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Toshihiko Aono. "It Is Not Easy for the United States to Carry the Whole Load': Anglo-American Relations during the Berlin Crisis, 1961-1962." *Diplomatic History* 34:2 (April 2010): 325-356. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.2009.00851.x. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2009.00851.x>.

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Review by **Dónal O'Sullivan**, California State University Northridge

The relationship between the superpowers and smaller players ranks among the most significant points of revision in Cold War historiography. Recent studies underscore how frequently Moscow and Washington saw their policies shaped by client states, manipulating their patrons for their own purposes. In his amply documented article on the 'special relationship' between the United States and Great Britain, Toshihiko Aono draws on British and American archival sources as well as many secondary accounts. Aono demonstrates convincingly that London successfully prodded Washington to include negotiations into the mix of Western policy, especially after the building of the Berlin Wall, whereas the Kennedy administration had originally planned a more forceful demonstration of power in the event of a showdown in Berlin.

According to Aono, previous scholarship tends to downplay the British contribution as negligible.¹ Combining personal relationships and shrewd maneuvering, London was able to decisively influence the American stance in its favor. Not only was Prime Minister Harold Macmillan successful in establishing a good relationship with President Kennedy, British diplomats in general managed to reach out to their counterparts in the U.S., with Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home working closely with Secretary of State Dean Rusk. It certainly helped, remarks Aono, that the British Ambassador to Washington, David Ormsby-Gore, was an old friend of the Kennedys.

¹ Among the interpretations challenged by Aono are Nigel Ashton's *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: the Irony of Interdependence* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002) and John P. S. Gearson's *Harold Macmillan and the Berlin Wall Crisis 1958-1962: The Limits of Interests and Force* (New York: Palgrave, 1998). Aono also notes recent works such as Erin Mahan's *Kennedy, de Gaulle and Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002) and studies by Hope M. Harrison, Kitty Newman, and R. Gerald Hughes.

Aono's article outlines how Great Britain attempted to overcome the disaster at Suez in 1956. Prime Minister Macmillan found himself again isolated in arguing for negotiations with the Soviets, even traveling to Moscow himself in 1959. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French President Charles de Gaulle preferred taking a stand against the USSR. Contrary to prior interpretations, Aono emphasizes that Macmillan gradually won over Washington to include negotiations into the Western political response. Pursuing a "double-barreled" strategy of military buildup and negotiations, the United States viewed Britain as a crucial ally, allowing London to play a "significant, if not exclusive role" (p. 328) in policy-making. Aono's article suggests that the United States and Britain jointly managed the Western alliance and relations with Moscow throughout the Berlin crisis. Apparently, Kennedy confided to Macmillan in October 1961: "It is not easy for the United States to carry the whole load," confirming the "special relationship". (p. 347)

From the beginning, Washington insiders voiced their displeasure at Macmillan's personal diplomacy. Henry Kissinger accused him of opening a 'real split' within the alliance. But Britain's diplomats were convinced that the Western position on Berlin grew more precarious year after year. Unless there was some attempt to negotiate a settlement with Moscow, the West would not be able to muster support for a military conflict. Khrushchev would meet force with force rather than give in to pressure.

Eventually, British diplomats were able to subtly influence Washington to accept London's strategic outlook. Aono sees this as a successful attempt to intervene into the American policy-making process while avoiding being targeted publicly as the one advocating compromise.

London's strategy received a boost after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, when Kennedy realized that he needed to rebuild Allied confidence in American leadership. When smaller European countries indicated doubts over defending Berlin in the absence of any "reasonable proposal", Kennedy ordered a review of U.S. policy in June. Indeed, American diplomats felt that Canada, Italy and Belgium wanted a negotiated settlement "at almost any price". (p. 346).

In his article, Aono stresses that American planners took all these reservations and views into account. Instead of a military demonstration of force, Washington now postponed any plans for a ground operation and envisaged a more passive airlift in case of a Berlin crisis. The Foreign Office called this shift "admirable" (p. 338).

The building of the Berlin Wall found the Western alliance unprepared and deeply divided. The safest course was to "do nothing to aggravate the situation" and Macmillan and de Gaulle kept their vacation schedules (p. 341). Aono's research indicates that London and Washington kept in close contact to pursue negotiations with Moscow, even against French and German opposition. In September 1961, Rusk and Home exchanged

notes on their conversations with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and decided not to pass them on to the French or the Germans (p. 344). As a consequence, Bonn and Paris complained bitterly that the Soviet goal of a broad European security agreement was tantamount to recognition of the division of Germany. The rift inside the Western alliance became sharper with revelations that Washington was thinking of signing an agreement and making concessions on Berlin. Now, the State Department and the Foreign Office jointly attempted to persuade Bonn and Paris to be more flexible.

According to Aono's findings, Kennedy and Macmillan came up with a two-staged tactic and divided up the duty to put pressure on de Gaulle and Adenauer. Officials prepared a four-power declaration recognizing the GDR and the Oder-Neisse line in return for access to West Berlin and preserving unification as an ultimate goal. The Allies would also promise to deny nuclear weapons to West or East Germany.

Adenauer was not ready to compromise on the Oder-Neisse line or on atomic weapons but eventually agreed to further negotiations, not wanting to deepen the rift within NATO (p. 348). Aono concedes that Kennedy did not push Adenauer to accept the concessions, usually interpreted as a sign of Macmillan's limited influence. During the Anglo-French summit in November 1961, de Gaulle rejected the pressure as well, stating that Berlin remained a tripartite question. As Aono writes, de Gaulle added: "[W]hat NATO thought did not matter". (p. 349)

Not only did NATO cohesion prove to be elusive, British hopes were crushed when Gromyko rejected all proposals out of hand in January 1962. Another attempt, during the Rusk-Gromyko talks in Geneva in March, failed as well. When the U.S. handed out a draft "principles paper", Adenauer sensed an Anglo-Saxon sell-out of German interests. Leaked to the German press, the document caused a serious rift between Washington and Bonn, further complicating the Western position. Moscow took advantage and declared the dialogue to be over. Khrushchev decided to return to press for Western withdrawal from Berlin as soon as he was finished stationing intermediate ballistic missiles in Cuba.

Overall, Aono refutes Neil Ashton's negative assessment of Macmillan's attempts to coordinate strategy with Washington. Aono also rejects claims that despite all her efforts, Britain remained a client state with limited influence. He also disagrees with Ashton's charge that Macmillan was willing to sacrifice British interests in the Berlin crisis in order to keep Kennedy happy. However, Aono's focus on just two years (1961-62) may be too narrow to argue for a comprehensive revision in this regard. Aono's analysis provides useful insights into the close collaboration between London and Washington in a pivotal crisis of the Cold War, opening up new avenues for discussion. His analysis will provide interesting material to discuss the significance of "junior partners" in major Cold War crises.

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Intelligence Co-Operation During World War II (Peter Lang, New York, 2010). He also published (in German): *Stalins cordon sanitaire. Die sowjetische Osteuropapolitik und die Reaktionen des Westens 1939-1949*. (Stalin's cordon sanitaire. Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe and the Western response) Paderborn: Schöningh publishers, 2003; and *Furcht und Faszination - deutsche und britische Russlandbilder 1921-1933*, (Fear And Fascination - British and German Images of Soviet Russia) Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau ,1996.

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