantic relations is the view that, without shared interests, or in a situation where shared interests are in steep decline, the Anglo-American relationship becomes one of *mere* sentiment, lacking any substance (Thorne, 1979, 725). The survival of US–UK ‘special relations well into the post-Cold War era, of course, runs against the grain of this ‘functionalist’ mindset.

Despite the grounding of (at least the Cold War) alliance in mutual interests, the account of US–UK relations given in this book actually places quite a deal of emphasis on sentiment. In part, this reflects a reaction against ‘functionalism’ and a commitment to the view that shared history, culture and language do count for something. ‘Functionalism’ itself, of course, embodied a response to neo-Churchillian accounts of the ‘special relationship’ which laid inordinate stress on kinship ties and the whole sentimental paraphernalia of ‘Anglo America’. The emphasis on culture and sentiment

also reflects the need to account for the manifest survival of the 'special relationship' throughout the international upheavals of the post-1990 period. Those British diplomats who sought to promote the specialness of the London-Washington axis had to start somewhere. They started precisely from culture and sentiment.

Though so much recent writing on Anglo-American relations does bear the imprint of 'functionalism' and the realist calculus of interests, it is worth noting that the more general study of American foreign relations has actually been affected considerably since the 1980s by cultural interpretations. The historian Michael Hunt, for example, whose *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* was published in 1987, explicitly located his work in the tradition of cultural study pioneered by Clifford Geertz. For Geertz (1973, 89), 'the concept of culture denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conception expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life'. In this tradition, values, ideology and beliefs are components of culture, and are seen as both socially constructed and relatively constant. Interests-based realism, of course, remains strongly influential in the academic discipline of international relations, despite the problems posed for realist thought by the circumstances of the Cold War's end. The perceived view of US foreign policy, however, is now clearly one in which culture, which embraces 'sentiment' and values, is seen as centrally significant, and where culture and interests refuse to be unscrambled. In a sense, and usually from a radically divergent political perspective, recent cultural interpretations of American foreign policy represent a reworking of the 'national mission' approach of older writers like Samuel Flagg Bemis.

Britain obviously does not, and cannot, partake of many key elements in American national culture, notably exceptionalism (the belief that the US has a special destiny, usually linked to international democracy-promotion), missionary optimism and belief in the perfectibility of human institutions. These issues will be discussed further in the following chapter. For the moment, let us simply recall that cultural historians and commentators generally accept that shared language, a certain shared history and the 'Anglo' orientation of traditional American elites do affect US-UK relations. British Conservative John Redwood (2005, 68) notes the

extent to which, at least in some ways, ‘America has preserved eighteenth-century Britain rather better than Britain herself.’ Toll roads in the US are called ‘turnpikes’; presidents and judges are ‘impeached’. Noah Webster, the great American lexicographer, insisted that what appeared to be vulgar American linguistic coinages were usually correct and authentic examples of English eighteenth century speech (Langford, 2000, 84). Alexander DeConde (1992, 197) noted that ‘Anglo Americans’ never had to face charges of ‘unAmericanism’ because ‘they had created the national ideology’. By the end of the twentieth century, of course, the demographic base of the United States was once again being transformed; this time by immigration from Asia and Latin America.

Subsequent chapters will demonstrate that the history of recent US–UK relations is not one of unremitting and absolute American domination. It goes somewhat against the grain of respectable academic rigour to argue the case for British influence in this way. The argument always stands in danger of being pushed too far or, as with an emphasis on shared culture, collapsing into sentimentality. For many realists the story of international history is the story of the great powers. Henry Kissinger once famously dismissed claims about the importance of Latin American ‘middle powers’ to the US by asserting that South America was a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica (Gray 1996, 249). Yet Kissinger, as we have seen, was a believer in the ‘special relationship’. During the Cold War, ‘middle powers’ used various strategies to enhance their security without undue sacrifice of sovereignty. Britain chose the ‘special relationship’ and relied on mutual respect and diplomatic skill to achieve its aims. Most academic discussions of ‘middle powers’ focus on the possibility of combining diplomatic creativity and some level of credible defence self-sufficiency to maximize interests in a regional order (Lee, 1998).

Emphasis on British influence and ‘middle power’ status should not be taken as a denial of the undoubtedly high degree to which the American alliance impinged on British sovereignty and freedom of action. Kathleen Burk noted in 1998 the dangers of ‘supporting the US even when the US does the seemingly insupportable’. British strategy – ‘to ensure that Britain remains the US’s most dependable ally, in the hope and expectation that the US will remain Britain’s’ (*The Independent*, 27 August 1998) – did not always work. The

‘special relationship’, despite US support for European integration, to some extent deceived British policy makers into believing that there was a non-European home. The ‘special relationship’ also unquestionably bolstered British pomposity and unrealism during the Cold War, making the management of decline even more problematic. Especially invidious here was the notion of Britain acting as Greeks to America’s Romans. Harold Macmillan, British prime minister from 1957 to 1963, famously developed the Greeks and Romans analogy during the Second World War. Here is Macmillan addressing the young Richard Crossman at Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers in 1943:

We, my dear Crossman, are Greeks in this American empire. You will find Americans much as the Greeks found the Romans – great big, vulgar, bustling people, more vigorous than we are and also more idle, with more unspoiled virtues but also more corrupt. We must run AFHQ as the Greek slaves ran the operations of the Emperor Claudius. (Danchev, 1996, 740)

Macmillan confided to his diary in 1944:

They either wish to revert to isolation combined with suspicion of British imperialism, or to intervene in a pathetic desire to solve in a few months by the most childish and amateurish methods problems which have baffled statesmen for many centuries. Somehow between these two extremes we have got to guide them, both for their own advantage and ours for the future peace of the world. (Macmillan, 1984, 446)

The ‘Greeks and Romans’ analogy has in many ways been an impediment to the smooth working of the ‘special relationship’. It has certainly fuelled American resentments. It has also unquestionably contributed to British delusion about London’s global power. British Greeks can also be British self-deceivers. However, it is part of this book’s intention to illustrate that the ‘special relationship’ was not entirely devoid of mutuality. America’s part of the Cold War system was one characterized by ‘open hegemony’ (Ikenberry, 1998–9) and Britain enjoyed a privileged place within it. Influence could be exerted and shared culture increased the chances of British success. America’s post-Cold War policies did indeed, as Robert

Cooper put it, have an ‘imperial tinge’ to them. However, the pursuit and development of the George W. Bush administration’s War on Terror illustrated that effective foreign policy for the US could not be achieved without credible, democratic allies. This reality opened the way, at least in theory, for an effective and redefined British recommitment to the US–UK circle of influence.

This book seeks consciously to combine chronological and thematic approaches to the subject of Anglo-American relations from 1960. Chapter 2 deals with mutual attitudes: the ways in which elites and publics on either side of the Atlantic view one another. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide a chronological account of US–UK relations as they developed from the Kennedy–Macmillan to the post-Cold War and post-9/11 eras. The concentration here is on foreign policy. Chapter 7 deals with nuclear, defence and intelligence cooperation – the heart of the Cold War relationship and indeed, albeit in changing strategic and institutional contexts, of the post-Cold War and post-9/11 eras as well. Chapter 8 considers how the alliance faced the test of war: Vietnam, the Falklands, and the 1991 and 2003 Iraq conflicts. The ninth chapter is concerned with the interaction between European integration and the ‘special relationship’. Ireland, a subject omitted from many conventional US–UK histories, is discussed in Chapter 10. The importance of Ireland to Anglo-American relations is not a new theme; it did, however, become especially prominent after 1992. The final chapter looks back and forwards to offer some general judgements and observations.

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