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# Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations

Phillip Myers

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# CAUTION & COOPERATION

The American Civil War in  
British-American Relations

PHILLIP E. MYERS



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*Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations*

PHILLIP E. MYERS

# Caution and Cooperation

*The American Civil War  
in British-American Relations*



PHILLIP E. MYERS

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# Introduction

## Realism and Private Diplomacy

The most earnest task confronting British and American statesmen when the American Civil War broke out in April 1861 was to stave off an international war. Fortunately, the two Anglo-Saxon nations had enjoyed nearly a half-century of peace since 1815, and in 1861 British-American relations were more dependable than at any time since American independence. But they were also ridden with distrust. Neither Britain's shaky Liberal government that was still shy of completing two years in office nor America's new Republican government wanted the American civil conflict to make them enemies. Neither power (nor anyone else) had any idea of the course the Civil War would take, and both decided to adhere to the traditional policies of caution and cooperation.

Despite the desire of both powers for peace, the Civil War seriously threatened relations between the two. Hard-pressed Union leaders believed on scanty evidence that many British upper-, middle-, and working-class subjects were pro-South despite being adamantly opposed to slavery. Ultimately, so Unionists heard, pro-Southerners argued that an independent Confederate state would eventually abolish slavery and become a modern nation. As a result, Unionists' fears that Britain would recognize Confederate independence strained relations.

There were further strains that have caused historians to believe in the possibility of an Anglo-American war during this time period. The Union's aim for self-preservation without announcing that emancipation was a primary war aim until January 1, 1863, made many Britons believe that the Republicans were turning on a poor but proud South in a most imperious manner. When the shooting began, newly elected president Abraham Lincoln announced that his primary war aim was preserving the Union, which was beyond the comprehension of many British subjects and their leaders who had philosophically supported European national independence movements against the conservative powers and now saw a parallel with the South's secession from the Union. Many aristocratic leaders had always believed in the Union's inevitable demise. They now argued that the

Union's simplest way out of the sectional crisis was to let the South have its independence, because they refused to believe that reunification was possible.

Conversely, although the numbers are just as imprecise, the Union had a respectable group of British supporters. Because the British government never detected that public opinion swayed significantly enough to take sides, it remained neutral, just as it had in the recent successful Italian and Greek national unification movements. The scrambled nature of public opinion about the American Civil War buttressed nonintervention and the continuation of peaceful relations.

There were obvious reasons for nonintervention. The traditions of antimartial spirit in Britain and the United States, retrenchment from big military budgets, Anglo-American commercial and financial connections, and self-proclaimed isolation from Europe since 1815 caused a cautious and realistic foreign policy that was the opposite of the punitive realism that was becoming ascendant in Europe. The European balance of power changed with the revivification of France during the 1850s and the early Civil War years. It was further amended with Bismarck's advent in Prussia from 1862 and Prussia's aggressions in Europe during the Civil War. (Prussia was pro-Union.) The upshot was that, as the Civil War grew more protracted, British diplomatic power diminished in Europe and it became more isolated from influencing the conservative powers than at any other time in the century. It could not afford a war with the Union before or after 1861 in the popular, economic, or strategic senses. Realistic British leaders remained aloof from actual or potential conflicts on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Any war in which Britain might find itself a combatant threatened to disrupt its unprecedented prosperity and complicate the worsening situations in Europe and in North America. Pinched by the international instability, Britain avoided conflict to develop its free-trade empire and to maintain its traditional isolationist foreign policy that had raised great industrial and imperial wealth at little military cost.

American foreign policy paralleled that of Britain in many ways. The United States followed the British policy of isolation from European affairs and by 1861 was building a transcontinental and global empire by peaceful means. It needed British financial and naval assistance in China and Japan, where antebellum cooperation to gain trading outposts continued through the Civil War and beyond. These complementary foreign policies, commerce, and investments underlined the mutual desire to continue peaceful relations.

Despite the mutual peaceful attitude and the Union's domestic predicament, a haze of uncertainty still surrounds the true course of Anglo-American relations during the Civil War era. It is helpful to examine the chances of war between the two cousins, and a long view is needed to clarify this vital issue. Chapter 1 reviews the trends in relations after 1815 to show the growth of a rapprochement by 1861. Chapter 2 shows how antebellum cooperation remained the strongest trend dur-

ing the first six months of the conflict, and to tell a longer story, into 1864 because Britain refused to overturn its traditional posture of nonintervention.

Chapter 3 shows how the *Trent* affair of November and December 1861, commonly believed to be the event that brought the Union and Britain closest to war, was less threatening than believed when seen against decisions since 1815 and the dependable methods of cooperative problem solving that had underpinned those decisions. Moreover, the outcomes of the affair are discussed into the first half of 1862 to show how quickly relations returned to peaceful traditions. Within the long span of relations, the *Trent* affair was pivotal because its resolution, through private diplomacy and good sense, released tensions accumulated during the Civil War's first eight months and kept relations on a cooperative track for the rest of the conflict. Neither power wanted to repeat the scare and, in Britain's case, the expense that it caused. Seen in a positive light, the affair proved the peaceful, noninterventionist aims of both governments and cleared the diplomatic system to manage issues. To illustrate this mutual resolve, Chapter 4 discusses examples of cooperation on land and sea during the pivotal year of 1862.

With caution and cooperation predominating early in the conflict, Chapter 5 demonstrates that any war fever that existed on either side of the Atlantic was lanced by the fall of 1862 when the British cabinet's intervention debate reaffirmed cooperation rather than intervention. Chapter 6 shows how Lincoln met his own cabinet crisis during the same time period, as Radical Republicans pressed to harden the war effort and oust Seward, if not Lincoln himself. Like Palmerston, Lincoln had to wend his way out of his own cabinet crisis. Taken together, these two chapters show that pressures on both cabinet and chief executives caused parallel reactions and reinforced cooperation. Somewhat like the military scare the *Trent* affair raised, the rebellion within the Republican Party made both governments realize more than before why it was important to support the other in power to uphold transatlantic peace. The work of Palmerston and Lincoln in maintaining their cabinets made each body more aware of the criticality of supporting the other's staying in power because of the workable mutual relationship that by now had proven worthy of withstanding tensions. The majority of both cabinets refused to consider an international war, and the nucleus of these cabinets remained intact throughout the rest of the Civil War.

With a middle diplomatic and political ground reached by the beginning of 1863, the next six chapters show the improvement of relations through the war's climax in April 1865. Chapters 7 and 8 depict the explicit mutual support in 1863 and 1864. Chapter 9 analyzes the weaknesses of Confederate diplomacy and the impact they had on the easing of British-American tensions while tensions between Britain and the Confederacy increased. Chapter 10 shows how Britain and the United States cooperated to end the slave trade and also maintained commercial partnerships in the Far East. Chapter 11 discloses how quickly the United

States returned to a peacetime military and commerce that depended on good relations with Britain. Chapter 12 shows how diplomacy covered the return to normal relations. I argue that the end of the war was accompanied by a stronger desire for a comprehensive treaty to settle all differences, some of which extended from as far back as the declaration of American independence. Chapter 12 shows that in 1871 the two countries acknowledged the cautious and cooperative relations with the comprehensive Treaty of Washington and the unprecedented international arbitrations that it spawned. Together, Britain and the United States set the precedent for peaceful solutions while Europe dissolved into war.

These events were the culmination of the course that relations had taken after 1815 and demonstrated that the Civil War was not as unique and threatening to relations as historians have believed. I believe there is a strong argument that for these reasons the Civil War was contained by the contingent traditions. The conflict failed to dictate a change, or watershed, in the traditional tendencies of caution and cooperation that had anchored relations in peace. In other words, the consistency of diplomatic management after 1815 was manifested in Civil War diplomacy rather than a new and dangerous track. The fact that the arbitrations of the early 1870s were an example of dispassionate settlement reflects the tone of relations before and during the Civil War. The arbitrations were unique when compared with contemporary European fighting solutions and underlined the British-American desire for peace at all costs.

Chapter 12 concludes by explaining how Britain and the United States stood by each other during the European wars of the 1860s and early 1870s with neither taking advantage of the other's predicament: Britain supported Reconstruction, and the United States made no attempt to embarrass Britain's weak standing in Europe. This kind of mutual support was seen many times prior to the Civil War. For example, wartime disputes were either resolved or held in abeyance along with unresolved antebellum issues until there was a mutual political need for a general settlement. Just as the British had not taken advantage of American prosecution of the Mexican War, neither had the United States taken advantage of Canadian political weaknesses and the British prosecution of the Crimean War. Britain refused to embarrass the United States as American political parties weakened and fell apart under the pressures of the sectional crisis, and the United States refused to embarrass Britain in Europe during and after the Civil War.

Because I argue that the Anglo-American peace set in more deeply than previously as a result of the Civil War, my conclusions differ from existing interpretations. Historians have tended to see Civil War diplomacy constrained by the beginning and end of the military event with little consideration of antebellum or postwar diplomatic contingencies.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Civil War was not a historic watershed or obstacle in relations, because past cooperation held up and grew stronger. Put another way, on the diplomatic level, the Civil War continued decades of private

conflict management and resolution. Thus this study looks for the evidence of the growing cooperation not only during the Civil War but from Lee's surrender at Appomattox on 9 April 1865 to the Treaty of Washington of 8 May 1871, where existing studies have fallen short. This observation raises the question that if traditional arguments that the Civil War left Anglo-American relations sour enough to break up, why did relations persist in their usual manner of cautious diplomacy, cooperation, and negotiations during that six-year interim and result in the most comprehensive treaty of the century? And why do studies that do consider the contingencies conclude that the Civil War's end implied dependable relations?<sup>2</sup>

This work's contention that the dependable prewar relationship was briefly interrupted but not permanently disrupted by the Civil War runs contrary to the past three decades of histories written on both sides of the Atlantic that have viewed Civil War diplomacy as self-contained and paid little attention to antebellum or postwar relations. This traditional approach implies that relations were near collapse during the first two years of the war. But, as will be shown, statesmen cooperatively employed past methods to manage disputes from the outset of fighting into the fall of 1862 when chances of British intervention waned in the minds of the British cabinet and Confederate leaders, and British-Union cooperation intensified. Indeed, British interventionists were a distinct minority in cabinet and parliament in the antebellum era and throughout the Civil War. This consistency strengthened after 1865. Moreover, Parliament and the public were never enthused about intervention. Despite their roles as the number two and three ministers, at the critical time from late September through early November 1862, Prime Minister Henry John Temple, third viscount Palmerston, ultimately ignored the interventionist desires of Lord John Russell, the foreign secretary, and chancellor of the exchequer William Ewart Gladstone, the only two important ministerial advocates of intervention. (Even they did not want to upset relations, however, but conceived of an intervention to stop the bloodshed and their fears of an incipient slave insurrection.) Palmerston's adept indifference maintained his relationship with Russell and his leadership of the declining Whig element in the Liberal Party. His letting Russell criticize Gladstone for the latter's famous Newcastle speech of 7 October 1862 declaring that the South had made a nation, broke up the two interventionists and caused both of them to support Palmerston's anti-interventionism. Meanwhile, there was no chance, short of a climactic Confederate military victory, for them to gain adherents. Lee's retreat from Gettysburg and Grant's conquest of Vicksburg in early July 1863 seemed to ensure a Union victory. If Palmerston lost office, Russell and Gladstone knew that they would fall also. Political ambition and intervention were antagonistic.

Moreover, all three of them, especially Palmerston, thought ill of the South as an ally because of slavery. Despite all that historians have correctly written about the prime minister's animosity toward Americans, his method had always been

deterrence and indifference, and his refusal to rile the North implied his superior need for peace with the despised “republican mob” to maintain his power. His belief that “Britain had no eternal friends and no eternal enemies but only eternal interests” made him “the great nineteenth-century practitioner of *realpolitik*.” He lived for “expediency rather than principle; and he proved himself capable of having second thoughts on decisions that bore great risk.”<sup>3</sup> No better example exists than his refusal to approve of intervention in the fall of 1862.

Indeed, the argument for Anglo-American relations congealing can be seen through Confederate foreign policy. The South gave up on British intervention by late 1862, if not earlier. It was aware that nonintervention was the attitude that pervaded the British cabinet. It was chagrined that Britain recognized the Union blockade of the chief Southern ports before the blockade of those portals was effective. The government in Richmond recognized Russell’s cooperation with the Union on the most explosive disputes, and rebel leaders knew that he showed more cooperation than interventionism in 1862. Measured against his refusal to truck with Confederate diplomats, his brief push for intervention in the fall of 1862, and his overall desire for peace with the Union, Russell’s behavior makes him a most ironic statesman of the Civil War era.

We must credit President Jefferson Davis and some of his top field commanders, such as Robert E. Lee, with figuring out Russell’s ironic stance by the time the war was little more than a year old. The South was aware that in 1862, a transitional year to improved British-Union relations, Britain’s policy toward the Civil War merged with Lincoln’s steadfast desire for peaceful international affairs. The persistence of the mutual desire to cooperate on the diplomatic high road continued antebellum habits, while the South’s inability to muster a cooperative foreign policy with the European powers contributed to its acute isolation in the war’s last years.

France was the third power in the nonintervention equation that must be integrated with the story of cooperation. Instead of accomplishing its aim of breaking up British-American relations, France’s actions were another significant reason that inspired the two governments to cooperate. France and Britain had been rivals for decades. British leaders feared a surprise cross-channel invasion from the 1840s onward. The specter of another Napoleon at the helm of the French state became reality in 1852 with the accession of Louis Napoleon as Emperor Napoleon III. This imperious ruler soon became the most mistrusted power in Europe. French relations with Britain and the Union faded throughout the Civil War concomitant with the growing bad feeling between Britain and the South and the recuperation of British-Union relations. These developments brought the British and the Union closer for a number of reasons. The opportunistic Napoleon III awkwardly tried to use the Union’s distractions to push Britain to recognize the independence of the Confederacy while he established a French monarchy in Mexico. He tried to

frighten the British into believing that Union victory meant the subsequent conquest of Canada and Mexico. He played a treacherous game that antagonized all of the players, including his foreign ministers, and his antics in Europe produced similar results until his defeat by Prussia in 1870, the same year that Britain and the United States seriously prepared for comprehensive treaty making. Throughout this period Britain became more defenseless in Europe, and the United States needed British financial assistance and commerce to fund the Civil War debt. By looking at the British-American relationship in this way, one can begin to see that there were many more reasons for caution and cooperation.

Britain's nonintervention ultimately led to a comprehensive treaty with the United States. Perhaps the largest point to be made regarding this issue is the quickness with which the major British-American treaty of the nineteenth century was made after the Civil War ended in 1865. In 1871, they finally resolved long-standing and Civil War disputes. The timing of this negotiation presents a compelling reason for the extension of the antebellum rapprochement into the Civil War and its aftermath. The treaty led to, a year later, an international arbitration that was characterized by mutual accommodation to settle the *Alabama* claims, which was the most potentially destructive dispute that resulted from the Civil War. The Treaty of Washington culminated nearly a century of diplomacy, reinforced the rapprochement, and kept relations on a steady course of friendship and understanding throughout the rest of the century and beyond.



# 1

## The Antebellum Rapprochement

The growth of cooperation between America and Britain after 1815 provides a clearer understanding about the activities and outcomes of the British-American relationship before, during, and after the Civil War. Britain and the United States stopped competing militarily for advantages in North America after 1815, and the absence of military maneuvers and the discovery of using diplomacy to settle disputes enabled relations to grow into a rapprochement from 1815 to 1861.<sup>1</sup> The British and American governments used similar principles of diplomacy because each had much more to lose than to gain from war. They refused to intervene when either got into international trouble, shelved disagreements that they could not resolve, and shrouded their dislike for one another to maintain peace. When they negotiated, they negotiated in private, out of the purview of public opinion. Personal communication was “more significant than official channels. Dispatches, memoranda, and reports undeniably exercised great influence, but personal letters and conversations had an enormous impact. Private correspondence from a friend not only appeared more trustworthy, it had the stamp of candor.”<sup>2</sup> The fact that provocative disputes were contained for decades attests to the mutual will not to fight. Repeatedly, diplomacy absolved the cousins of their mutual antagonisms and ensured peaceful settlements. To find the basis of this peaceful diplomacy, one has to dig through the bluster that was often in the news and look precisely at the actions of the governments’ views of national self-interest. Older histories support this view: “It may be doubted whether the various questions dealt with and settled between the two great English-speaking nations from the [Rush-Bagot] Treaty of 1817 . . . can be equalled for general sanity and fairness by any similar number of agreements made between any other Powers since history began. Nor, as far as definite acts are concerned, have the relations between any two nations ever been at once so intimate and so free from serious injury to one another.”<sup>3</sup>

In *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, Ephraim Douglas Adams advised for this longer view to explain the dynamics that charged relations. Although he

hesitated to analyze why peace was the strongest characteristic in relations, he saw the value of the antebellum contingencies in explaining why the Civil War did not shatter relations. He implied that the peaceful destiny of both governments stemmed from cooperation. He did not believe that the Civil War was “an isolated and unique situation, but that the conditions preceding that situation—some of them lying far back in the relations of the two nations—had a vital bearing on British policy and opinion when the crisis arose.” Adams noted that “understanding the elements that influenced British perceptions of America during the mid-nineteenth century requires looking back to the end of the 1820s.”<sup>4</sup>

The mutual desire for peace stemmed from the foreign policy of both governments resting on the same philosophical structure, what Walter McDougall terms “unilateralism” and “minimalism.” Unilateralism meant that both governments eschewed formal alliances. Minimalism meant that each government wanted to gain maximum economic and strategic benefits abroad without aggression and at the lowest cost possible. These two strategies also meant that in the four decades before the Civil War British governments followed a realistic policy toward the United States instead of warring over disputes because the benefits of peace were too great to lose. The United States thought the same way: the rewards of a cooperative relationship were stronger than those of war. By the Compromise of 1846, Britain realized that the balance of power in North America had shifted to the United States, but that it was more important for Britain to surrender this costly stance than contest it. Britain could surrender without loss of honor, and it was hesitant to anger its best trading and investment partner. By the mid-nineteenth century the huge British banking houses led by the Baring brothers, the Rothschilds, and the American George Peabody and Company were at the height of their control over the Atlantic economy. These financiers knew how to build wealth, and the United States was critical in their pursuits. Historian Jay Sexton points out that American foreign indebtedness grew to unprecedented proportions in the twenty-five years before the Civil War. Thus it is no wonder that the Barings and their American agents such as Daniel Webster were forces in maintaining the diplomatic peace, to the extent that “ninety percent of the United States’ foreign indebtedness in 1861 was of British origin.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite what E. D. Adams wrote about the rapprochement’s being detectable from the 1820s, this shift to dependable relations can be detected as early as before the War of 1812. This war was an anomaly in relations, and the British had tried in vain to stop it in June 1812 but were too late. Relations improved after the war, as evidenced by both governments’ getting trade back on track, and ambiguous and incomplete agreements became permanent manifestations of the cooperative relationship. Britain needed the United States as an export and investment base, and it needed peace to import American cotton to keep its textile industries booming and to protect its weak North American colonies of Canada and the Maritimes

(Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island). Bilateral trade was restored by agreement in 1815. Signs of rapprochement continued in 1817 when the Rush-Bagot Agreement demilitarized the Great Lakes to remove that border region from conflict. The agreement stood as the first reciprocal naval disarmament "in the history of international relations." Probably just as important in the antebellum decades was the wide-ranging and practical Convention of 1818 that further eased potential border tensions by demarcating the Canadian-American boundary along the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rockies. It called for joint occupation of the Oregon Territory west of the Rockies to the Pacific, and it was renewed in 1826 and continued until 1846. It also enabled New Englanders to fish in British colonial inshore waters where the best fishing was found; and they could dry and transship their catches from colonial shores. Even before the Convention of 1818, Britain refused to commit resources to the Northwest Coast, an area rich in furs and strategic locations for the Royal Navy to operate and support commercial operations into the Far East. In the decades that followed, conflicts were resolved by the mutual policy of conciliation and cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

These actions show that Anglo-American leaders worked to maximize their commonalities and shelve their differences. Both were each other's best trading and investment partner, experienced industrial growth, and had expansionist goals. Both experienced social dislocations, with immigrants in the United States spilling into the eastern cities and into the farmlands of the Midwest and the far West, and in Britain, with farmhands dislocated into the teeming industrial cities by mechanization and the promise of higher wages. In addition, both governments were extremely suspicious of French pretensions in Europe and abroad. The Anglo-French rivalry remained after 1815, became pronounced by the 1830s, and grew apace over the next two decades. By 1861 the two powers were involved in an intense rivalry capped by the first modern arms race over ironclad ship construction and British fear of a surprise cross-channel invasion by French steam vessels no longer controlled by wind and waves.

Furthermore, at no time throughout the antebellum period could Britain withstand a two-front war against France and the United States. To guard against this eventuality, Britain and the United States advanced transatlantic commerce and popular democracy, both of which strengthened the common bond of democracy. The 1830s brought unprecedented foreign investments into the United States. Few Americans resisted this impetus to support the transportation and industrial revolutions. By 1838, foreigners had invested \$110 million in American businesses. The ties between Britain and the United States were strengthened in this way because the huge increases in investments in American development showed that the United States could be trusted in fiscal matters. Baring Brothers spent huge sums on lobbying, propaganda, and its network of American agents, such as Webster, but also on journalists, politicians, and religious leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Other mutually beneficial movements occurred during this time. As the abolitionist movement flowered in the United States and took a strong hold on the Whig and then Republican parties, British antislavery legislation triumphed and the franchise was modestly extended. In the 1840s and 1850s North and Central American boundary settlements succeeded through British and American compromise that enabled the completion of American transcontinental expansion and mutual commerce in Central America. It is unsurprising that British Liberal and Conservative ministries sent leading financiers to Washington to negotiate these treaties partly to deflect the pressure of public opinion.<sup>8</sup> Whether the territory negotiated was north or south of the American borders, the treaties were negotiated privately and quickly out of a desire to maintain calm relations. By the early 1840s both governments were aware that diplomatic disputes were not “in the interests of either British capitalists or their American debtors.”<sup>9</sup>

As already suggested, Palmerston was the key player that prevented Britain from going to war to solve the various American problems in the antebellum period. What was it about his career that made his blustering always stop short of war with the United States? From 1807 through 1865, he served as war minister, foreign secretary, home secretary, and prime minister. As a young administrator he learned about the realistic diplomacy that the British foreign secretaries of the day practiced to keep the peace. This realism helped to create the Convention of 1818 that settled boundary and fishery disputes until clearer agreements were possible. Palmerston unsurprisingly pursued a mild American policy during his first tour at the Foreign Office from 1830 to 1841, and President Andrew Jackson and his successors generally reciprocated his work. In 1835, Palmerston wrote that the United States and Britain were “joined by Community of Interests, & by the Bonds of Kindred.” Over the next two years he refused to encourage Texas independence or block its entry into the Union. Moreover, he stated, “that as far as our Commercial Interests are concerned we should have no objections to see the whole of Mexico belong to the United States.” In 1839, he wrote that “Commercial interests [with the United States] . . . are so Strong . . . that it would require a very extraordinary state of things to bring an actual war.” He deepened the friendship with the United States during his last five years as foreign secretary.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1840s, with an even more peaceful foreign secretary, the earl of Aberdeen, Britain privately ceded huge amounts of North American territory to the United States. Secretary of state Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton, who was a member of the Baring family but had renounced his American investments, negotiated the Maine boundary treaty privately and quickly in Washington in mid-1842. British financiers did not want a war over the disputed boundary. The Rothschild's American agent, August Belmont, wrote to the home office in London that “England, in a war with her largest debtor, the consumer of her manufacturers, has all to lose and nothing to gain.” If negotiations were unsuccessful

and a battle of national honor ensued, British investments would be completely suspended, trade would be reduced, and a run on banks might occur. Moreover, successful negotiations would increase American security rates on the London Stock Exchange. Webster (also a Baring's agent) and Ashburton both agreed, as Webster remarked, "No difference shall be permitted seriously to endanger the maintenance of peace with England."<sup>11</sup>

Amid these pressures, the Webster-Ashburton negotiations showed that Britain and the United States respected each other's intelligence and power, as they ignored traditional protocols and calmly negotiated a complex treaty concerning twelve thousand square miles bordering Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. In what was becoming commonplace in the Anglo-American diplomatic tradition, they ensured that the provisions were not written until after the talks, kept few minutes, and exchanged few notes. The treaty tranquilized the Canadian-American border and provided joint operations against the slave trade (which the United States did not uphold until after the Civil War began). It also ended the illegal operations of groups who resented Britain, such as the Patriot Hunters, a secret society of Canadian rebels and their American supporters who disturbed relations during the Canadian rebellion against the mother country in the late 1830s. The treaty's extradition provisions prohibited flights for safety across the border. Further cooperation came to the chagrin of Maine's leaders, from Webster's ceding territory along the contested Maine and New Brunswick border to Britain. This cession of territory was the only one made in any American treaty. With that treaty American leaders realized that Britain preferred not to fight about remaining territorial disputes to the extent that the treaty did not have to be precise in all respects, another common outcome. For example, Webster dropped demands for reparation for escaped slaves in return for a British pledge not to interfere with American ships brought into British ports that might be commandeered by slaves, as in the *Creole* case. Moreover, both parties expressed regret to each other over the awkwardness created in relations by the *Caroline* and McLeod disputes a few years before that had resulted in the death of an American at the hands of the British. As Jay Sexton writes, this treaty was created because it was at this time (and other times as well) more prudent to cover up the sore spots in relations than to negotiate a substantial treaty that would have proved impossible to accomplish.<sup>12</sup>

The Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 20 August 1842 proved to be a model to use in realizing cooperation over other sore spots in relations. A few years later, as the "Oregon question" began to fester, Boston author and diplomat A. H. Everett wrote President James K. Polk that Britain would "acquiesce" and negotiate an "equitable adjustment." He reminded the president what British leaders had already certified: that trade was the basis for British foreign policy, and trade with the United States was worth more to it than all of its other commercial connections. Everett

concluded that the abuse of the United States by the British press should not be perceived as critical to relations because the British government realized the “absolute political necessity, of entertaining friendly intercourse with us.”<sup>13</sup>

Polk did not heed Everett’s advice, however. The president went the way of the Democrats and blustered for “fifty-four forty or fight,” while emitting his famous manifesto that “the only way to treat John Bull was to look him straight in the eye.” Secret lobbying by the Barings and Sen. Daniel Webster’s call for a compromise border at the 49th parallel gave the president more to think about. Conservative foreign secretary Aberdeen supported this plan, which was published in London journals. Moreover, Britain’s practical needs overrode forceful solutions. Both governments wanted to lower tariff barriers to increase the mutual economic benefits. For immediate purposes, Britain could import more staples from the United States to alleviate the plight of the starving Irish in the midst of the potato famine. American leaders were thoughtful about the challenge of funding a war against their largest creditor.<sup>14</sup>

In a fashion reminiscent of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, the Oregon Treaty of 1846 was negotiated just as rapidly and privately in Washington in June 1846. In terms of the extent of the territorial cession to the United States, it far outdistanced the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. The United States gained more than 500,000 square miles of contested territory in the Pacific Northwest. In support of Everett’s prognosis, Palmerston proclaimed “that nothing could be more calamitous to both countries, than a war between Great Britain and the United States.” This treaty too was imprecise, with the water boundary along the 49th parallel extending through Puget Sound left unsettled because neither side could agree to lose control of the strategically located Haro Strait and deep water ports of the region that divided the San Juan Islands from Vancouver Island. As the natural boundaries of the United States began to be realized through these treaties, British statesmen and financiers showed that American Manifest Destiny, thought by prideful American leaders and midwestern Democrats to be a predetermined, God-given right and a symbol of national honor worth fighting for, was not as important as expanding finance and maintaining peace. As Jay Sexton points out, “There can be little question that the larger financial and commercial interdependence of Britain and the United States that they embodied connected the two nations to such an extent that leaders on both sides of the Atlantic desired to avoid war at all costs.” With the Mexican War brewing and thirty Royal Navy ships dispatched to North American waters as a deterrent to war, Polk opted for compromise over Oregon. As Sexton summarizes, “for the second time in less than five years, cool heads prevailed during a diplomatic crisis.”<sup>15</sup>

These cool heads continued to dominate relations with the tensions that the Crimean War of the mid-1850s threatened to unleash in British-American relations. With the British government distracted fighting Russia in the Near East,

expansionist America took the opportunity to steal a march on Britain in the Western Hemisphere. Nothing happened as a result, because the expansionist focus of the United States was southward and westward, not northward, and it was blurred beyond achieving its natural frontiers that had been accomplished by the Oregon Treaty of 1846 and the Mexican War. In keeping with its traditional policy of not intervening in European affairs, the United States refused Russia's requests to fit out privateers against the Royal Navy and British and Canadian merchant ships, and Anglo-American commerce continued to flourish. After several years of tragedy on the windswept Crimea, Britain and its ally France won, primarily due to French efforts. The war nearly bankrupted Britain. After the war, amid growing rivalry with France and Russia, Britain exercised more characteristics of unilateralism and minimalism abroad with a foreign policy that continued to emphasize deterrence, nonintervention, and military retrenchment. In addition to cooperation in Central and North America, Britain and the United States collaborated to enhance commercial self-interests in China and Japan.

The Crimean War caused one problem that threatened the British-American rapprochement, but it also showed that no matter how piqued Americans became, like the British, they preferred diplomacy to fighting. In this event, unilateralism and minimalism kept the cousins out of war with each other in 1855–56 during the Crampton affair. John Crampton was the veteran British minister to the United States. He was considered friendly to British-American cooperation and enjoyed a successful diplomatic career. But the huge losses of the British Army in the Crimea brought orders from Whitehall to recruit troops clandestinely in the United States and ship them out through Nova Scotia in violation of the American Foreign Enlistment Act of 1818. Crampton was zealous about establishing a recruitment organization. His recruitment ring was quickly discovered, as was his duplicity. At Prime Minister Palmerston's behest, Foreign Secretary Clarendon, who was "obviously involved in the fiasco up to the hilt," ordered Crampton to cease recruitment in June 1855, but he apparently continued through early August.<sup>16</sup>

Clarendon's cease and desist order was conditioned by British public opinion, which was a growing force in Britain and supported the White House's solution to deflect the situation by recalling Crampton. Sensitive to opinion, Clarendon hastened to recall his minister and express regret to the United States.<sup>17</sup> In November 1855, merchant and manufacturing leaders worried that "unless we bestir ourselves there is no knowing how soon the reckless gambler at the head of affairs [Palmerston] may involve us in senseless quarrels with our Brother across the water." On 2 November Sir George Grey, the home secretary, wrote that "a real quarrel [with the United States] is so unnatural that I trust it will be averted by the good sense . . . of both countries." The liberal *Leeds Mercury* thought the West Indian fleet was provocative and discouraged the ministry from "considerations which would make hostilities with the United States an evil of the first magnitude." When parliament



returned in February 1856, Radical MP (member of Parliament) John Arthur Roebuck, who had led the committee investigating mismanagement of the Crimean War, said that war with the United States would be a war "between brethren, the evils of which would surpass anything that could be imagined. We are the only two great free nations at the present time." Chancellor of the exchequer William Ewart Gladstone echoed Roebuck's sentiments on the evening of 4 April, which aroused an already angry Palmerston. As the session continued, led by Gladstone, the Peelite conservative wing of the Liberal Party supported the Americans, with Sir James Graham writing to Gladstone on 16 May, "Even if we had a better case, the risk of War with America is an unpardonable Error."

In this atmosphere, Crampton was dismissed at the end of May 1856, and in retaliation Palmerston and Clarendon thought about sending American minister George Mifflin Dallas (who had only arrived) home, but they refrained from revenge because of the opposition of cabinet, Commons, and public opinion. The liberal middle class believed that American expansion into Central America was conducive to increasing British commerce and that cooperative relations were paramount. Palmerston agreed and retreated for the same defensive reason as he had from opposing the United States over Texas in 1836. Not only did the cabinet not want trouble with the United States over Crampton, but also on 4 June 1856 Sir Charles Wood, the first lord of the admiralty, wrote the prime minister that Britain had no interests in Central America and should withdraw peacefully. Russell told Clarendon that the region was in the U.S. sphere, and "we have no reason to complain & no business to interfere." Moreover, the moderate Clarendon quit his hard line and reminded Russell that the British and American naval commanders cooperated in the Gulf of Mexico to protect their commercial interests and the territorial settlements.

With these considerations, the usual process of British-American diplomatic business brought another peaceful conclusion. Palmerston was conciliatory in the Commons because he wanted to conserve the "many causes of union and so many mutual interests as between Great Britain and the United States." In this regard, "Palmerston and Clarendon showed commendable self-restraint."<sup>18</sup> As in the past, Palmerston repressed his initial bluster. Although infuriated by Washington's behavior, he only pouted and refused to send a replacement to Washington and scoffed at the American action by elevating Crampton as British ambassador to Spain.

Palmerston was not about to infuriate the United States over such an affair. There were too many existing issues that required cooperation for the national self-interests of both countries. Cooperation continued globally from 1857 until 1861 over other potentially divisive issues. A clearer revision of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was concluded. The U.S. Navy assisted the Royal Navy in accessing treaty ports in China and in opening up Japan to Western commerce. The United States again refused to take advantage of Britain's woes when the Indian Mutiny rocked



Britain in 1857. In 1858, Britain backed down when the United States government was stirred up by the British capture of slave traders under the American flag. The governments cooperatively shelved the San Juan Water Boundary dispute in Puget Sound in 1859. During the Conservative interlude under Lord Derby, Crampton's replacement, Lord Francis Napier, arrived in Washington in 1858 and fell to work maintaining amicable relations.

As the settlements of these disputes demonstrated, Britain and the United States were in no position militarily to fight in the antebellum period. The Federal army was primarily a weak, unprofessional frontier force of sixteen thousand. The navy consisted of forty wooden ships built primarily for coastal defense. In 1854, Congress quickly stifled attempts by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to add several new regiments to the army. In both countries the antimartial spirit remained ascendant as it had in Britain for centuries and in the United States since independence. British subjects were uncomfortable with large standing armies despite the assumed French threat. Britain's tragic experience in the Crimea was still fresh in the minds of its subjects. Painfully aware of this experience, strategic planners realized that war takes on its own form no matter how disciplined the state behind it. In executing the Crimean campaign, British leaders had discovered the inadequacies of their war plans, organization, and leadership, as Roebuck's commission reported.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, war was dangerous to political careers. The war ousted the Aberdeen coalition government and put Palmerston in office as prime minister for the first time to salvage what he could in the Crimea. Yet the aftermath of the Crimean War proved too much for Palmerston, whose patriotism was not convincing enough to move a majority of his cabinet, Parliament, or public opinion to create a superior steam navy to compete with the navy that France was building and to guard against a rumored French invasion. He was further opposed by the queen, both political parties, and the Radical Liberals who represented the industrial interests and a large section of public opinion. Throughout the rest of his political career, Palmerston had to battle retrenchment from military affairs. Both Liberal and Conservative governments existed on small majorities and refused to challenge the electorate and public opinion with military solutions to foreign predicaments. For all of these reasons, nonintervention and military retrenchment peaked by 1861, when Palmerston's second Liberal ministry was two years old.

At the same time, a similar penchant for military retrenchment was evident in the United States. The weak navy is a case in point. Certainly, a threat of war with Britain was not uppermost in the minds of U.S. leaders in 1860 when senators John Sherman and Owen Lovejoy proposed a drastic decrease to the naval appropriations bill that aimed at modernizing a rotting fleet. Lovejoy wanted to liquidate the navy altogether.<sup>20</sup> This retrenchment group had no use for the army and navy amid the growth of production and trade. Rather, Federal policy played on the antimartial spirit of Northern Democrats and conservative Republicans in

an attempt to coax the Confederates back into the Union and continued to do so well into the conflict. While President Lincoln struggled to prosecute the war, he could brook no foreign interference and simultaneously had to keep foreign relations serene to prevent intervention. His policy took advantage of the prevailing British-American rapprochement as the conflagration was not enough to overcome unilateralism and minimalism. Despite the challenge of conquering a huge amount of territory and trying to blockade the South's 3,500 miles of coastline, little was done to rejuvenate either service until after Fort Sumter.

Thus, the fate of both countries was tied up in antimilitary tradition. The sweeping revival of British national confidence after the European liberal revolutions of 1848 in France, the German states, Italy, and elsewhere denigrated popular interest in military affairs. In the years before the Crimean War, Britain showed its true national colors of military weakness in imperial and homeland defense. From 1847 to 1852, the attempts of Liberal prime minister Lord John Russell to increase the income tax to keep the forces from reduction did not impress the House of Commons. Russell's proposed tax was abandoned. Public opinion showed up defense advocates Palmerston, Sir John Burgoyne, inspector general of fortifications, and others as "alarmists." People were tired of hearing about invasion scares and national defense weaknesses. In the 1850s Chancellor of the Exchequer Gladstone began his retrenchment agenda with a "military" tax falling most heavily on the middle classes to keep it firmly behind retrenchment. He knew that any increase in military expenditures conditioned the pound's rate and was unpopular. War critics on both sides of the Commons such as David Hume, Richard Cobden, and John Bright and Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli impugned taxes to increase the military as a "war vote." Thus retrenchment held sway despite the threat that some British leaders felt from France.

This threat was deflected because the Crimean War divulged the lack of military organization and a weak military education system reflected in poor senior military leadership. There was a powerful peace party in the cabinet composed of Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll; Sir George Grey, the second Earl Granville; and secretary of war George Cornwall Lewis. In the face of this strong opposition to boosting armaments, Palmerston lamented that in democratic countries men were prouder of being gentlemen than officers, whereas the opposite was applied to nondemocratic countries. Antimartial traditions made neutrality rather than armed might the cheapest method of self-defense. The neutral, antimartial policy became self-fulfilling. There was, as in the past, no comprehensive reappraisal of foreign policy principles by the cabinet. Left alone, "Palmerston and his colleagues intended to go along much as they had been and for much the same reasons."<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, with the emphasis for resolving disputes on diplomacy, aversion to war was the primary consistency in British and American foreign policy. Diplomacy was the realistic solution for dispute resolution. Protected by ocean barriers,

Britons and Americans habitually distrusted large peacetime standing armies. Large armies were perceived as obstacles to developing democratic societies. In the wrong hands, standing armies could become instruments of despotism. Moreover, they were costly and thought to siphon funds from the development of a diverse industrial base and the public works necessary to sustain industrial expansion. After 1815, Britain underwent four decades of severe defense reductions. Proposals that aimed to increase the British army against France failed. Britain's standing army remained half the size of that of France and Germany and was less than a third of the size of Russia's army.<sup>22</sup> Britain was prepared to fight only limited wars to keep imperial peace. The Royal Navy was to defend against French attack and to maintain imperial sea-lanes.<sup>23</sup>

Like Gladstone and other Liberals, Whigs, and Radicals, Lincoln was never a proponent of warfare. Indeed, his opposition to the Mexican War injured his political career as a young congressman from Illinois in the late 1840s. He helped develop the Republican Party from 1854 on as the true Union party that aimed to block the expansion of slavery. Lincoln's political focus was on internal transportation improvements to raise the status of the common man coupled with sensitivity to the slavery question. Associated with national improvements was his idea that slavery was a moral wrong and an obstacle to a free society. Thus leaders in both Britain and the United States were in no position to solve differences with violence because of their goals of prosperity and moral concern for humankind. With massive social changes afoot in both nations, and the diplomatic traditions in tow, the Anglo-American relationship was being redefined.<sup>24</sup>

There was strong consistency in the lack of fighting spirit in Britain after 1815. In 1821, Castlereagh had become the great conciliator and mover of the British-led European diplomatic system to keep France from again upsetting the balance of power. Twenty-five years later, Conservative foreign secretary Aberdeen believed that the French "go to work in such a roundabout way that it is difficult for them to inspire confidence."<sup>25</sup> Aberdeen worried about "an enormous expense and general distrust," and the Admiralty shared his view. In the 1840s, Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, mentor to Aberdeen, Gladstone, Lewis, and other luminaries in the Palmerston ministries, opposed excessive defense spending for the same reasons. Peel charted the way by not wanting "any show of preparation which is costly, calculated to excite suspicion and apprehension, and does not really advance us in our object."<sup>26</sup> Seen this way, it is unsurprising that several hallmark treaties were concluded between Britain and the United States in the 1840s and neither government wanted to fight the other during American expansionist wars against Mexico over Texas and to annex the Southwest to complete the boundaries of the republic. The financial houses also played a role in maintaining the peace. When the United States annexed Texas in 1845, for example, the Barings urged Peel's government against resistance to promote good relations with the United States.<sup>27</sup>

After 1846 many British Liberal and Conservative leaders took Peel's conciliatory cue and opposed escalating the arms race with France. Thus, as foreign secretary under Russell from 1846 to 1852, Palmerston was unsuccessful at maintaining the British military at a high state of readiness despite his persistence. His cabinet "Memorandum on the Defence of the Country" on 18 December 1846 failed to receive a majority. Two years later Russell failed to raise taxes to fund improvements. By 1851 British military leaders had assessed national defenses against the French threat and believed that the situation was desperate. Sir John Burgoyne, the leading national defense expert, noted the "apathy on the defense question in the country . . . standing as it does on the brink of a frightful precipice. The melancholy thing is the indifference of our statesmen to the question." By the early 1850s, despite upsets in Europe, what was thought to be a direct challenge from France under Napoleon III, and the French and Russian threats to Britain's sphere of influence in the Middle East, Britain refused to empower its armed forces. If it refused to equip itself to use force successfully against European threats, it would probably have taken a severe jolt to get Britain to fight the United States, and its unpreparedness for the Crimean War has already been discussed. Finally, the antimilitary lobby was supported by popular hostility to the army. Laborers disliked the army because it kept law and order, innkeepers disliked billeting troops, and Parliament and the landed classes feared the army as a political force that answered to the queen and not to Parliament. In 1860, Gladstone disagreed with Palmerston that a field army was needed to protect London against a French invasion. In 1862, when the fate of the American Union hung in the balance, Disraeli made "bloated armaments" the main charge in his attack on the government against Derby's "misgivings."<sup>28</sup>

As we are beginning to see, Anglo-American relations were influenced by the French contingency. Palmerston had been suspicious of France since he had drilled at Cambridge as a schoolboy to oppose Napoleon's invasion plan in 1806. In 1809 he entered the central government in the noncabinet post of war minister in which he served until 1829, and foreign secretary (1831–40). In the latter role he remained suspicious of French pretensions. As foreign secretary, he began to use the French threat to embellish his political stature when "he had become the symbol of Britain's mid-Victorian success."<sup>29</sup>

Palmerston's advocacy of a French threat throughout the antebellum period was not unsupported by tradition. During his first foreign secretaryship (1830–41), rival French foreign minister Guizot challenged him in the Mediterranean and felt that France was pinched between British and European absolutists. Guizot tried to break the unstable Franco-British cordon from 1830 onward.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, at the same time that diplomats were deterring civil conflict in North America in the 1840s, Britain needed dependable relations with the United States. Returning to the Foreign Office in Lord John Russell's Liberal ministry in 1846,

Palmerston could not put himself in a position of weakness, and any anti-American moves were difficult to explain to the public because European rivalries and revolutionary developments were the government's primary focus. Acting within this perspective, Palmerston raised alarms about the French threat to maintain his power. He believed correctly that France wanted to resurrect its Napoleonic hegemony. Franco-British imperial squabbles caused war scares in the 1840s and 1850s. During these two decades Palmerston believed that French hatred made imminent a surprise cross-channel attack by a steam navy because seaborne invasions were no longer dependent on winds and tides. He opted for the deterrent policy he had used in the Oregon dispute that argued that a weak Britain encouraged France, and "to improve our defenses is the best way to prevent it being necessary to employ them."<sup>31</sup> By 1847, even moderate Whigs such as Clarendon, a Palmerston protégé, upheld the foreign secretary's anti-French policy. As the French government fell in 1848 emitting Louis Bonaparte as president, Clarendon wrote on 1 April that the cabinet should arouse the public against France, and Russell warned that France could land forty thousand troops in Britain in a week. By January 1848 the cabinet supported a greater defense effort as relations hinged on the ironclad naval race.<sup>32</sup>

While warning about the probability of a French cross-channel invasion, Palmerston muted chances of a flare-up with the United States. The Anglo-American financial relationship had grown more interdependent with the boom in U.S. bonds overseas beginning in 1848. British capitalists had helped the United States finance the Mexican War even though they opposed American expansion, because, as Jay Sexton explains, expansion strained Anglo-American relations. But the financial interests of the two countries were complementary, and the financial houses of Rothschild, Barings, and Peabody partnered to broker for the United States the \$15 million indemnity for the acquisition of Mexican lands ceded as a result of the Mexican War. This financial cooperation continued in the 1850s, especially through investments in state and railroad securities. Moreover, American industrialists used British loans to buy superior British steel.<sup>33</sup>

In 1850, as conditions in France remained unstable, Palmerston continued to contribute to the atmosphere of peaceful relations with the United States when he completed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty over contested territories in Central America. American westward expansion was coupled with the discovery of gold in California in 1848. These contingencies opened up the need for safer, faster, and less expensive transportation between the coasts. The idea of a transoceanic canal through the isthmus of Central America brought British and American claims to territory into conflict. But again practical needs inspired American secretary of state John Clayton to invite Britain to enter into a joint agreement to build a canal in 1849. In the event, Clayton proclaimed to Sir Henry Bulwer, the British minister with whom he negotiated the treaty bearing their names: "England is the

home of my forefathers and the blood of the Anglo-Saxon forms the basis of the population of this country." Clayton was also motivated to desire a partnership in Central America by the need to attract British investments for building a canal and for political stability in the region, which was a precondition to potential investors. Clayton's action represented a growing continuity in Britain's policy of cooperation with the United States. Moreover, a joint isthmian agreement could stabilize the politics of the region to gain investor confidence. Leading American entrepreneurs, such as Cornelius Vanderbilt and William Aspinwall, conveyed to Washington the need for British cooperation, and Clayton informed the British that the United States would cease expansion into Central America if a joint agreement could be made.<sup>34</sup>

In both cases policies were overridden by a material need to quicken transportation time to California that, if nourished, had long-lasting potential for the overseas trade of both parties. For this reason, the United States was ready to tear up an unratified treaty with Nicaragua and to prohibit further expansion into Central America to ensure British investments. This position contradicted the American expansionist tradition, the Monroe Doctrine, British "gunboat diplomacy," and the nationalism of both countries, as Sexton insightfully explains. Just as before, the needs of the moment were satisfied because negotiations were conducted in secret in Washington, even without the full purview of the British and American cabinets. In the interests of flexibility, Clayton and Bulwer followed earlier negotiators when they saw fit to overlook contentious issues having to do with territorial rights to create an agreement. The putative canal and adjacent regions were neutralized from fortifications, colonization, or political control by either party by Article I of the treaty. Article V held that the canal would be forever free and investment capital secure. Although unresolved contentions continued to rankle, the treaty ended future British expansion in Central America just as the Oregon Treaty had done north of the border.<sup>35</sup> Almost sounding like Aberdeen, Palmerston believed the ensuing Clayton-Bulwer Treaty in the spring of 1850 was "a Bond of Harmony between the Two Countries in regard to local Disputes." Finally, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty threaded through the decade as a symbol of the rapprochement. The treaty demonstrated that the two powers could continue to meet and resolve contentions. Several prominent revisions were made to define respective interests in Central America almost up to the Civil War.

Compromise continued to be British policy as well in the triangular relations with the United States and Canada. In 1849, economically depressed Montreal merchants pressed for annexation to the United States, which was uninterested. In this case, a threat from its own colonists, Britain refused to arm Canada because it wanted Canada to govern itself with its own political and economic self-sufficiencies. In 1853, Russell told American minister Edward Everett that in foreign policy "our two countries should maintain a real Family Compact."

The compact was demonstrated again a year later when Britain sent another aristocratic negotiator, Lord Elgin, the governor general of Canada, to Washington to quickly conclude the unprecedented Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. During this period of confusion and weak leadership in London and Washington, Foreign Secretary Clarendon's suspicions of the United States grew despite his work for the treaty, which was the answer to borrowing time for Canada to become economically self-sufficient. There was a long history that made treaty making auspicious. By the Convention of 1818 Americans could fish for the choicest catches of cod and mackerel within the three-mile limit on specified coasts off of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. However, as the decades passed, New Englanders began to fish in the contested shore waters of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and elsewhere to the disdain of the colonists. Trouble arose during the fishing season of 1852, but the American Navy and the Royal Navy patrolled the fisheries amicably and exchanged social visits. The 1854 season promised more trouble, but the two parties continued to cooperate to keep the colonists and the New Englanders from shooting at each other or fighting onshore. British minister to the United States Crampton wrote Clarendon on 6 March 1854, as the season began, that secretary of state William Marcy did not fear a collision even if negotiations failed. He was prepared to cede every point except registry of American vessels in order to make a treaty.<sup>36</sup>

The ensuing treaty not only pacified the fisheries and represented the growth of a British-American rapprochement in the middle of the 1850s but also created an unprecedented customs union in natural products to develop industry and trade along the common boundary. By helping to build a national economy instead of the existing weaker provincial economies, Britain symbolized a long-held desire for the colonies to establish responsible government and economic self-sufficiency. (In the 1850s the United States made no attempt to annex the colonies and would only accept them if they came of their own accord.) In fact, the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 sent zealous Canadians a warning that British diplomacy rather than war was the principal method to deter Canadian and American fishermen from fighting each other over inshore rights or other border squabbles. Joint naval cooperation continued to keep New Englanders and colonists from conflict in the fisheries. Moreover, American politics of the intensifying sectional struggle between North and South kept even the most ambitious northward expansionists, always a politically weak minority, from lobbying for the annexation of the colonies as free states. Finally, the Reciprocity Treaty illustrated that the United States was interested in acquiring territories south of the border and not to the north, and the treaty quelled the desires of Montreal merchants to be annexed to the United States.<sup>37</sup> It opened free trade in enumerated natural products and allowed free fishing between Canada and the United States for ten years. New Englanders could fish in the most profitable colonial inshore waters and Canadians could fish American



waters to the 36th parallel. The treaty assisted Canadian industry and prevented a blowup in the North Atlantic fisheries. Moreover, the treaty strengthened Canadian-American social and economic interdependence at the expense of Britain's trade monopoly with its colonies and "served as evidence to British capitalists of an Anglo-American rapprochement."<sup>38</sup>

The four treaties showed that caution and cooperation were the leading British-American aims. Palmerston could afford to do little else and maintain his power. As prime minister from 1855 to 1858, he ran his government on a "day-to-day, hand-to-mouth, basis." During his later years as prime minister, he defined politics as "largely a matter of getting from Monday to Friday without conspicuous damage."<sup>39</sup> Certainly, these were not the words of an old war minister with a deliberate policy of weakening the United States. Lord Granville, a cabinet conciliator, declared that Palmerston "had no idea of a sound policy" and understood no cabinet office except the Foreign Office. Palmerston did not need policies or reforms because of the unprecedented prosperity. His geniality and realism made him reluctant to change domestic and foreign policy.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, under both Liberals and Conservatives, the cabinet managed matters as they arose and, like Palmerston, did not enjoy facing American problems. Except for his emphasis on naval deterrence, ministers ignored unresolvable problems or created ambiguous agreements. Anna Ramsay argued that except for "Salisbury, Dilke, and possibly Disraeli, no British minister between 1830 and 1890 ever sat down to think out clearly for himself, putting aside tradition and precept, a definite policy in foreign affairs." As the foreign secretary of the leading constitutional nation in Europe, Palmerston talked about upholding democracy abroad and used this patriotic ploy to solidify his popularity. Meanwhile, he followed his mentor George Canning's policy of remaining free from entangling alliances and used his acute sense of public opinion to maintain his prestige.

In his second and last Liberal ministry (1859–65), Palmerston and foreign secretary Lord John Russell formed a cooperative foreign policy team. Whenever possible they preferred to make decisions privately (just as they made treaties) because cabinets were time consuming and their deliberations were made public. This private method turned out to assist British-American relations during times of stress. The outcome of indifference to long-term foreign policy making and reform, owing to political weakness, was a neutral policy toward British politics, Europe, and North America.

Likewise, on the brink of the American Civil War, the Conservative opposition had no method except to refuse to adopt a clear position on any issue while pursuing an inactive foreign policy. Inactivity impacted directly on the nonaggressive policy toward the North during the Civil War. Palmerston had a "truce" with the Conservatives based on nonintervention and reduction of naval armaments, which fit well with retrenchment-minded ministers who were his greatest political



worry. This alliance of convenience helped the Liberal Party to maintain control and, guided by Palmerston, to assert its vision of progress conditioned by minimal government and free trade. As Angus Hawkins points out, the 1850s did not witness disillusionment with the principle of party, but there were too many different ideas about party principles for any one party to gain ascendancy without allies from across the political spectrum. In summary, Palmerstonian foreign and domestic policies were based on compromise to maintain the delicate political balances at home and abroad. To think otherwise would, in the words of Paul Kennedy, be “a staggering misreading of British political priorities in the early 1860s.”<sup>41</sup>

On the brink of the American struggle, these policies were rendered critical by what was by now the traditional immediacy of the French threat. This threat continued to move Britain to maintain stable relations with the United States as the perceived French menace took on threatening proportions. In contrast to the British and the Americans, Napoleon III continued to increase his army until the Anglo-French crisis, from 1859 to 1861; at that time it numbered about 400,000, which was the largest in Europe.<sup>42</sup> Even Palmerston’s retrenchment-minded ministers could not ignore Napoleon’s military buildup, and British defense spending grew from about £300,000 in 1858–59 to £325,000 in 1859–60 and to nearly £650,000 in 1860–61. The Royal Commission on National Defenses was paid £950,000 in 1861 and £970,000 in 1863.<sup>43</sup> A volunteer movement was established in 1860–61 to meet the French threat. Most of this increase was directed at Europe rather than North America.

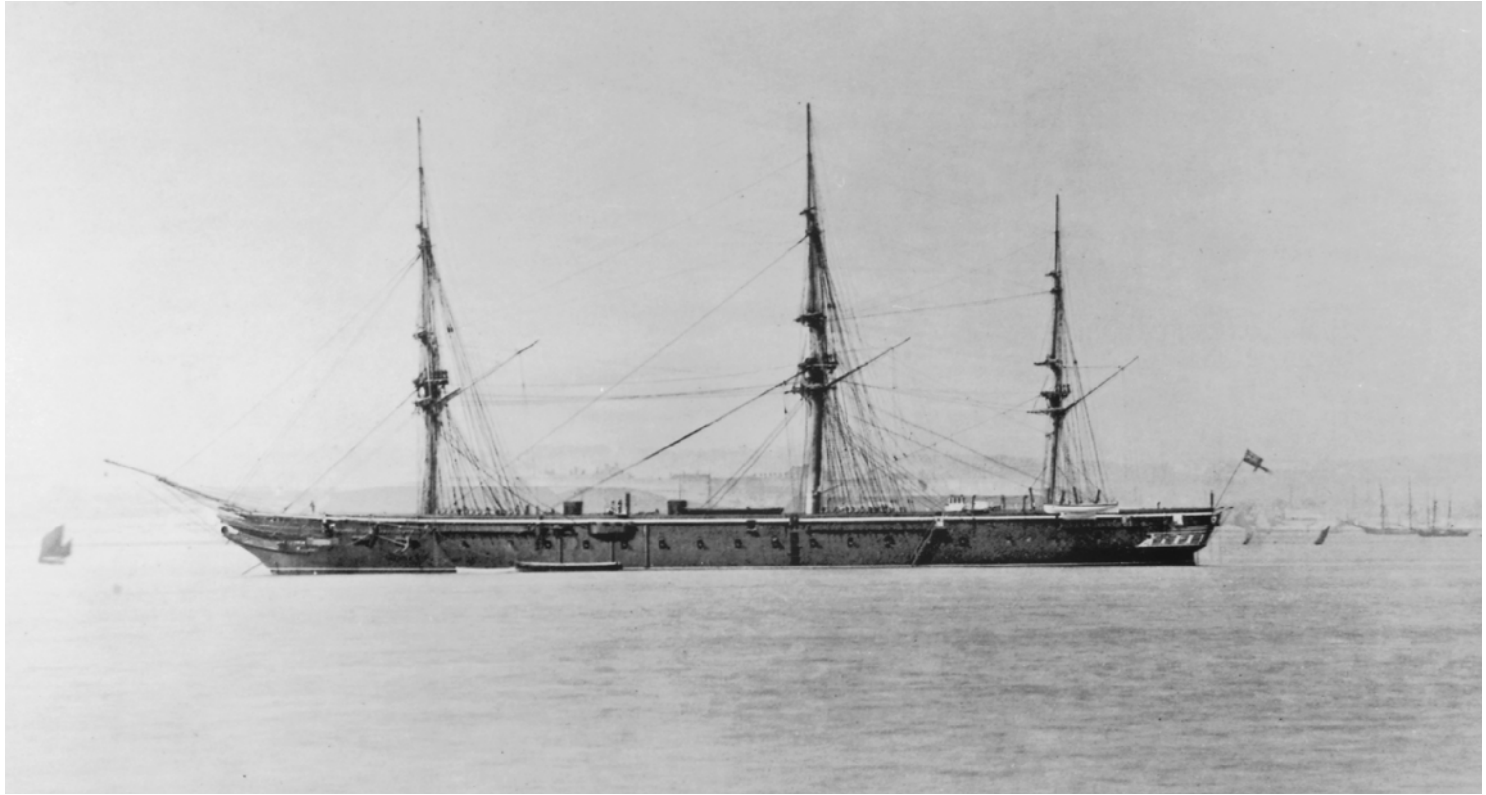
British fear of France grew as the American Republican Party was formed to save the Union and extinguish slavery. The United States was thus distracted from pressing an aggressive foreign policy, which was never a strong point for Washington. The weak midcentury American governments resembled those in Britain. Washington faced growing violence in Kansas and Nebraska, Southern threats of secession, and the general disintegration of American politics during the Democratic administration of James Buchanan who presided with partiality toward the South. His failure to provide a solution to the sectional controversy added fire to it as the Republican Party seized on Democratic weakness with an antislavery policy. If the Republicans could obtain the presidency with a restrictive policy on slavery, leaders like Abraham Lincoln believed, slavery would die.

Lincoln was fortunate that British politics and foreign problems distracted it from taking advantage of the disintegration of the Union even if it had wanted to intervene. Prime Minister Derby’s fear of naval inferiority in 1858 gave way a year later to Palmerston’s fear of yet another ironclad French invasion. He said that the new French dockyard at Cherbourg was like a “knife pointing at Britain’s jugular” and “a great arsenal and excellent harbour directly facing the Channel and the South Coast of England.” The fast French fleet could outdistance the British wooden fleet and raid dockyards. In 1860, France was building six seagoing and

nine coast-defense ironclad warships, and only a lack of funds prevented more. Palmerston favored a screw liner and armored ship buildup because he believed the French naval expansion was for the English Channel or the Mediterranean, the two quickest ways to weaken Britain and its empire. Britain and France were in the thick of the ironclad buildup amid warnings that Britain was becoming a second-rate naval power. By 1861, Britain had 149 first-class warships, but it only had two ironclads available, the *Warrior*, which was more than twice as large as *La Gloire*, and *Ironsides*. In light of the naval race, public apathy, poor home defenses, and only sporadic increases in defense spending, Britain was hard-pressed to prosecute a war anywhere. Naval weakness was one reason the government kept policy making in the *Trent* affair in November and December within the boundaries of traditional private diplomacy to help Lincoln and Seward back away honorably. As long as Gladstone ran the exchequer, lucrative economics prevailed at home aided by fewer taxes that favored the lower classes.<sup>44</sup> Palmerston was a realist and had no reason to shake up international relations.

Deterrence was Britain's best bet. Indeed, it was its only bet. As first lord of the Admiralty, the twelfth Duke of Somerset, and British vice admiral and commander on the North American and West Indies Station, Sir Alexander Milne had demonstrated many times before, and as military historian Russell Weigley points out, "The coming of steam power had destroyed the ability of its [Britain's] best warships to cruise indefinitely in American waters as the blockading squadrons had done in 1812. Even with a major base at Halifax, or possible aid from Confederate ports, the British navy would have found it a precarious venture to try to keep station on the U.S. coast." Weigley continues, "A war with America would have posed the danger of destroying altogether the facade of British military preeminence. . . . Whether feared by the North or hoped for by the South, British intervention in the American Civil War was little more than a chimera."<sup>45</sup>

Other international problems exacerbated Anglo-French relations on the eve of the Civil War and distracted London from understanding the escalating American sectional crisis. Bad feelings erupted over northern Italy where Napoleon III took Nice and Savoy to block Austria. Britain favored a unified Italian republic (Russell wanted to add Rome and Venetia) as a bastion against French or Austrian advances against the European balance of power. In the Middle East, Britain and France supported opposite sides in a religious civil war. Palmerston interpreted plans for a French canal through Egypt as a threat to Britain's commercial lanes in the eastern Mediterranean, India, and the Far East. Personal differences between Palmerston and Napoleon III intensified suspicions. The religious civil war in the Middle East showed their differences. Palmerston wanted the Turkish government to solve the problem rather than the great power congresses favored by Napoleon III, where he thought that he could enhance Bonapartism. The British desired not to provoke Europe as the alliance system crumbled and Napoleon III tried to lead



The HMS *Warrior*, shown in 1860 when it was launched. Weighing 9,200 tons, it was the greatest ironclad steam battleship of the day and was a vivid symbol of the naval arms race with France. Naval Historical Foundation

it. The Middle Eastern rivalry showed how differently Britain and France looked at foreign policy: Britain was beginning to originate a policy of splendid isolation, and France continued to follow the opportunistic motives of Napoleon III.<sup>46</sup>

Beyond the Liberal government's distrust of the French emperor and its desire to push American affairs into the background, British public opinion remained opposed to a conflict. Many realistic leaders of the British middle and upper classes acquiesced to American progress. The London *Times* expressed popular sentiments about the United States. In 1852, it indicated that the "temperate and friendly spirit, which is alone consonant to their close relationship and enormous common interests," guided relations. In 1853, it held, "We have so little desire to check or impede the growth of the United States of America in conformity with those wise principles which were handed down to them by the founders of the Republic that we are satisfied the rapid and successful progress of that country is of essential advantage to ourselves, as Englishmen, and to the general interests of mankind." In 1856, the newspaper noted "a bond of mutual interest, the maintenance of which had become a matter for constant concern in the both countries." Moreover, other newspapers and middle society believed that American progress ensured the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>47</sup>

A primary obstacle to that ascendancy, and to perfectly dependable relations, was the obliteration of slavery, which the British had outlawed in 1808. Tensions continued because the United States balked when the Royal Navy began stopping its slave ships in 1833, and the United States tried to convince France not to sign a treaty for mutual right of search. American leaders thought that the treaty by Britain with European nations was a pretext for dominating the seas. By 1839, the Yankees were the only hole in Britain's policing of the slave trade. They rejected the Quintuple Treaty of 1841, insisting that the national flag protected ships from foreign searches, and broadcast that it policed its own merchantmen. In 1842, the United States stopped searching its own ships for slave traders. Yet British Liberal and Conservative ministries refused to fight the United States over the slave trade. Partly as a result of the treaties between the two powers, relations improved during the 1850s. Moreover, Britain's military had not performed well during the Crimean War despite the fact that it had emerged with victory; the war had also unearthed a crisis of confidence in its military ability and an acute perception of how overextended it was internationally.

Britain knew its limits on the eve of the Civil War, and it followed an isolationist doctrine. In 1858, the London *Times* played peacekeeper. The newspaper refused to castigate the United States for ignoring the stop-and-search policy for slave traders off Cuba. In early June, the *Times* remarked that the threat to friendly relations caused by the arrests of slavers carrying the American flag was not worth the risk to peace. As the United States began war measures against Britain, the *Times* expounded that Americans had a perfect right to prevent their

ships from being boarded just as the British would be incensed if the American Navy boarded its ships whether they were slavers or not. By late June, Britain had stopped boarding American ships and showed that it had no intention of going to war over the anti-slave trade issue. The ministry and Parliament refused to support such a war, while the evidence shows that the United States was ready to fight.<sup>48</sup> The most effective outcome was the reversal of roles on the high seas on the eve of the Civil War. Usually, Britain was on the offensive at sea, but now the United States had assumed this role. Neutral Britain refused to act because the tables could be turned if Britain became a belligerent.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, strong British humanitarian and financial sentiments reinforced neutrality and peace. British investments in the Northern states continued at high levels. British investors, for instance, manifested antislavery investment tactics by preferring to invest in Northern railroads. Pro-North British leaders such as John Bright and Richard Cobden held a portion of the 66 percent of British stock in the Illinois Central Railroad, and Abraham Lincoln protected the interests of the railroad and its bondholders. Conversely, the one-crop economy of the South was unpopular to investors because of concerns about drought, soil exhaustion, slave insurrections, and the growing chance of a civil war. Moreover, in the 1840s, three Southern states—Mississippi, Arkansas, and Florida—had defaulted on their interest payments and repudiated their debts of \$11.5 million owed to British investors. In addition, Jay Sexton writes, “Slavery, in short, made the South an unsafe destination for European capital,” and George L. Bernstein points out that, in general, “The Civil War was no different. British attitudes and policies had evolved over the previous twenty years.”<sup>50</sup>

Personal exchanges aided the good feelings brought about by cooperation on the large issues. In 1858 good tidings were exchanged between Queen Victoria and President James Buchanan over the newly laid Atlantic cable (which soon broke and was unavailable during the Civil War). With some trepidation, ex-Conservative prime minister Lord Aberdeen, who pursued a conciliatory American policy in the 1840s, wrote that Britain was “in a rapid course of *Americanization*.” Lady Palmerston expressed a similar sentiment to Monckton Milnes, who was pro-American, that “I think we are fast verging into Democracy and Americanism.”<sup>51</sup> Relations improved when the prince of Wales visited the United States and Canada in the fall of 1860. He was the first member of the royal family to tour the United States and was greeted with a “tumultuous reception” in New York City. President Buchanan commented on the visit’s success, and Queen Victoria deemed it an “important link to cement the two nations of kindred origin and character.” The exodus of Southern Democrats from Congress in 1861 assisted the rapprochement because they had been the ones who threatened Britain’s interests in Central America and the Caribbean. Since the War of 1812, Northerners had been more pacific than Southerners, who had been chief agitators for the aggres-

sive policy in Texas and Mexico in the 1830s and 1840s and for the filibusters in Cuba and Central America in the 1850s.<sup>52</sup>

The rapprochement of the late 1850s was further validated by Britain's response to the disputed San Juan Island water boundary in Puget Sound in August 1859. This dispute marked the closest that Britain and the United States came to fighting before the Civil War. It included the dynamics of all of the disputes since the 1840s: manifest destiny, filibustering, boundaries, military force, annexation, strategic locations, and the antimartial spirit that pervaded both democracies. The dispute evolved from a practical oversight of the makers of the Oregon Treaty. It was a dispute that Palmerston had ignored to prevent trouble when he returned to the Foreign Office in 1846, soon after the Oregon Treaty was signed. But the filibustering of pro-South Federal officers in Washington Territory reenlivened the dispute. The British were still debating the water boundary with American diplomats as Major Robert Anderson and his small Federal complement surrendered Fort Sumter. But nobody had to surrender in the Pacific Northwest, and traditional private diplomacy overcame yet another misunderstanding.

Since 1846, both governments preferred indifference to settling the water boundary. But as American settlement on the archipelago increased, pressure mounted on the remnants of the British-sponsored Hudson's Bay Company, long the commercial monopoly in the region. In the late 1850s, without authorization from Washington, the government of the newly constituted Washington Territory tried to annex the archipelago. In August 1859, the military governor of the territory, Gen. William S. Harney, sent an unauthorized military contingent with artillery under Capt. George Pickett to the island on the pretext of maintaining peace between the British settlers and the American settlers—one of whom had killed a British pig rooting on his property. This event has gone down in history as the so-called Pig War. The British were about to land marines to contest the occupation when a cease and desist order was received from the British naval commander on station. A Virginian, Pickett might have had the naive idea that an Anglo-American war might keep the Union united and the slavery question forgotten.<sup>53</sup>

The San Juan Island water boundary dispute also symbolized the British-American global cooperation of the 1850s and 1860s. Control of the archipelago meant control of the best harbors in Puget Sound, which had significance for control of the Far Eastern trade. The archipelago blocked the development of Britain's Pacific imperial naval headquarters at Esquimalt at the tip of nearby Vancouver Island, which was obtained in 1846. The British were lukewarm about developing the base because of an indifferent attitude about the Northwest. Yet if the United States controlled the narrow Haro Strait between Vancouver Island and the continent, Esquimalt could easily be threatened. To save geopolitical face, private diplomacy preserved the national honor of both sides and protected the governments from public scrutiny until permanent settlement was possible. In fact,

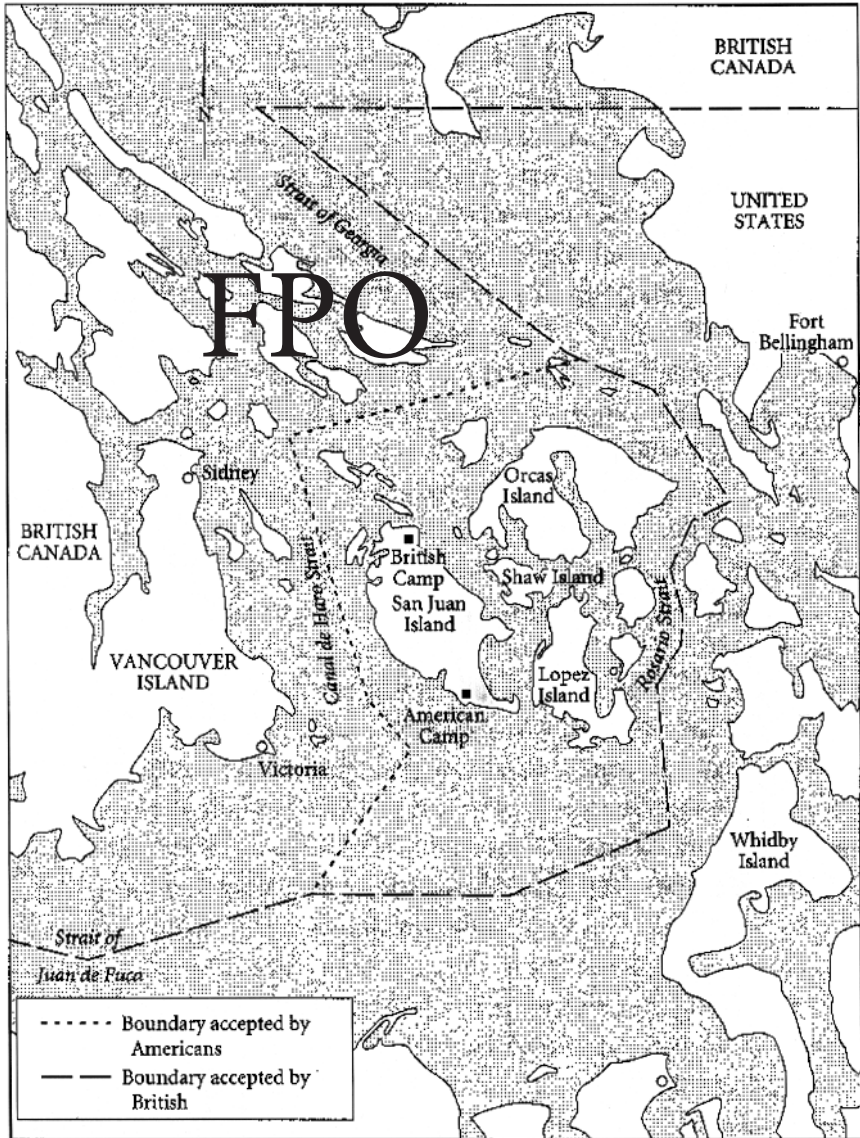
Parliament was not called back into session in late October 1859 after news of the encounter reached Britain. A debate on San Juan, coupled with the concomitant dispute over the Royal Navy's forcing its way up the Peiho River to extract commercial concessions from the Chinese emperor with the support of the U.S. Navy, and the French rivalry, threatened Palmerston's power.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, San Juan demonstrated that British-Americans followed established methods of settlement through compromise. Gladstone and his colleagues in the retrenchment bloc of the cabinet did not want war because they were not convinced of the superiority of the British case for San Juan. Gladstone refused to believe that the archipelago was worth a fight "even when the interests involved were considerable." Palmerston's usual first impulse to fight was thwarted by Gladstone and Somerset. Sir Edmund Hammond, the permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office, supported them. Neither thought the distant area was critical to British global security or to the informal empire. Fortunately, British naval commanders on the spot, from the lowest lieutenant to the commanding admiral on station, offered further support. British Royal Navy captains Michael de Courcey and Geoffrey Phipps Hornby refused to land the two thousand marines from their warships to contest the American occupation.<sup>55</sup> These officers acted independently for nonintervention. Their moderation was wise because the American government disavowed General Harney's unauthorized action.

The Admiralty praised Hornby's discretion in the interests of compromise and deterrence. Historian Barry Gough has written that Hornby "rightly held that the British could afford to be forbearing in view of their superior naval strength." Hornby wanted to blame any rupture squarely on the United States just as Lincoln wanted the Confederacy to bear the responsibility for firing the first shots of the Civil War. Along with Adm. R. Lambert Baynes, who became the senior British naval commander soon after Harney's action, the British reasoned that the issue was potentially explosive but doubted that the American occupation jeopardized British lives or Britain's claim to the archipelago.<sup>56</sup>

Washington acted quickly to defuse the situation. Once it learned of Harney's "filibuster," the Federal government dispatched Commanding Gen. Winfield Scott on a peacekeeping mission. After a four-week transcontinental journey, Scott met with Harney and told him that the British were uninterested in forcing the American settlers off San Juan Island. He further told the expansionist general (who had been insubordinate to Scott several times during the Mexican War and was known to be bloodthirsty) that he was reducing the number of troops on the island to keep cordial British-American relations. He ordered Harney to relinquish command and return to St. Louis for reassignment. On 5 November 1859 Scott ordered the withdrawal of all but one company of Federal soldiers and all artillery to the USS *Massachusetts*. The British were pleased with Scott's work. The portly





Map of the San Juan water boundary dispute. From Leslie J. Gordon, *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend*. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998)

general reminded Harney that until the ownership of the island was determined, "British subjects have equal rights with American citizens."<sup>57</sup>

Scott's amelioratory statement was accompanied by British Foreign Office complaints that their subjects did not fall under American laws, and he questions why



the Department of State had allowed the incident to occur. Yet this contention was not something that the British wanted to fight over. In fact, looking at the academic parts of the squabble enabled both parties to move away from a punitive solution. The Foreign Office wanted to know why Harney had violated the understanding with the Hudson's Bay Company. Scott returned to Washington and wrote that only the "forbearance of the British" stopped escalation. (Harney had refused to go to St. Louis and ordered Pickett back to San Juan on 10 April 1860.) Faced with the embarrassing and mutinous Harney, Scott again recommended that Harney be relieved and recalled. The State Department agreed and informed British minister Lord Lyons that the War Department had revoked Harney's orders to Pickett and enforced Scott's arrangement with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Royal Navy for a joint occupation until the two governments settled. Harney was again relieved of command and ordered to report to the secretary of war.

The dispute was peacefully resolved with Harney's removal, but the boundary commission and diplomats failed to agree on the water boundary. In January 1861, the newly installed secretary of state, William Henry Seward, wanted to settle the dispute as the sectional crisis threatened. On 16 March Lincoln asked the senate if the question should be submitted to arbitration. On 19 March Charles Sumner, a Radical Republican with social connections in British high society and an inveterate abolitionist, recommended arbitration, but Congress delayed until December. In May, Seward warned Russell in a dispatch that Lincoln "only partially softened," and Lyons feared that the joint occupation might cause another incident.<sup>58</sup>

As it turned out, neither government wanted to take advantage of the other's plight. Britain and the United States cooperated to keep the water boundary issue dormant. A friendly joint military occupation was established to shelve the issue until a settlement could be made. The joint occupation consisted of one hundred soldiers each, although half of the American troops were withdrawn when the Civil War erupted.<sup>59</sup> The British garrison was on the north end of the island, and the Americans were encamped on the south end. The joint occupation continued on friendly terms until the Treaty of Washington of 8 May 1871 provided arbitration by the German emperor who found for the United States in 1872. This decision ended the last dispute between the two powers over territorial sovereignty in North America, and it delineated the final boundary line of the continental United States.<sup>60</sup> Instead of exacerbating the problem, diplomacy put it to sleep. The key fact was that the Royal Navy was ordered to back down just like it had been ordered to sail away from an encounter with the United States in Hawaii in 1842 when the Americans had pronounced the Tyler Doctrine to discourage the other powers.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the Royal Navy was not deployed during the Central American or Canadian disputes in the 1850s. When it came down to it, diplomacy, not military force, was the deterrent as perceived by both sides.

For our purposes, San Juan was important as the last major event that synthe-

sized the character of British-American relations before the Civil War. San Juan showed that diplomatic relations were cooperative and that there was an arsenal of tactful maneuvers that both governments knew well how to use to prevent war. Cooperation over San Juan indicated that part of the fiber of cooperative relations was the increase in power of the noninterventionists in Palmerston's cabinet. It was consistent with Britain's nonintervention policy of not wanting to hold or acquire territory at the cost of the United States. In fact, both governments were peaking in their isolationism and minimalism to preserve foreign interests. These were roughly the same lines of policy that formed during Civil War disputes. The outline for the later intervention debate in the British cabinet was drafted with San Juan because the cabinet was nearly unanimously against intervention despite the ascendant British force on station. But as we have seen, deterrence and not combat was the cabinet's tactic. Besides, Palmerston, Russell, Gladstone, and Somerset refused to condone fighting for San Juan. They were supported by George Cornwall Lewis, Argyll, and Granville, the same ministers who refused to support intervention in the Civil War two years later. This group was the heart of the cabinet, and all but Gladstone refused to let Palmerston and Russell break away in 1862 as will be discussed in chapter 5. Somerset spurned Palmerston's urgings to reinforce the squadron around Vancouver Island as the United States had only one small warship there, and he opposed sending more land forces because of fear of desertion, which was a common practice among British sailors on American shores, and because of the expense. In addition to these considerations, he and his colleagues opposed war.<sup>62</sup>

Thus the track of peace between the United States and Britain was clear before the Civil War. More peace factors existed than war factors. Cooperation was embedded in the roots of the relationship. A prewar rapprochement was created from tradition, commerce and investments, antislavery, antimilitarism, Francophobia, and compromise (especially on the British side). Private diplomacy resulted in a number of treaties that reduced territorial tensions. Americans were indebted to British investors for \$444 million (up from \$110 million in 1838), and the latter's antislavery premonitions and lack of trust in the South caused investors to prefer the North. These interdependencies relative to an array of contingencies were housed in the shielding tradition of pacific resolution. These contingencies became basic to the interests of both governments to maintain stable relations when the Civil War broke out. Stability was accentuated by British neutrality, coupled with the United States' refusal to allow the Civil War to become an international conflict. The longer the war, the more the British benefited from commerce with the North and the South. The noninterventionist cabinets and public wanted to avoid conflict to live peacefully with both the winner and the loser.<sup>63</sup> The course of British-American relations had not varied during the Civil War just as it had not varied during disputes since 1815. The structure of relations enabled both governments to continue with antebellum diplomacy.

This review of contingent antebellum events casts doubts on depicting the Civil War as a relational crisis because of the demonstrated success of private diplomatic relations. Antebellum diplomacy shows that Civil War diplomacy cannot be interpreted only within the confines of the event alone. The rapprochement evolved from decades of experiences stemming from foreign and domestic causes that created the reserve to resolve problems peacefully. The compromise settlement over discordant territorial claims in North America in the 1840s and 1850s began Britain's withdrawal from the North American balance of power, thus easing tensions. The 1850s reinforced the predominance of the British-American custom of private talks and fortified the mutual noninterventionist foreign policy.