From Enmity to Friendship: Anglo-American Relations in the 19th and 20th Century

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Anglo-American cooperation was a central element of 20th century international politics. It was crucial for America's ascendance to a hegemonic position in the international power hierarchy during the first half of the 20th century, and it was even more important during the Cold War. The institutional backbone of the Cold War international system (international organizations and Western alliances) bear the imprint of Anglo-American cooperation: the international economic and financial structures, security policy, especially such sensitive areas as the secret services and nuclear strategy and diplomacy; decolonization and development policy were also arenas of close Anglo-American cooperation, competition and conflict resolution. The Anglo-American "special relationship" survived several serious political crises during the second half of the 20th century; the most critical one was without doubt the Suez crisis. London and Washington remained close partners even at a time when "old Europe" was distancing itself from the United States because of growing American unilateralism and the militarization of American security policy in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

What is so special about the 'special relationship' and what are its historical foundations, its institutional and communicative structures and its problem-solving strategies? These are the questions that, when one looks back at the history of Anglo-American relations during the 19th and 20th century immediately come to mind and that the papers of this conference volume try to explore. We do this by analytically juxtaposing two crucial periods in the history of Anglo-American relations: The second half of the 19th century as the period of the emerging "special relationship" and the Cold War era as the period of the "special relationship" in action.

After the American Civil War we can observe a major change in the structure and character of British-American relations. The hostile tensions between the two states as manifested by two wars conducted against one

another toward the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries were eased during the 1880s and 1890s with a rapidity and dynamic that is astonishing for processes of mental change. This development was accompanied by the emergence of close British-American transnational networks and a growing economic and financial interdependence.[1]

The political rivalry that emerged once again during the Venezuela crisis in 1895/96 already has to be interpreted as the close-up of a process during which the United States rose to an international power that established itself as primus inter pares in the concert of Europe after World War I and as the leading power of the Western world after World War II. This replacement of the Pax Britannica by the Pax Americana became obvious already at the end of the 19th century. The Second World War eventually finished this process of "Changing of the Guard" (Randall Bennett Woods).

Starting from these observations part I of the conference volume brings together articles that try to reconstruct the social construction of Anglo-American relations during the second half of the 19th century by examining

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1 See Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings. Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge MA 1998); Markus Brechtken, *"Sea-Change" und "Scharnierzeit": Persönlichkeiten, Netzwerke und Politik in den britisch-amerikanisch-deutschen Beziehungen während der globalen Formationsphase um die Jahrhundertwende* (Habilitationsschrift Universität München 2003).

cultural transfer processes and the mental and ideological basis of British-American relations. The papers of part II cover the Cold War period and investigate the way in which the special relationship worked politically, economically and with regard to international security policy. The analytical link between the two parts of the book consists of two overarching research perspectives. All articles focus on the institutional and communicative structures of the "special relationship" (1), and all articles explore conflicts and problem-solving strategies (2). By contrasting and complementing historical research that is informed by approaches from cultural history, the history of ideas or intellectual history on the one hand and political and diplomatic history on the other we try to answer the following set of questions:

(ad 1) What are the underlying domestic and institutional settings of the "special relationship"? What are its transnational and transcultural underpinnings? Which communicative reference points (topoi/standard arguments) and communication strategies are essential for sustaining the "special relationship"? To what extent does American and British policy depend on institutionalized bilateral arrangements and communication procedures? And (ad 2): Who is, in a given crisis or conflict situation, more interested in maintaining and reinventing the "special relationship"? Who benefits from existing bilateral arrangements, why and to what extent? Why do considerations of prestige and conflicting interests, disappointments and other stress factors not prevent the responsible actors of fostering the British-American partnership?

The reader might ask why the first half of the 20th century and especially the interwar period was not included. We did so for two reasons: This period has been studied extensively in particular by members of the Arbeitskreis Deutsche Englandforschung.[2] Including this period would have meant just summarizing well known research literature. We wanted to offer new perspectives and insights based on new archival evidence or new historical approaches helping us to reread and reinterpret historical documents, and we intended to compare two historical periods that are characterized by an opposite power structure within the bilateral set-up. During the second half of the 19th century Great Britain was the dominant

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2 Robert von Friedeburg and Hartmut Berghoff (eds.), *Change and Inertia. Britain under the Impact of the Great War* (Bodenheim: Philo 1998); Ursula Lehmkuhl and Hans-Heinrich Jansen (eds.), *Großbritannien, das Empire und die Welt. Britische Außenpolitik zwischen "Größe" und Selbstbehauptung", 1850-1990* (Bochum: Brockmeyer 1995); Clemens A. Wurm (ed.), *Wege nach Europa. Wirtschaft und Außenpolitik Großbritanniens im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bochum: Brockmeyer 1992).

player, regionally and globally. The United States was an emerging continental power still focusing primarily on domestic issues and the forging of the American nation state. A hundred years later the situation was reversed: Great Britain was a declining world power with reduced regional and global significance. It was struggling economically and financially with the severe impact of the Second World War on the domestic economy but also on the economy of the British Empire. The decolonization process and the concomitant retreat from the position of a global power had repercussions on national self-esteem. Domestic regional rivalries and the restructuring of British society were the domestic correlates of the highly disputed foreign policy issue of whether Britain's future lay in Europe or elsewhere.

A comparison of these two historical periods will help us to offer a perspective on the history of the "special relationship" reflecting the interdependence between the internal power structure within the bilateral framework and the international power structure. We hope that this perspective together with the focus on institutions, communicative structures and problem solving strategies offers new insights into the specificity of the "special relationship" and its historical foundations.