

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXIV-31

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## Contents

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Introduction by James Ellison, Queen Mary University of London.....	2
Review by Martin Farr, Newcastle University.....	9
Review by David G. Haglund, Queen’s University.....	13
Review by Ruth Lawlor, Cornell University.....	18
Review by Sarah L. Silkey, Lycoming College .....	23

This H-Diplo forum discusses a special issue of the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* published in 2020 on the subject of “British Attitudes towards the United States since 1941.” Edited by Robert Cook and Clive Webb, it comprises six articles which reflect upon different topics and eras but locate themselves as original interpretations of the Anglo-American relationship. That subject in its modern historiography is perhaps just over 40 years old and has developed an extensive literature on bilateral ties from the Second World War onwards. The diplomatic and international historians who wrote it have concentrated on elites, policymaking and interactions between the two states, often between presidents and prime ministers.<sup>1</sup> This body of work, as the editors of the special issue note, largely disregarded the context in which elites existed and the effect of political cultures upon them. With arguments reminiscent of those of the cultural turn, the editors make their case for contrasting perspectives on the Anglo-American relationship’s history and the use of non-governmental sources to reframe it. The articles they commissioned are only partly interested in the influence of culture on politicians and decisionmakers and are more concerned with another missing feature of the literature, popular attitudes and specifically British views of the United States. It is explored in a diverse set of six articles, four of which attempt fully to adopt non-elite methods. These articles, and the wider literature on the history of Anglo-American relations that has evolved over the last decade, raise questions about why and how this history should be written and where it sits within wider historiographical trends.<sup>2</sup>

Diplomatic and international historians responded to this kind of methodological critique in the 1980s when Charles Maier described their field as “languishing” in his famous essay.<sup>3</sup> It is worth recalling the ‘Maier scare’ because it accentuates how long it has taken for historians to think about the history of Anglo-American relations differently.<sup>4</sup> After all, its predominant literature never accepted Maier’s view that diplomatic history lacked disciplinary dynamism in the way that it analysed power and those who wielded it in the realms of high politics. Nor did it race to respond to his suggestion that the field could draw inspiration from others such as social history. Until very recently, Anglo-American relations historians have not approached power from the opposite direction or addressed categories such as class, gender and race to question it. In these ways, the conventional histories have been doing in part what Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall recently suggested had been displaced in the study of US foreign relations by the international and transnational turns, namely the study of the state.<sup>5</sup> In fact, there are interesting contrasts to be drawn between the response to Maier’s views in the 1980s and the reactions to Bessner and Logevall.<sup>6</sup> They tell us something about the relationship between diplomatic and international history and other historiographical modes. In the 1980s, a focus on elites, state bureaucracies, and interactions between states was not seen as a productive way to understand international relations. By the 2020s, Bessner and Logevall were concerned that the evolution of these fields was such that the state had faded into the background. As we consider this juxtaposition over 40 years, we

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<sup>1</sup> For a classic text, see Wm. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull, eds., *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). For a recent example, see Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers: From Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Robert M. Hendershot and Marsh, eds., *Culture Matters: Anglo-American Relations and the Intangibles of ‘Specialness’* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Charles S. Maier, “Marking Time: The Historiography of International Relations,” in Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writings in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 355–387.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Philip Bradley, “The Charlie Maier Scare and the Historiography of American Foreign Relations, 1959–1980,” in Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9–29.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, “Recentring the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations,” *Texas National Security Review* 3:2 (Spring 2020): 38–55.

<sup>6</sup> Compare, for instance, “Responses to Charles S. Maier, ‘Marking Time: The Historiography of International Relations,’” *Diplomatic History* 5:4 (October 1981): 353–382, with H-Diplo Roundtable XXI-42 on Bessner and Logevall, 25 May 2020, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XXI-42.pdf>.

must also add that other historians of the international, especially those of empires and of metropolises and peripheries, of elites and subalterns, have described relationships between states and colonies from post-colonial and global perspectives. Contemporary mores were at work in the 1980s as they are now, and that is how it should be, as history must always consider its purpose and value as a discipline.

The study of Anglo-American relations has mostly maintained its discrete, specialist identity within the wider historiography of international history. It is largely Anglophone and has been mostly written by British scholars. The explanations for those characteristics have something to do with the dominance of the US in the United Kingdom's foreign relations from the Second World War to the Cold War and beyond, and the tradition of diplomatic history in British universities. The result is an approach and a literature which is expert in its field. At its best, in its use of varied sources and complex and detailed understanding of geopolitics, it reveals much about how individuals and institutions, and often ideas and practices between states, lead either to war or peace.<sup>7</sup> It certainly has relevance to moments such as ours today. Yet it has not reached beyond its environs very much either in a disciplinary manner or in attempts to connect elite, state history with other kinds of history. That is where the special issue that we are considering comes in. It is one example of ways in which the study of Anglo-American relations has been changing over the last ten years or so.

The editors are right to ask us to think about the approaches and questions that have occupied those who do not concentrate on elites, their interactions, and their effect on the world. Matters which exercise other historians, not least the study of popular and political culture in politics and society, certainly have relevance to the history of Anglo-American relations. The special issue reminds us that elites are products of cultures, exhibit them in their worldviews, and employ them as a kind of diplomatic language, even it does not have room to address all these issues. They are being addressed, along with other areas of inquiry, in the new diplomatic history which has pioneered different approaches and subjects.<sup>8</sup> It is also apparent from the literature on Anglo-American history, even in its state focus, that the relationship was conspicuously cultural and social in the references that American and British politicians, officials and others made to shared heritage and history, ideas, and interests. There is no better example of this contention than the originator himself, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who steeped his speeches in Anglo-Saxonism. His address at a convocation of Harvard University on 6 September 1943, "The Gift of a Common Tongue," was an evocation of realism and rhetoric, identifying law, literature and language as elements which unified the English-speaking peoples. Even the US statesman George Ball, who was a later critic of the status given to the UK by US governments, admitted that the Americans and British "should have a 'special relationship,' since to an exceptional degree we look out on the world through similarly refracted mental spectacles."<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, as those who write Anglo-American relations history have predominantly examined policy, politics, diplomacy and their effect, they have not explored these aspects, or their connection to their primary interests. The authors of the six articles in the special issue do not explore them either, but they begin the work by focussing on British attitudes and culture, mainly outside of governments. As the four reviewers—Martin Farr, David G. Haglund, Ruth Lawlor, and Sarah L. Silkey—note, these are original attempts to reconceive the history of Anglo-American relations.

Before we get to those reviewers and the articles themselves, we need to remember that the study of culture, broadly defined to include agents of culture and cultural products in politics and other areas, has not been entirely absent in the historiography of Anglo-American relations. One of its experts, David Reynolds, did much to lead and demonstrate what we can call the conventional method. In some ways, he helped define the

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<sup>7</sup> For a recent exemplar, Kevin Ruane and Matthew Jones, *Anthony Eden, Anglo-American Relations and the 1954 Indochina Crisis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, <https://newdiplomatichistory.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> George W. Ball, *The Discipline of Power: Essentials of a Modern World Structure* (London: The Bodley Head, 1968), 91.

field in his first book and in early articles.<sup>10</sup> Yet he was always alive to the wider subject and in 1995 published a cultural history of American GIs in Britain during the Second World War. It dealt with class, cultures, gender, language, race, and sex in a purposively non-elite history which matched other celebrated cultural histories of civilians and soldiers in the War.<sup>11</sup> The particularity of the Second World War and its varied histories enabled this kind of book to be written but there was also a fascination with the wartime subject which has not yet been replicated in similar form in the study of Anglo-American relations during other events or periods.<sup>12</sup> As such, Reynolds's book planted a flag but did not lead a charge. An interesting, non-academic and in many ways anomalous study written about the same time by the journalist and intellectual, Christopher Hitchens, identified “the grand triad of race, class, and empire” as the “trivium upon which the [Anglo-American] relationship rests,” but did not have historiographical effect.<sup>13</sup>

The exploration of the idea that the endurance of close Anglo-American relations had to involve wider explanations than those purely centred upon national interests was the result of disciplinary influences and contemporary context in the late 1990s and 2000s.<sup>14</sup> Two very different, general surveys published amid the revival of controversial ties between the UK and US during the Tony Blair–George W. Bush era accepted that historical factors beyond the diplomatic and political featured in the relationship's past. These were not full responses to the cultural turn as their authors remained proponents of the conventional method, but they did suggest new areas of research. John Dumbrell made the second chapter of his *A Special Relationship* a foray into various “attitudes, emotions and cultural interactions” which, he suggested, surround and condition Anglo-American relations.<sup>15</sup> The topics that Dumbrell raised—class, British anti-Americanism, public opinion and attitudes, and cultural diplomatic intimacy—were introductory and assorted but also a start. Much more substantively, Kathleen Burk went further in her *Old World, New World* by interweaving three non-diplomatic history chapters on nineteenth-century travellers' tales, elements of everyday life, and Anglo-American marital relations, among her monumental political and diplomatic history from the early modern period.<sup>16</sup>

The prolific editorial work of Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh led the more sustained expansion of the field of Anglo-American relations history into the cultural domain. Their 2012 volume incorporated conventional chapters and novel ones about cultural connections, print media and strategic culture.<sup>17</sup> In 2017 they produced a further collection which concentrated upon Churchill in Anglo-American history. It purposefully made agency, culture, values, and ideas classifications for analysis and sought to understand their role in the construction of narratives and representations.<sup>18</sup> Dobson and Marsh then extended their interventions with a further edited volume which was the first specialist text to explore traditions of political thought, political concepts, international law, empire, race, and Anglo-Saxonism from the perspective of Anglo-American

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<sup>10</sup> David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (London: Europa Publications, 1981); Reynolds, “A ‘special relationship’? America, Britain and the international order since the Second World War,” *International Affairs* 62:1 (Winter 1985/6): 1–20 and Reynolds, “Rethinking Anglo-American Relations,” *International Affairs* 65:1 (Winter 1988/9): 89–111. Also, Richard Aldous and Nigel Ashton, “David Reynolds: Studies in Competitive Co-operation,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 33:1 (2022): 1–18.

<sup>11</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London: HarperCollins, 1995). Also see Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> For an attempt, see Michael John Law, *Not Like Home: American Visitors to Britain in the 1950s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia: Anglo-American Ironies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990), 21.

<sup>14</sup> See Reynolds's reflections on the cultural turn in Reynolds, “International History, the Cultural Turn and the Diplomatic Twitch,” *Cultural and Social History* 3:1 (2006): 75-91.

<sup>15</sup> John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Kathleen Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown: 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Alan P. Dobson and Steve Marsh, eds., *Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Dobson and Marsh, eds., *Churchill and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2017).

relations history.<sup>19</sup> In parallel, Marsh also edited a book with Robert M. Hendershot in 2020 which was written entirely as a cultural history. *Culture Matters* brought together chapters on Beatlemania, literature, school textbooks, film and television, pageantry, political culture, public narratives, and remembrance.<sup>20</sup> It is to this new field of Anglo-American relations history that the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* special issue seeks to make its particular contribution.

The six articles by Lucy Bland, James E. Cronin, Sam Edwards, Sylvia Ellis, Steve Marsh, and Clive Webb cohere around the theme of British attitudes towards the United States since 1941. They do not overtly address the concept of the special relationship, a subject which has occupied earlier enquiries.<sup>21</sup> Implicitly, they suggest a redefinition of how historians conceive of it. Three of them concentrate on politics. Ellis considers how the British public viewed the US war in Vietnam, and the US more generally, and how much Prime Minister Harold Wilson understood opinion and was affected by it.<sup>22</sup> Cronin explores the relative weight of culture and interests as divining forces and identifies the fallout of the Iraq War as historic.<sup>23</sup> Marsh is also interested in this effect in his study of the attempt to rebrand the relationship in the David Cameron–Barack Obama era.<sup>24</sup> The sense here is of the relationship in its latest stage of transition with Cold War norms lost. Bland, Edwards, and Webb have different questions in mind. Bland’s study of how Black Britons traced their GI African American fathers is an entirely refreshing social history of war, identity and race.<sup>25</sup> The research is drawn from her excellent book which defines a new kind of history in Anglo-American relations.<sup>26</sup> Edwards uses film, literature and television representations of the ‘friendly invasion’ of American soldiers during the Second World from the 1940s to the 1990s to contemplate their effect on British popular views of the special relationship. His is a fascinating work of cultural memory which touches on popular attitudes towards courtship, love, masculinity, race, and sex.<sup>27</sup> Webb uses the Mass Observation archive to raise the enduring but little studied question of the extent to which British leaders have reflected public opinion in their alignment of their nation’s interests to the paths taken by the United States. His findings about respondents’ feelings and the emotional history that can be written about them reaffirms this archive’s value and how Anglo-American relations history can be seen from below, as well as from above.<sup>28</sup>

The four reviewers of these rich articles offer further, diverse perspectives given their own subject expertise. All remark on the disciplinary novelty of the special issue. Farr, who has written much himself on British political history and Anglo-American relations, notes the value of Cronin’s reference to a ‘common cultural space.’ Haglund offers significant thoughts about the articles and the method of studying popular attitudes. He is right to say that this collection reminds us that the question of how popular attitudes reflect those of

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<sup>19</sup> Dobson and Marsh, eds., *Anglo-American Relations and the Transmission of Ideas* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022).

<sup>20</sup> Hendershot and Marsh, eds., *Culture Matters*.

<sup>21</sup> For an interesting review article which considers this subject, Nigel J. Ashton, “Anglo-American Relations from World War to Cold War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39:1 (2004): 117–125.

<sup>22</sup> Sylvia Ellis, “British Public Opinion and the Vietnam War,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18:3 [hereafter *JTS* 18:3] (2020): 314–332.

<sup>23</sup> James E. Cronin, “The Roots of the ‘Special Relationship’” Shared Values and Interests?,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 283–295.

<sup>24</sup> Marsh, “Beyond Essential: Britons and the Anglo-American Special Relationship,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 382–404.

<sup>25</sup> Lucy Bland, “Born to Black GIs: From the Demonisation of Father and Child to the Search for American Roots,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 333–352.

<sup>26</sup> Bland, *Britain’s ‘Brown Babies’: The Stories of Children Born to Black GIs and White Women in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Sam Edwards, “Special Relationships: Romance, Race, and the Friendly Invasion in Film and Television, 1941-1996,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 353–381.

<sup>28</sup> Clive Webb, “Observing America: What Mass-Observation Reveals about British Views of the USA,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 295–313.

political elites, and are shaped by them, remains understudied.<sup>29</sup> Lawlor does the special issue full justice in her remarks about the intertwined histories in its articles and how they suggest that citizenship, imperial thinking and race are major areas for more extensive work. In her review, Silkey also notes the value of the new perspectives in the articles and especially the varied sources in their footnotes. Her observations about transnational popular culture also comply with the other recent work on the cultural history of Anglo-American relations mentioned above.

What this special issue does, alongside the recent publications on the cultural history of Anglo-American relations, is to encourage questions about how to define the subject and where it places itself historiographically, especially in relation to other trajectories in historical research on the national, the international, and the transnational. The study of British attitudes, broadly defined, towards the US certainly deserves its position as this special issue makes clear. When to begin that study is an open issue and while there is a logic to making 1941 a starting point, the argument for a longer view is already being usefully made by other historians, from both American and British perspectives.<sup>30</sup> How these studies of attitudes relate to the history of Americanisation still requires analysis despite the fact that the subject is already mature outside of Anglo-American relations history.<sup>31</sup> There is then the question of the relationship between attitudes and emotions, a subject touched upon in three of the special issue's articles, and which has been a focus of vibrant historical research elsewhere but in terms of international affairs remains to date in the field of international relations.

While the authors of the articles in this special issue and in the edited volumes on the cultural history of Anglo-American relations have been rethinking the subject, it has in parallel been conceptualised in new ways by other historians. Those who write about political thought have sought the origins of Anglo-American ideas across the long twentieth century. Duncan Bell has written extensively on the relationship between empire and race in the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Or Rosenboim explored the ideas of public intellectuals in Britain and the US in the 1940s about the future of world order.<sup>33</sup> And Daniel Stedman Jones examined the history of neoliberalism from interwar Europe to the 1970s and the era of President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.<sup>34</sup> His work reminds us that in this period the economic and social ideas that underpinned the Anglo-American relationship had global effect, marking out the 1970s and 1980s as particularly significant for the understanding of our contemporary times.<sup>35</sup>

How Britain and the US have in their interactions shaped the longer history of world order is a question which has also led historians of international economy and international organisations to contemplate the

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<sup>29</sup> See Ben Clements, *British Public Opinion on Foreign and Defence Policy 1945-2017* (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> For example, Stephen Bowman, *The Pilgrims Society and Public Diplomacy, 1895-1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019) and David G. Haglund, *The US "Culture Wars" and the Anglo-American Special Relationship* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> For example, David W. Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Also, there are still no equivalent studies from either the American or British perspectives to Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: The History of French Anti-Americanism*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) and Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> From the international history perspective, see, Niall Ferguson, Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2011), and from the British history perspective, Aled Davies, Ben Jackson, and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *The Neoliberal Age? Britain since the 1970s* (London: UCL Press, 2021).

significance of Anglo-American relations. Various, Marc-William Palen, Patricia Clavin, and Adam Tooze consider the relationship between economics and politics in global affairs from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth, each with reference to the UK and the US and to the rise of American power.<sup>36</sup> American and British conceptions of international order also feature significantly in the work of Susan Pedersen and Mark Mazower on the contexts, ideas, and effects of the League of Nations and the United Nations.<sup>37</sup> In these more global studies, the roles of Britain and the US are prominent but feature as part of wider international developments. Those now include accounts of the anti-colonialist, nationalist movements that resisted Western imperialism and ideas.<sup>38</sup> The Anglo-American relationship is central in an important study of international order from the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. James E. Cronin's *Global Rules* argues that the period from the 1970s witnessed the persistence of Anglo-American ideas of democracy, politics, and economics in the construction of an enduring liberal order.<sup>39</sup> This is a compelling thesis which attempts to meld the history of the UK-US relationship with the larger questions that have occupied the new historians of the twentieth century. It asks other historians to respond, not least in considering the weight that Cronin places on the Anglo-American relationship in an era when the US became the world's dominant power with numerous close allies and when Britain's own power underwent significant change.

Cronin, of course, is one of the authors in the special issue which brings us back to the matter which it raises, namely, how to conceive of the history of the Anglo-American relationship. As this introduction suggests, the field has taken some time to explore approaches and subjects which have been dominant and productive in other disciplines of history. That is not to discredit the conventional methods in this specialist literature which continue to justify their place in the study of a relationship which has been, and is, one of politics, policy, diplomacy, military and intelligence collaboration, and geopolitics.<sup>40</sup> The history of the high politics of Anglo-American relations and their effect on world affairs remains important as the wider discipline of history responds to global events, particularly in regard to borders, colonialism, empires, nationalisms, populism and race, and the transmission of historical forces through globalisation. As this special issue suggests, the history of UK-US relations can also be reimagined anew by considering culture as a focus in its broadest meaning, and popular attitudes as a subject, areas of analysis that have been expanding international history approaches in other fields. What we might see as mainstreaming Anglo-American relations history opens up new and important areas of historical research. The study of the politics and diplomacy of state interactions can now be connected beneficially with other histories, domestic and foreign, elite and non-elite.

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<sup>36</sup> Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations 1924-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Marc-William Palen, *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order* (London: Allen Lane, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Allen Lane, 2012); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> For example, Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019) and Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> James E. Cronin, *Global Rules: America, Britain and a Disordered World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> The literature on these subjects remains sizeable with new interpretations of well-studied eras and new work on the period of détente and beyond. It is too extensive to be listed in full here but for recent examples, Tyler R. Bamford, *Forging the Anglo-American Alliance: The British and American Armies, 1917-1914* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2022); James Cooper, *The Politics of Diplomacy: US Presidents and the Northern Ireland Conflict, 1967-1998* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); and Sally-Ann Treharne, *Reagan and Thatcher's Special Relationship: Latin America and Anglo-American Relations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

## Participants:

**James Ellison** is Reader in International History in the School of History at Queen Mary University of London. He is author of “The search for world order and the wars in Kosovo and Iraq,” *Britain and the World* 14:1 (2021): 69–93.

**Martin Farr** is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary British History at Newcastle University. His most recent publications include chapters about Barack Obama and David Cameron, Donald Trump and Theresa May, and Trump and Boris Johnson for the *Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers* (2022).

**David Haglund** (PhD, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 1978) is a Professor at Queen’s University. He has held visiting professorships in France (at Sciences Po in Paris, at the French military academy, Saint Cyr-Coëtquidan, and at l’Université Paris III/Sorbonne nouvelle); in Germany (at the Universität Bonn, and the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena); in Ireland (at the Clinton Institute for American Studies, University College Dublin); and in the US (at Syracuse University and Dartmouth College). From 2003 to 2012 he served as co-editor of the *International Journal*.

**Ruth Lawlor** is an historian of American foreign relations with a focus on war, gender, and labour. She is currently a postdoctoral research fellow in the Cornell History Department and from July 2023 will be Assistant Professor in the History of the United States in the World. She received her PhD from Cambridge in 2019. Her first book, on the US military and sexual violence in World War II, will be published with Oxford University Press. She is currently writing about the militarization of Alaska while also editing, with Andrew Buchanan (Vermont), a new collection on the global history of World War II.

**Sarah L. Silkey** is Professor of History at Lycoming College and author of *Black Woman Reformer: Ida B. Wells, Lynching, and Transatlantic Activism* (University of Georgia Press, 2015). Her research examines cultural narratives of violence and transnational debates about American race relations. She received a Collaborative Research Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies to support her current research project examining strategies to maintain white supremacy employed within a nineteenth-century family context.



## Review by Martin Farr, Newcastle University

It is a testament to American exceptionalism that there might in the fullness of time be special editions of the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* concerned with the attitudes of members of every nationality to the United States. For many countries their relationship with the US is the most important, but though numerous relationships are special, there is only one special relationship. For those engaged in teaching, commentating, or generally seeking to engage the public, the gift in studying the transatlantic relationship is that can include most aspects of national life and international relations. Yet, too often it does not.

New articles from the contributors to this special issue will always be welcome, but what makes this collection distinctive is that it presents new perspectives on the familiar. That such novelty is possible merely by reflecting on what the usually overlooked public thought demonstrates how elitist special-relationship historiography has, perhaps inevitably, been: indeed that historiography often centres on only two individuals. (Not that it is an approach entirely without merit.)<sup>1</sup> This issue of the journal contains two articles which foreground governmental relations, but four which have broader socio-cultural perspectives.

Nowhere is there less need to substantiate the special relationship than in the pages of this journal. Nor is it necessary to point out that that relationship is also easy to exaggerate. To take the presidency considered by Steve Marsh, in the first seventeen months of the Obama administration, the president publicly mentioned France 17, Germany 25, and China 58 times. The UK he mentioned on eight occasions.<sup>2</sup> President Barack Obama not only said that “we don’t have a stronger friend and a stronger ally” than France, but that German Chancellor Angela Merkel “has probably been my closest international partner.”<sup>3</sup> Bob Woodward’s ‘inside story’ of *Obama’s Wars*, waged as they were with British cooperation, does not even mention Prime Minister David Cameron.<sup>4</sup>

That is perhaps because it is a given. As Obama’s Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes put it, “the special relationship was really the closest manifestation of the relationship that America has with allies around the world, which usually meant that when we met with the British we agreed about things and we were forging common strategies.”<sup>5</sup> Not having to negotiate “makes it a unique relationship that you don’t have with any other country.”<sup>6</sup> Which was why it was so very unusual—though not disproportionate given the convulsions of the mayfly Liz Truss administration—for President Biden to say of its almost maniacal supply side reforms, “I wasn’t the only one that thought it was a mistake. I disagree with the policy.”<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that gestures or phrases are never over-read. Though the reputation of only one party has withstood the scrutiny of succeeding years, Obama–Cameron’s was the last functional president–premier relationship.<sup>8</sup> Having hitherto been the norm, to have had two competent, communicative, creditable, heads

<sup>1</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers From Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Steve Clemons, “Obama’s Map: Which States Are Hot and Which Are Not?,” *HuffPost*, 13 July 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Remarks by President Obama and President Sarkozy of France after Bilateral Meeting, 10 January 2011, Office of the Press Secretary; John Lichfield, *The Independent*, 12 January 2011; Press Conference by the President, 14 November 2016, the White House, Office of the Press Secretary.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars: the Inside Story* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011). This is quite consistent with the secondary literature.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Rhodes, *Guardian Politics Weekly*, 5 July 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Rhodes, *Times Red Box Podcast*, 4 July 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Jeff Mason, “Biden knocks Truss economic plan, says he is not concerned about dollar strength,” *Reuters*, 16 October 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: the Ostensible Relationship,” in Cullinane and Farr, eds., *Presidents and Prime Ministers*.

of government at the same time felt for years as the stuff of legend. But so concerned with avoiding cliché were they that Obama and Cameron got into a semantic tangle over definition: was the relationship ‘special’ or ‘essential?’ The “word puzzles” that Steve Marsh delineates were more than merely phrasing exercises. As he notes, “a visit to the dentist may be essential but rarely is it special.”<sup>9</sup>

For all his effusions on the special relationship, President Donald Trump’s upending of the practice of centring allies in American foreign policy was felt most acutely by the British. His 2019 UK state visit was offered in haste and regretted at leisure by Theresa May, who found herself publicly humiliated by her guest for her pains.<sup>10</sup> The grisly episode features in the editorial by Clive Webb and Robert Cook. They are correct to say ‘first’ state visit by Trump, though anyone who cares about British attitudes to the United States being positive will hope that they might one day also use ‘only.’ Never were those attitudes so immoderate, in both feeling and statement, as political gestures acquired literal expression.

James Cronin appraises the recent state of political affairs in the two countries—an unedifying journey from disenchantment to cynicism—with a refreshing turn to the cultural. On the question of idealism (or sentimentality, or romanticism) as against realism, he highlights national interests as constituting the sinews of the relationship. War having done so much to institute it, one war in particular—what Cronin calls the “disaster” of Iraq—had so much effect on public attitudes.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence of George W. Bush and Trump, it may no longer be up to two leaders to define that relationship.

As if to compensate, the state visit has become a norm. Presidents did not receive state visits until the twenty-first century, and then they all did. That two of those three presidents also attracted visit-limiting public protest says more about them than it did their country. Where Bush did not venture beyond Westminster, President Dwight Eisenhower, a Republican with rather better instincts as regards Middle East adventures, was received warmly, despite having abashed the British over such an adventure. But Eisenhower was as much a cement of the special relationship as was former Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The president returned to Britain at least twice after his term of office ended: for *D-Day plus Twenty Years*, for CBS, and the following year for Churchill’s funeral. The serving president, Lyndon Johnson, would also have attended, but for ill-health which rendered him the only one since Harry Truman not to have visited the country or met the Queen.

Eisenhower was the exception that gives succour to the notion that Republican presidents are less popular in Britain than Democrats. Though not met with mass protest, President Ronald Reagan could not boast the cheering crowds that Jimmy Carter, his historically unlamented predecessor, attracted. Much as a comparison of the reception received by Obama and Trump in their visits to Britain alone may suggest a relationship in decline, with Johnson’s diplomats besieged in Grosvenor Square, it is unlikely that a visit from the president would have met with public acclaim.

Vietnam constituted, after Suez and before Iraq and Trump, the nadir in relations. The editors point out the limitations for the historian in quantitative information, but Sylvia Ellis deals with that episode where quantitative and qualitative align. While Suez marked a shift of policy but not public opinion, Vietnam did both, if mainly on the left. Iraq and Trump went beyond. But consideration of attitudes does matter, if one is

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<sup>9</sup> Steve Marsh, “Beyond Essential: Britons and the Anglo-American Special Relationship,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18:3 [hereafter *JTS* 18:3] (2020): 382–404, at 388.

<sup>10</sup> Farr, “Theresa May and Donald Trump: the Incredible Relationship,” in Cullinane and Farr, eds., *President and Prime Ministers*.

<sup>11</sup> James E. Cronin, “The Roots of the ‘Special Relationship’: Shared Values or Interests?,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 283–295, at 294. One correction: Major’s electoral victory—like Bush’s defeat—was in 1992, not 1993, 292.

interested in more than inter-governmental, diplomatic, military, and intelligence relations, and it has been overlooked, despite the disproportionate impact of the other's culture.

Further subverting traditional, elite, perspectives, Clive Webb makes profitable use of the Mass-Observation archive (also drawn upon by Cronin), a resource held at Sussex University which is continually mined by British social historians. Public opinion about foreign affairs rarely matters; that is, rarely helps to determine general elections or guides foreign policy. The 1938 Oxford by-election is so prominent because it is so unusual. After Suez the government was re-elected (albeit under a different prime minister); after Iraq it was re-elected (and under the same prime minister); and 'Britain Trump' was returned to power in triumph with an uncommonly personal mandate in 2019. Those electors sufficiently exercised about foreign policy are few, and are almost always to be found among each party's core vote.

Indeed, as Webb shows, members of the public are no better informed about foreign affairs whether in a vox pop on the pavement or having their opinions committed to posterity by being granted the status of an archive. This is not a criticism, either of members of the public or the means of record—why ought they be expected to be insightful?—but given the purpose of this special issue their attitudes are necessary to consider. The volunteers' views—"however partial or uninformed"—provide color, and in their own way give some substance to Webb's carefully-parsed judgement that Mass-Observation "proves one of the most important means by which to reconstruct the emotional history of Anglo-American relations."<sup>12</sup>

Vietnam was different in that, as Ellis demonstrates, British attitudes towards the United States mattered to the Americans. Even here though, what the public thought is arguably of more interest than it is of import. Whilst a majority of the size of Labour's victory in 1964 would not have withstood anything less than standing apart from the Americans in South East Asia, that of 1966 would have been a clear win all the same, and Prime Minister Harold Wilson's shock loss in 1970 was despite it (although in not standing against it more volubly, the teenagers he enfranchised in 1969 precisely because they were more likely to vote Labour didn't vote at all). Yet Vietnam did not feature in the 1970 general election.<sup>13</sup>

With Vietnam, scholarship—not least thanks to Ellis herself—is so well established and the issue so animating that a clear sense of what the public thought is possible, such as through polling and protest. It takes a war. Here too, though individual opining occurs in letters to newspaper editors rather than interviews with Mass-Observation observers, the effect is the same: color more than light. These days at least what the public thinks is no longer overlooked in the conduct and consideration of foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to Webb and Ellis, '01018' and Mrs E Doreen Ogg, respectively, now have their place alongside their better-known fellow Britons.

Insofar as the public thinks about other countries it tends to be as destinations, teams, or cuisines. With one country can culture be said to dominate, indeed, perceptions "of the United States owes more to the way it is represented in the American popular culture that floods this country," as the editors put it.<sup>15</sup> Such has been the saturation since 1941 that it is almost possible to think of a joint culture, there being no barriers to

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<sup>12</sup> Clive Webb, "Observing America: What Mass-Observation Reveals about British views of the USA," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 296–313, at 310, 311.

<sup>13</sup> Farr, "The 1970 General Election," in Andrew Roe-Crines and Timothy Heppell, eds., *Policies and Politics Under Prime Minister Edward Heath*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> British Foreign Policy Group, *UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Affairs Annual Survey*, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Webb and Robert Cook, "British Attitudes Towards the United States since 1941," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 277–282, at 279.

consumption or absorption; it is, as Sam Edwards puts it, a “friendly invasion.”<sup>16</sup> But where there are invasions there are often also occupations.

Rarely, if ever, are matters of race and gender explored in discussion of this history, and yet the greatest encounter there had ever been between British and Americans was in large part both: during the Second World War, of a population of 48 million, 1.6 million were Americans—Eisenhower being one of them. From few articles has this reader learnt more than from Lucy Bland’s investigation of the 2000 ‘brown babies’ born of the war, progeny of Black GIs and white British women.<sup>17</sup> They were ‘illegitimate’ almost always given the effective ban on marriage, and indeed that congress meant rape, a capital offence. Initial acceptance—contrasting with the attitudes of white Americans—provoked hostility when women became involved. There’s much painful personal testimony: special relationships there were aplenty, but tolerance was often only skin-deep.

These themes are touched on in popular culture, and Bland’s contribution is very well complemented by that of Edwards, who explores “a common cultural space,” as Cronin puts it; “a very large and active one” (284). Edwards does much to establish that invasion as a second front in war historiography, one with its own, gendered, discourse which is as relevant today as it was at the time. The phases (put in generational terms), would be “explorations of a transatlantic parity of power” for the “silent generation,” “critiques of wartime colonisation” for Baby Boomers, and “nostalgia shaped by certain absences and omissions” (such as the marginalised presence of African-American service personnel) for Generation X and millennials (355). Edwards’s immensely detailed account assays, among other things, Britain’s celluloid courtship of America, as cultures were met, and legend made.

This special edition the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* was published in the middle of a traumatic year of pandemic in which, for all the self-referencing of the foundational relationship in the Second World War—Trump and Prime Minister Boris Johnson as President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Churchill—Washington and London were again united, but this time in the inadequacy of their response to a global crisis.<sup>18</sup> This review is published in the midst of another such crisis. It took an extraordinary act, Russia’s invasion of a sovereign European state, for a president whose commitment was initially a source of concern in Whitehall to say of Britain—to his third prime minister of the year, Rishi Sunak—“you are our closest ally and closest friend.”<sup>19</sup> Or, as Biden put it, more succinctly, to his first, “we’re not going anywhere without you, pal.”<sup>20</sup>

In the light of the recovery and reconstruction of 2021, and the strategic lockstep of 2022, the greatest cinematic expression of the Churchillian mission, Michael Powell’s and Emeric Pressburger’s 1946 paean to the special relationship, *A Matter of Life and Death*, resonates afresh. In what the editors set as their remit—a “focus...not only on the USA as a geographical entity but also as a place of the imagination” (279)—these rich and varied articles provide both.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Sam Edwards, “Special Relationships: Romance, Race, and the Friendly Invasion in Film and Television, 1941-1996,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 353–381, at 353. Farr, “Swinging Imperialism: Days in the Life of the Commonwealth Office 1966-1968,” in Stephanie Barczewski and Farr, eds., *The MacKenzie Moment: Essays in Honour of John M. MacKenzie*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Lucy Bland, “Born to Black GIs: From the Demonisation of Father and Child to the Search for American Roots,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 333–352.

<sup>18</sup> Farr, “Donald Trump and Boris Johnson: the Unfulfilled Relationship,” in Cullinane and Farr, eds., *Presidents and Prime Ministers*.

<sup>19</sup> Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Sunak of the United Kingdom Before Bilateral Meeting, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Bali, Indonesia, White House Briefing Room, 16 November 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Tim Shipman, “Ukraine couldn’t have come at a better time for Boris Johnson,” *The Sunday Times*, 20 February 2022.

<sup>21</sup> *A Matter of Life and Death*, written, produced, and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1946.

Early in Walter McDougall's magisterial 1997 study of America's strategic culture, some lines from Randy Newman's satirical song, "Political Science," are quoted—lines that testify to the unerring ability of allies to, as McDougall puts it, "get our goat" with their criticism of Washington's policies. Two particular allies, the United Kingdom and France, captured the singer's attention.

We give them money, but are they grateful?  
 No, they're spiteful and they're hateful!  
 They don't respect us, so let's surprise 'em!  
 We'll drop the Big One and pulverize 'em.  
 'Boom' goes London! 'Boom' Paree!<sup>1</sup>

Some might think it odd (or *worse*) that a reviewer of a themed journal issue on the Anglo-American special relationship would see fit to begin with Randy Newman's tongue-in-cheek(?) placing of Britain and France in the same basket of rotten allied eggs. For if there is one policy idea that appears to have established a rock-solid presence in the minds of so many of those who think and write about America's alliance relationships, it is that *no* qualitative equivalence can possibly be established between Britain and France in the sphere of 'alliancemanship,' and it is blasphemous even to suggest one. With the former country, there is a 'special relationship'—or even better, *the* special relationship.' With the latter, there is at best (to speak euphemistically) a chronically uneasy quality to bilateral ties, one that requires much different words to capture its essence. Descriptors for that uneasy quality can range from Simon Serfaty's "permanent quarrel," through Jean Guisnel's "world's worst friends," and all the way to John J. Miller's and Mark Molesky's "oldest enemies."<sup>2</sup>

Newman's lyrics, however, would not seem out of place in the context of what is said in some of the articles in this issue under review, which is why I begin by invoking them. For sure, none of the contributors, not even the most skeptical among them, would fit within the category of "special-relationship deniers," the contrarian 'ginger group' bent on purveying the message that the special relationship is bunkum.<sup>3</sup> All seven of the contributors to this issue clearly think that the object of their scholarly curiosity well and truly exists; if they did not, there would be little point to their contributions. But beyond this general agreement, there are clear divisions, analytical and perhaps even normative ones, that show up in the respective articles. At the risk of being accused of 'Procrusteanism,' I sort the articles below into three categories, each of which speaks to an important theme among those who study and debate the special relationship.

The first category embraces those who debate what it *is* that constitutes the 'glue' that holds the US and UK in such a tight alliance embrace. Briefly, the analytical tension here is between 'interest' and 'affect.' For many scholars of the relationship, its creation and evolution testify to nothing so much as the congruence of interests as between Washington and Whitehall. The alliance makes good sense for each country, hence it was

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Serfaty, "France-États-Unis: la querelle permanente," *Relations Internationales et Stratégiques*, no. 25 (Spring 1997): 52-59; Jean Guisnel, *Les Pires Amis du monde: Les relations franco-américaines à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Stock, 1999); John J. Miller and Mark Molesky, *Our Oldest Enemy: A History of America's Disastrous Relationship with France* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Among the eminent contrarians are Edward Ingram, "The Wonderland of the Political Scientist," *International Security* 22 (1997): 53-63; Erwan Lagadec, *Transatlantic Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Europe, America and the Rise of the Rest* (London: Routledge, 2012); and Guy Arnold, *America and Britain: Was There Ever a Special Relationship?* (London: Hurst, 2014).

created as a rational reflection of sensible calculations of what best served each country's 'national interest.' James E. Cronin's article clearly leans in favour of interests as supplying the motive force of the relationship, though he also nods in the direction of those affective elements we call 'values' as being important secondary factors.<sup>4</sup> In a nutshell his case is this: "Shared cultures and shared values, to put it slightly differently, are best understood in this context as permissive factors that allowed more active cooperation when interests demanded it. They do not determine policy and shape actions" (291).

Diametrically opposed in analytical (though not, I hasten to add, normative) terms is the contribution of Steve Marsh.<sup>5</sup> His focus is on the short-lived attempt at re-branding the relationship from 'special' to 'essential' made at the start of the previous decade, at the behest of the Cameron and Obama governments. But beneath the surface of his conceptual analysis lies an implied and stark contradiction of the Cronin thesis. Although like Cronin, Marsh assesses the special relationship as being beneficial not just to the two countries that were immediately involved in it but also to the broader international community we call 'the West,' he parts company on the question of its motive force. For Marsh, it is clearly culture (hence 'affect') that predominates over rationally calibrated interest-coordination. We could do worse, here, than to paraphrase a remark Bill Clinton famously made to good effect about the economy during his successful campaign against George H. W. Bush in 1992: 'It's the culture, stupid,' would be Marsh's mantra. As such, he finds the relationship in little danger of lapsing into desuetude, because of the strengthening cultural bonds, not so much between governing elites as between the societies they serve. "What is particularly significant nowadays," he tells us, "is that Anglo-American cultural sharing has intensified even as geopolitical drivers of functional cooperation have weakened since the Cold War. British and American creative industries are increasingly entwined." As a result, the Atlantic is narrowing, not as some many think, widening, such that the "Anglo-American peoples can develop a greater sense of proximity than ever before. They might even acquire a common heritage and shared memories with people they have no former connection to" (395–396).

This quotation from Marsh takes us to the second analytical tension of note concerning the most relevant 'agents' of the special relationship. Are they the policy elites, as Cronin suggests? Or is Marsh correct, so that to understand the relationship we must examine public opinion, the setting where, presumably, the affective content of bilateral ties is mainly lodged? Three of the contributors draw our attention to the part played by public opinion in the functioning of the special relationship. One of those contributors (and special issue co-editor) is Clive Webb,<sup>6</sup> who weighs in on the side of Cronin in finding that the special relationship is more the doing of elites than it is of societies (to the extent one can ever impute purposive 'agency' to the latter). From his sifting of survey data amassed by the public opinion organization Mass-Observation, Webb leaves the reader thinking that perhaps Randy Newman knew whereof he was singing: the British public, Webb finds, is not a demographic cohort that would easily be confused with a mob of pro-Americans. Indeed, so unenamoured has it often been that even during the Second World War, it was hard to get Britons to abandon the practice of heterostereotyping Americans, which had flourished during the interwar years.<sup>7</sup> One finds in Webb's article the extraordinary news that British "public attitudes towards nine different nationalities revealed that respondents had, with the exception of Poles, the least unconditionally affirmative attitude towards Americans." True, Americans' favorability ratings did get bumped up as the war went on, hitting a peak of 33 percent in 1943, but this still had Americans' scores lagging behind those of the Dutch

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<sup>4</sup> James E. Cronin, "The Roots of the 'Special Relationship': Shared Values or Interests?," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18:3 [here after *JTS* 18:3] (2020): 283–295.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Marsh, "Beyond Essential: Britons and the Anglo-American Special Relationship," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 382–404.

<sup>6</sup> Clive Webb, "Observing America: What Mass-Observation Reveals about British views of the USA," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 296–313.

<sup>7</sup> See George H. Knoles, *The Jazz Age Revisited: British Criticism of American Civilization during the 1920s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955); and Margaret Halsey, *With Malice Toward Some* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938).

(73 percent), the Czechs (64 percent), the French (52 percent), the Greeks (43 percent)—and even the enemy Italians (41 percent) (300).

Sylvia Ellis also concentrates upon public opinion in her article, whose focus is upon how Britons' views of the Vietnam War made life difficult for Harold Wilson's government, as it attempted to navigate between the Scylla of damaging the bilateral relationship by refusing President Lyndon Johnson's entreaties for British support and the Charybdis of alienating the British electorate by not sufficiently opposing America's war.<sup>8</sup> Wilson muddled through, in the manner not unlike leaders of other American allies whose publics vehemently opposed the war (Canada's, for one). Significantly, Ellis shows that even though British opposition to the war was strong it was not universal; moreover, she claims:

despite the horrors of the war in Vietnam, and despite the hatred of LBJ within many circles, the opinion polls show as late as December 1967 more people had a good or very good opinion (53 percent) of the president than those who had a bad or very bad opinion of him (nine percent). While in all likelihood much of this positive rating might be accounted for by LBJ's actions on the domestic front, especially on civil rights, it might also be down to LBJ's strong leadership, his welcoming of Wilson to the White House on six occasions, and to his staunch anti-communism (329–330).

It might also be due to the fickleness of public opinion, as well as to the lack of sufficient differentiation provided in the 'data' served up by survey analysts. And this thought directs us to the third analytical distinction embodied within the collection under review here: a distinction going to the very meaning of 'culture' (political or otherwise). Public opinion can sometimes be a surrogate for political culture, but it can also be a most defective means of sampling the latter. Earlier generations of scholars who dealt with what was at one time referred to as 'national character,' before it became conceptually upgraded to 'political culture' and then 'national identity,' never ceased tying themselves into knots trying to develop suitable metrics for their concept. Here the debate turned on whether character/culture/identity was to be revealed through systematic exploration of presumed group behavioral traits via the kind of survey data Webb unearths in his article, or rather whether character/culture/identity would become better expressed in other, albeit less direct, ways focusing upon the collectivity's (in our case, the 'nation's') *cultural products*. These latter could include such items as the collectivity's "institutions, its collective achievements and its public policy."<sup>9</sup>

It is often far from obvious what public opinion is trying to tell us, and even if we knew what that was, it is also not clear to what extent vox populi really does have a fundamental bearing on the special relationship. Illustratively, the co-editors' introductory article by Webb and Robert Cook<sup>10</sup> begins with a reference to the state visit paid by President Donald Trump to the UK in June 2019—a visit that if remembered very much today is recollected because of the huge protests against Trump, the "most iconic symbol of [which] was an orange balloon depicting the president as an overgrown baby that floated in the summer sky above the nation's capital" (277). Both authors note the importance of trying to understand public opinion as well as the difficulties associated with establishing credible links between the public 'mind' and governmental decision-making regarding the special relationship. "Despite the use of opinion polls by some scholars," they lament, "the academic literature does not systematically address the extent to which British public opinion about the USA has mapped onto diplomatic, military and economic interaction at the level of the nation-state." That interaction is far too often construed as an intra-elite affair, but such a construe ignores an essential element: "These state actors are themselves products of political cultures that influence their opinions and behaviour. The ways in which popular attitudes have shaped and in turn been moulded by political elites nonetheless

<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Ellis, "British Public Opinion and the Vietnam War," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 314–332.

<sup>9</sup> Morris Ginsberg, "National Character," *British Journal of Psychology* 32 (January 1942): 183–205, at 187–188.

<sup>10</sup> Clive Webb and Robert Cook, "British Attitudes Towards the United States since 1941," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 277–282.

remain seriously understudied despite the ‘cultural turn’ in diplomatic history that stresses the need to understand the core values that underpin interstate relations” (278).

This analytical tension features centrally in the contributions of Lucy Bland<sup>11</sup> and Sam Edwards,<sup>12</sup> both of whom tell us important things about two relatively overlooked aspects of culture as being consequential for policy: race and gender. Bland’s article offers the important reminder that despite the common impression of Britain being, quite unlike America, a relatively ‘race-blind’ country, the reality is different. Her focus is on the fate of ‘brown babies’ conceived in wartime liaisons between English women and African-American servicemen posted in Britain during the years 1942 to 1945. “The British government,” she writes, “may not have wanted Black GIs to come to Britain but come they did,” in numbers she estimates at almost a quarter-million (or not quite ten percent of all American military personnel who were in Britain at some stage of the conflict, [334-335]). The article gives the reader a series of often touching vignettes of wartime children who did not know their fathers, but sought (sometimes to happy effect) to be reunited with them once they had grown to adulthood. The need for reuniting was basically a result of the separation imposed by American military authorities, who refused to authorize marriages between Black GIs and British white women, preventing the latter from being brought home as war brides. But the separations also revealed prejudices within British society. “The black GIs who had come to Britain in the 1940s were initially received positively,” Bland writes. “Once they started to have relationships with local women, attitudes changed. As children were born of these relationships, hostility grew” (350).

If Bland gives us reason to think that Britain and the US might not be all that dissimilar on the question of racism, Edwards provides material for contemplating other aspects of cultural commonality. His focus is on how the ‘friendly invasion’ of 1942 to 1945, which saw the arrival of some three million American military personnel, was portrayed in film and, subsequently, on television during the period spanning the early 1940s and the mid-1990s. Like Bland, he turns his gaze to racial questions, but even more is he captivated by how the two media have reflected gender, as a metaphorical element in the budding special relationship of the wartime years. He notes that in the field of International Relations (IR), gender and race have been receiving more attention in the past twenty or so years. “Despite such interest,” he concludes,

the specific ways in which...transatlantic liaisons have been *represented* in post-war popular culture has largely been overlooked. This is in spite of the fact that the conceptualisation of Anglo-American relations that has so shaped this culture—the ‘special relationship’—is in origin and phraseology explicitly *gendered*. After all, it was coined by the child of an Anglo-American love-match [Churchill]; a man who, by his own admission, pursued transatlantic diplomacy as courtship (377).

All in all, this theme issue on the special relationship has a great deal to commend it, and the editors have done a service by putting together such an impressive roster of innovative themes. As with all published works, gremlins have been known to make an appearance. Fortunately, they have only had a cameo role in this production. I count two such solecisms, which in closing I introduce not to criticize but to instruct. Whether it was the dramatic exploits of Mrs. Miniver (Greer Garson) or her spouse (Walter Pidgeon) that are most retained in memory, viewers of *Mrs. Miniver* will be clear that the events being depicted in the film were set at the time of the fall of France and the miracle of Dunkirk. Ergo, William Wyler could not have made this movie in 1939, as Edwards says (358); it was made in 1942. The other factual glitch appears in the article by co-editor, Webb, who, when recounting (301) some poll respondents’ admiring views on President Franklin Roosevelt he found in the Mass-Observation archives, took gently to task a Yorkshireman who had

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<sup>11</sup> Lucy Bland, “Born to Black GIs: From the Demonisation of Father and Child to the Search for American Roots,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 333–352.

<sup>12</sup> Sam Edwards, “Special Relationships: Romance, Race, and the Friendly Invasion in Film and Television, 1941-1996,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 353-381.



expressed deep admiration for the president, not least because he had overcome infantile paralysis. This observation, said Webb, reflected a mistake “about the president’s age when he contracted polio.” Actually the Yorkshireman was not mistaken (nor would he likely have admitted it *had* he been), for the disease, otherwise known as poliomyelitis, can afflict its victims at any age (though it targets mainly the young). Thus what Roosevelt contracted in 1921 at the age of 39 was indeed, as the Yorkshireman said, a case of infantile paralysis.

For better or for worse, the special relationship is an enduring trope. It has more resonance with political elites in both the United States and Britain than with ordinary citizens of either country, except for brief moments when it enters the public consciousness. This tends to happen either in comic fashion—as with President Joe Biden’s use of the term “the Brits,” a gently mocking quip common amongst the Irish, in particular, when he is criticising some present or historic attitude or policy decision—or in ways that cause headaches for British politicians, eager, as they are, to retain the goodwill of their transatlantic ally. One example of the latter might be President Barack Obama’s 2016 warning to the British public that the UK would be “at the back of the queue” for a trade deal should the country vote for Brexit.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, for the most part the special relationship is quietly carried out without much tumult, since the ties between the two countries are deep and will remain so. This is not only because of their shared language and historic relationship, which are important, but also because of present geopolitical concerns. In matters of security and intelligence, and both countries’ central place in the global economic and political order, which they each see as increasingly threatened by China, Russia, and Iran, the two are firmly aligned.

The stability of the alliance does not mean it is devoid of anxiety, especially for the British ruling class which, since the country ceded its role as global sovereign to the United States in the years after World War II, has been unsure of its place in the world. Many of the essays in this special issue draw attention to such tensions, and in particular to the ways that the past weighs upon the “special relationship” of the present. Steve Marsh points to one such example in his commentary on Obama’s decision in 2017, upon entering the White House, to remove a bust of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, which had been loaned to President George W. Bush by Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, from prominent display in the Oval Office. Hearing the news, then-Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson quipped, in a remark reminiscent of Trump’s birtherist attacks on the President, that Obama harbored “an ancestral dislike of the British Empire” (394). If this barely-disguised racism seems particular to Johnson’s own political temperament, the structural similarities run deeper, and the special issue as a whole makes the case such questions of race and belonging are at the heart of what constitutes the bond between the two countries.

These themes are most notable in Lucy Bland’s moving portrait of the children of Black GIs and white British women and in Sam Edwards’ fascinating depiction of World War II on screen. While, on the one hand, as Bland points out, the UK, and Europe more broadly, have functioned both symbolically and materially as spaces of freedom from the colour line, particularly the sexual colour line, the extraterritorial powers of the US military mean that the long arm of the Jim Crow state has historically had far reach. Bland’s conversations with the adult children of American fathers who were arrested, imprisoned, or executed by the US military on false charges of rape provide a poignant example of this.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, as Sam Edwards demonstrates, the US has also in turn served as a foil for British anxieties about race and empire. The 1979 film, *Yanks*, starring Richard Gere, is one of the few Hollywood films to depict race relations in Britain during the Second World War but, as Edwards argues, its function has been to ease the British conscience about the UK’s own imperial troubles. “[A] decade after Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech and just two years before the Brixton Riots, the result is a rather self-congratulatory tone in which British capacity for racial intolerance is displaced onto segregationist southerners,” Edwards writes of

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<sup>1</sup> Anushka Asthana and Rowena Mason, “Barack Obama: Brexit would put UK ‘back of the queue’ for trade talks,” *The Guardian*, 22 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/22/barack-obama-brexit-uk-back-of-queue-for-trade-talks>.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Bland, “Born to Black GIs: From the Demonisation of Father and Child to the Search for American Roots,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 333–352, 337.

the film, “while the black GI characters themselves are peripheral to the narrative throughout.”<sup>3</sup> This feeling comes through strongly in civilian letters that were ferried across the Atlantic during World War II and captured by British censors: as one British woman implored an American friend in 1943, recounting a scene of racial violence that she had witnessed, “Do tell me, if there is such a violent colour prejudice over there as this [incident] seems to indicate. I won’t say there isn’t one among some types in England, but at least we don’t usually behave in such a brutal and Nazified way.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, as one middle-class man pointed out to Mass Observation, an extraordinary archive of public opinion mined effectively by Clive Webb in his article, “. . . it’s hardly for us to talk, when you think of the way the blacks are treated in South Africa.”<sup>5</sup> As Bland notes, such sentiments reflected what the journalist Roi Ottley aptly called Britain’s “racial double-talk” (335).

In this way, the essays in the collection together make a broader proposition: that the special relationship might be defined as what historian Paul Kramer has called the relationships of “pan-imperial whiteness” or “pan-imperial manhood” that structure the Euro-American world and which constitute a global liberal order in which some people are afforded the privileges of civilisation and citizenship and others are not.<sup>6</sup> In taking up the imperial role that Britain could no longer fulfil after the Second World War, the US built upon and expanded this global order, making the two countries the primary architects and historic caretakers of it. It is for this reason that so many of the essays bring us back to this pivotal moment, and why the issue as a whole focuses on the period since 1941, the year the United States formally entered the war. Steve Marsh puts the idea cogently in his discussion of Churchill’s ambitions for “the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples,” a phrase that clearly expresses the inter-imperial connection that both countries shared. Indeed, Marsh suggests, Churchill created the conceit of the special relationship after World War II, thus formalising an historically implicit relationship, in order to “create a position of privilege for Britain at the top table of post-war powers despite its wartime impoverishment” (387). James Cronin’s essay similarly engages this question directly as he argues for the interconnectedness of those global “Anglospheric wests” from Australia and New Zealand to Canada and the United States, born out of “‘settler revolution’ that transformed much of the globe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (284).

Cronin argues persuasively that it is ultimately interests, not values, that determine the policy decisions of the two countries, an important intervention that directs our gaze away from sometimes-hazy questions of identity and towards more concrete issues of political economy. Indeed, the language of values has historically been the handmaiden of more tangible imperial interests: the economic and security concerns of both countries have often been packaged in a similar rhetoric of civilisation, one which laid claim to a set of

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<sup>3</sup> Sam Edwards, “Special Relationships: Romance, Race, and the Friendly Invasion in Film and Television, 1941-1996,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 353–381, 375.

<sup>4</sup> The full quotation is worth reading because, even while indicating the enlightenment of English people on matters of race, this woman also argued that intimate relationships were the place where some form of colour line had to be drawn: “I suppose you have a colour problem over there which our folk do not grasp, I can see how impossible it would be to mix socially too much, because inter-marriage would be bad, but to refuse to eat in the same room! and get off buses, etc. is going too far, especially in democratic England, and I begin to think that really at bottom we are more truly democratic than America.” These gestures of superiority could cut both ways as Americans in turn saw British imperialism as oppressive and anti-democratic. An open letter from the editors of the American magazine, *Life*, to the ‘People of England’ stated firmly: “One thing we are sure we are not fighting for is to hold the British Empire together. We don’t like to put the matter so bluntly, but we don’t want you to have any illusions ... In the light of what you are doing in India, how do you expect to talk about ‘principles’, and look our soldiers in the eye?” “Extract from Army Mail Censorship Report No. 64,” 26 April 1943, 64, FO 371/34124, National Archives at Kew, London; “An Open Letter from the Editors of LIFE to the People of England,” *Life*, October 12, 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Mass Observation, “Report on Feelings about America and the Americans,” 22 January 1943, 32–33, Report No. 1596, British Library.

<sup>6</sup> Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 12.

ostensibly superior values that only Northern European cultures, and those derived from them, were said to possess. According to the “Life in the UK” test, which is today a prerequisite for immigrants seeking to acquire British citizenship, British values include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance, and participation in community life.<sup>7</sup> “American values” are generally thought to be similar, including liberty, individualism, a belief in the sanctity of private property, and egalitarianism. Many Black Britons, however, would surely not agree that tolerance and inclusion are defining features of the country’s imperial past or present.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the early transatlantic crossings of Black people, usually under conditions of extreme violence or in flight from such violence, are not the migrations that either national history has in mind when invoking this circulation of ideas and people as the foundation for the special relationship today (it is, instead, the ideas of the European Enlightenment, not those of slave rebellions or the Haitian revolution, that the elites of both countries claim as their shared heritage). A professed commitment to democracy, meanwhile, may ring somewhat hollow for generations of working-class people locked out of the promises of full social citizenship through assaults on trade unions, the erosion of the social safety net, and transfers of wealth from the poorer classes to the wealthy via regressive taxation, all exacerbated by the weighty pull of corporate funds on ostensibly democratic government. The contradiction between these professed values and their obvious exclusions has historically proven a fertile ground for protest aimed at dismantling those measures which deny belonging to some while offering to others only very conditional inclusion in the nation.

As such, there is a counterpoint to the elite framing of the special relationship, as Clive Webb suggests in his essay on public opinion. Indeed, as he notes, it is actually very difficult to determine the significance of the special relationship for the public writ large—not only, as he argues, because most studies of the partnership have emphasised diplomatic relations between particular leaders, but also because there are in fact multiple publics in both places, for whom the special relationship might mean different things.<sup>9</sup> What of those publics, of ordinary people in both places, or those who moved between them, as many have done and continue to do?

To give an example from the Second World War, when Bamber Bridge in Preston, near Manchester, and Detroit, Michigan, were rocked by race riots just a few days apart in 1943, the white residents of the British town faced off police alongside Black soldiers, as the Black residents of Detroit similarly stood their ground to protect their lives and livelihoods from the incursions of white vigilantes.<sup>10</sup> The League of Coloured Peoples held its twelfth annual general meeting in Liverpool just months earlier in March 1943, even as these issues of racial conflict were thrown into sharper relief as the League’s president Harold Moody worried that white American GIs were behaving aggressively towards the city’s Black British population, which is itself a testament to the intertwined histories of Europe, the Americas and Africa.<sup>11</sup> The 5th Pan-African Congress took place in Manchester in 1945, with notable delegates including the great American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, Ghanaian independence leader Kwame Nkrumah, and pan-African feminist Amy Ashwood Garvey. The Congress discussed the colour bar in Britain as well as the issue of children left behind by Black GIs, a discussion Lucy Bland takes up in her other work in this area, as well as larger questions about the post-war order.<sup>12</sup> During the war, George Padmore, the Trinidadian activist and intellectual, served as the European

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<sup>7</sup> Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement, “The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century,” Report of Session 2017-19, published 18 April 2018, HL Paper 118. See Chapter 2: Values—the red lines, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldcitizen/118/11805.htm/>.

<sup>8</sup> See Hazel V. Carby, *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands* (London: Verso Books, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Clive Webb, “Observing America: What Mass-Observation Reveals about British Views of the USA,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 295–313.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Burgess, “In the Other England, the Land of Cotton, Nobody Says ‘Baaaaath,’” *The New York Times*, 28 January 1973.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta, 1984), 59–60, 333.

<sup>12</sup> Lucy Bland, “Interracial Relationships and the ‘Brown Baby Question’: Black GIs, White British Women, and Their Mixed-Race Offspring in World War II,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26:3 (2017): 424–453.

war correspondent for African-American newspapers, writing for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*, and connected transatlantic societies through his seeking out of a cross-national Black community and his unabating critique of colonialism and racism from Washington to London. He wrote powerfully about the rape allegations faced by Black soldiers in Britain as well as on the European continent, and appeared in Paris in 1946 for the first UN General Assembly on the future of the former League of Nations mandates. As Padmore pressed for the rights of colonised peoples to self-determination, Du Bois presented his “Appeal to the World” for Black Americans’ human rights as an internally colonised population in 1947.<sup>13</sup>

What has the special relationship meant to these connected groups—the Black internationalists, the Marxists, the globally and locally subjugated—and how has it been constituted outside of state-to-state relations? How, for them, as Clive Webb and Robert Cook put it in their introduction to this collection, have both UK and the US functioned “as a geographic entity and as a place of the imagination?”<sup>14</sup> This is the context to which Sylvia Ellis speaks in her article on labour opposition to the Vietnam War, as she cites one letter received by Harold Wilson which was searing in its criticism of the Labour prime minister: “The rape of Vietnam once again, By Yankee thugs who kill in vain, Supported by Wilson in England’s name.”<sup>15</sup> The letter obliquely references Vietnam’s past history of colonial conquest and alludes to the prior actions of American aggressors elsewhere. Indeed, Black Americans saw themselves as intimately linked to the Vietnamese through their shared experience of American policing, which to them looked similar whether it was a counterinsurgency operation in a Vietnamese village or an FBI raid in Chicago.<sup>16</sup> The eeriness with which these words seem to conjure the more recent British Labour Party venture into Iraq with the United States is also striking. In these expressions of counter-hegemonic solidarity and the promise of transnational relations of protest and resistance, the “special relationship” between the downtrodden of two world-empires perhaps gives the term new meaning.

Taken together, these essays offer insights into a past that still infiltrates the present. They seem particularly prescient given the recent 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V-E Day, the touchstone for the contemporary special relationship in its traditional, diplomatic form. That event still carries great significance in the UK, even as it heralded British imperial decline. For the United Kingdom, a union of four nations yoked together increasingly uneasily, but more specifically for England, the memory of victory in World War II reiterates in the present the myths of British exceptionalism and English nationalism. In the story that Britain stood alone against Nazi aggression, the role of its colonial empire and the soldiers who comprised its conscripted armies fades conspicuously into the background. That memory of the war discards Britain’s inconvenient imperial past, which is sometimes disavowed today, other times proudly invoked, and elides what the war was really about, while simultaneously preserving and celebrating the larger order which it inaugurated; it ensured, in American hands, that the privileges of empire-states and of capital would endure.

For the US, national mythologies of exceptionalism are also familiar terrain, and World War II stands as the moment when the nation rose to world hegemon, still in some senses tethered to its old metropole but in many other ways leaving Britain behind. The essays together point to moments when different presidents and prime ministers have managed to invoke this shared past towards common policy goals: Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, Tony Blair and Bill Clinton (and, just as consequentially, George W. Bush), David Cameron and Barack Obama. Although Theresa May, Boris

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<sup>13</sup> For a selection of these articles, see George Padmore, “U.S. Color Prejudice Hit In Parliament Debate,” *The Chicago Defender*, 15 July 1944; George Padmore, “Eisenhower Reprieves Soldier Facing Death,” *The Chicago Defender*, 24 June 1944; George Padmore, “Eisenhower Frees Soldier: Rescinds ‘Attack’ Sentence,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 July 1944. See also W.E.B. Du Bois, “An Appeal to the World: A Statement of Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States of America and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress,” 1947.

<sup>14</sup> Clive Webb and Robert Cook, “British Attitudes Towards the United States since 1941,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 277–282, at 279.

<sup>15</sup> Sylvia Ellis, “British Public Opinion and the Vietnam War,” *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 314–332, at 329.

<sup>16</sup> Nikhil Pal Singh, *Race and America’s Long War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 1–35.

Johnson and Donald Trump do not figure prominently in this list, perhaps in the future they will. As Marsh points out, the special relationship is an enduring fixture of the international order, regardless of short-term political developments; even though Trump was generally disliked by the British public, their faith in the US as an ally did not substantially change during his term in office.<sup>17</sup> If there was anything troubling the relationship between these leaders in the turbulent years since 2019—whether Britain’s increased dependence on the US after Brexit or Trump’s broadsides against NATO members and the World Health Organization—the world of the post-pandemic has set their successors on a more familiar and stable course once again. That time now seems like a blip, a temporary rent in the national myth of continual development, of the onward march of progress, that many in both countries hold dear. Today, as geopolitical and economic crises loom large, it is back to business as usual: two stalwart allies united against a dangerous world.

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<sup>17</sup> Adam Drummond, “Britain’s Verdict on Trump? Improve Non-US Allies and Be Prepared,” *The Guardian*, February 4, 2017, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/04/britains-verdict-on-trump-improve-non-us-allies-and-be-prepared>.

Scholars have devoted considerable attention to the importance of public opinion on nineteenth and early twentieth century Anglo-American politics and transatlantic reform movements, including a substantial body of scholarship on the transatlantic abolitionist movement and the struggle for women's rights.<sup>1</sup> Considerably less attention has been paid to the impact of public opinion on Anglo-American relations during the Cold War period. This special issue of the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* addresses this gap in the literature by examining British public attitudes in order to reassess the 'special relationship' shared by the United Kingdom and the United States over the past 80 years.

The six authors collectively demonstrate that a fuller understanding of the 'special relationship' can be achieved by looking beyond the personal and political bonds forged by American and British politicians to assess the attitudes and actions of the populace that shaped the context in which political elites operated. As the collection's editors, Clive Webb and Robert Cook, observe, the essays not only create a multifaceted portrait of British attitudes toward the government, people, and culture of the United States, but also reveal the "ebb and flow of the putative special relationship" and the influence of public opinion on foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> While the individual contributors provide interesting and useful interventions, the value of the collection also lies in the juxtaposition of ideas between essays, the creative approaches adopted to recover and interpret public attitudes, and the possibilities for further research suggested by the authors' conclusions.

Unsurprisingly, public opinion did not always align with the priorities of political elites. Clive Webb's analysis of public surveys conducted by volunteer diarists for Mass-Observation reveals disconnections between public attitudes and the relationships developed between British and American political elites.<sup>3</sup> Webb demonstrates that the British public remained well-informed about "disagreements and misunderstandings" between the British and American governments, leading to ambivalence toward both the American people and the 'special relationship' (303). Assessing the working relationships established between American presidents and British prime ministers during the Cold War, James E. Cronin concludes that, in the face of popular dissent, neither professions of shared Anglo-American values nor political leaders' personal affinity were enough to solidify the 'special relationship.'<sup>4</sup> Successful coordination of UK-US foreign policy ultimately required the alignment of national or political self-interests.

While the agenda of political elites may have been the dominant force behind the 'special relationship,' British public opinion placed limits on what politicians could achieve. Sylvia Ellis's work examining the impact of British anti-war sentiment on the British government's response to the American war in Vietnam demonstrates the continuing relevance of British moral suasion on American politics in the Cold War context.<sup>5</sup> Britons not only rejected British support for American intervention in Vietnam, but they also expressed their moral outrage directly to the American government—with some degree of success in gaining the attention of President Lyndon B. Johnson. British public dissent against the immorality and illegality of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction: A Study in Anglo-American Co-Operation, 1833-77* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart, eds., *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Clive Webb and Robert Cook, eds. "British Attitudes toward the United States since 1941," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18.3 [hereafter *JTS* 18:3] (September 2020): 277–282, at 281.

<sup>3</sup> Clive Webb, "Observing America: What Mass-Observation Reveals about British Views of the USA," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 296–313.

<sup>4</sup> James E. Cronin, "The Roots of the Special Relationship: Shared Values or Interests?" *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 283–295.

<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Ellis, "British Public Opinion and the Vietnam War," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 314–332.

US military intervention in Vietnam, Ellis argues, set limits on Prime Minister Harold Wilson's actions. When Johnson pressed for a British military commitment, Wilson invoked public dissent to justify his refusal to send even a symbolic British troop deployment in support of the US war effort.

Steve Marsh examines another example where British public dissent limited the actions of the British government, in this case the efforts of President Barack Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron to redefine the 'special relationship' as the 'essential relationship.'<sup>6</sup> In the wake of massive British public dissatisfaction over Prime Minister Tony Blair's support of President George W. Bush's war in Iraq, Obama and Cameron sought to assign "global relevance" to a renewed UK-US partnership (386). However, Marsh concludes, British public emotional and intellectual investment in the language of the 'special relationship' prevented redefinition, as moving away from the word 'special' could only diminish the strength of the partnership in British eyes.

As Webb demonstrates, for most Britons, American films and British media coverage provided the main sources of information about the United States and Americans more broadly. Even during the era of affordable air travel, the majority of Britons did not experience American culture firsthand. In the absence of Cold War anti-Communism, cultural sharing has played an increasingly important role in shaping identity and reinforcing belief in shared Anglo-American values. According to Marsh, it is the "daily flow back and forth across the Atlantic" of "discourse, symbolism, stereotypes, cultural references and associations" that keeps the 'special relationship' alive in collective memory (394).

Yet popular culture has always shaped and pruned collective memory. Marsh notes that the formation of collective memory requires both "processes of remembering and forgetting" (391). These processes played out in British popular culture, such as the films depicting the 'friendly invasion' of American GIs stationed in the UK during the Second World War, which is analyzed by Sam Edwards.<sup>7</sup> Edwards reveals how the tensions of Anglo-American relations were addressed through love triangles in film and television depictions of the war. British filmmakers portrayed and resolved these tensions differently in different periods, depending on the state of British public attitudes toward the 'special relationship.' These cinematic romances moved from demonstrations of "transatlantic parity of power" in the 1940s to a depiction of the 'friendly invasion' as American colonization at the height of the Cold War to nostalgia for the 'Good War' by the end of the twentieth century (355).

In their research, both Lucy Bland and Sam Edwards address how a history of institutional racism and the erasure of inconvenient history from collective memory has created barriers to recovering the lives and experiences of Black American GIs and their British descendants.<sup>8</sup> Bland's essay documents the personal costs incurred by those children of Black American GIs, whose very existence embarrassed both governments and undermined British racial identity. Since the nineteenth century, the British government and the British public engaged in a long history of denouncing racism abroad, while ignoring racist attitudes, policies, and practices at home. As Edwards observes, rather than confront the contradictions between British racial intolerance and British self-image as moral exemplars, the service of Black American GIs was largely omitted from the collective memory of the 'friendly invasion' during the Second World War.

Edwards argues that the growth in scholarly attention given to the experiences of Black American service-personnel in the 1980s and 1990s established space to engage with these themes in British popular culture

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<sup>6</sup> Steve Marsh, "Beyond Essential: Britons and the Anglo-American Special Relationship," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 382–404.

<sup>7</sup> Sam Edwards, "Special Relationships: Romance, Race, and the Friendly Invasion in Film and Television, 1941-1996," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 353–381.

<sup>8</sup> Lucy Bland, "Born to Black GIs: From the Demonisation of Father and Child to the Search for American Roots," *JTS* 18:3 (2020): 333–352.



beginning in the mid-1990s as part of a broader pattern of nostalgic engagement with the Second World War. This greater public attention coincided with the desire of many adult children of Black veterans to locate their fathers. As Bland observes, the rise of the internet, and more recently the proliferation of DNA testing, has enabled easier searching and information sharing, allowing some children to identify American relatives, although sadly often too late for them to be able to meet their fathers.

Bland's work ably demonstrates how oral history interviews play a critical role in recovering the history of historically excluded groups, including Black Americans and their descendants. Throughout the collection, the authors illustrate the creativity required to capture public sentiment beyond what might be measured in public opinion polling data. The authors analyzed an impressive array of sources—ranging from letters, telegrams, and petitions directed at government officials to surveys compiled by Mass-Observation volunteer diarists to various forms of popular culture media—to shed light on the political, social, and cultural aspects of British public opinion.

Overall, this insightful collection depicts cycles of national and political self-interest which prompted political and cultural leaders to defend the 'special relationship' based on shared Anglo-American values. Transnational popular culture simultaneously reinforced the British public belief in shared Anglo-American values and refined collective memory through selective pruning. Even when the conflicting interests of politicians challenged British public support for the 'special relationship,' British public investment in the image of shared Anglo-American values created reluctance to discard or significantly alter the connection. Ultimately, the collection leaves readers to ponder the role American public opinion has played in shaping the 'special relationship' and the degree to which the broader American public has remained similarly invested in defending the notion of shared Anglo-American values.