

7-2015

Dissolving Tensions: Rapprochement and Resolution in British- American-Canadian Relations in the Treaty of Washington Era, 1865–1914

Phillip Myers

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/new_foreign_relations



Part of the [International and Area Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

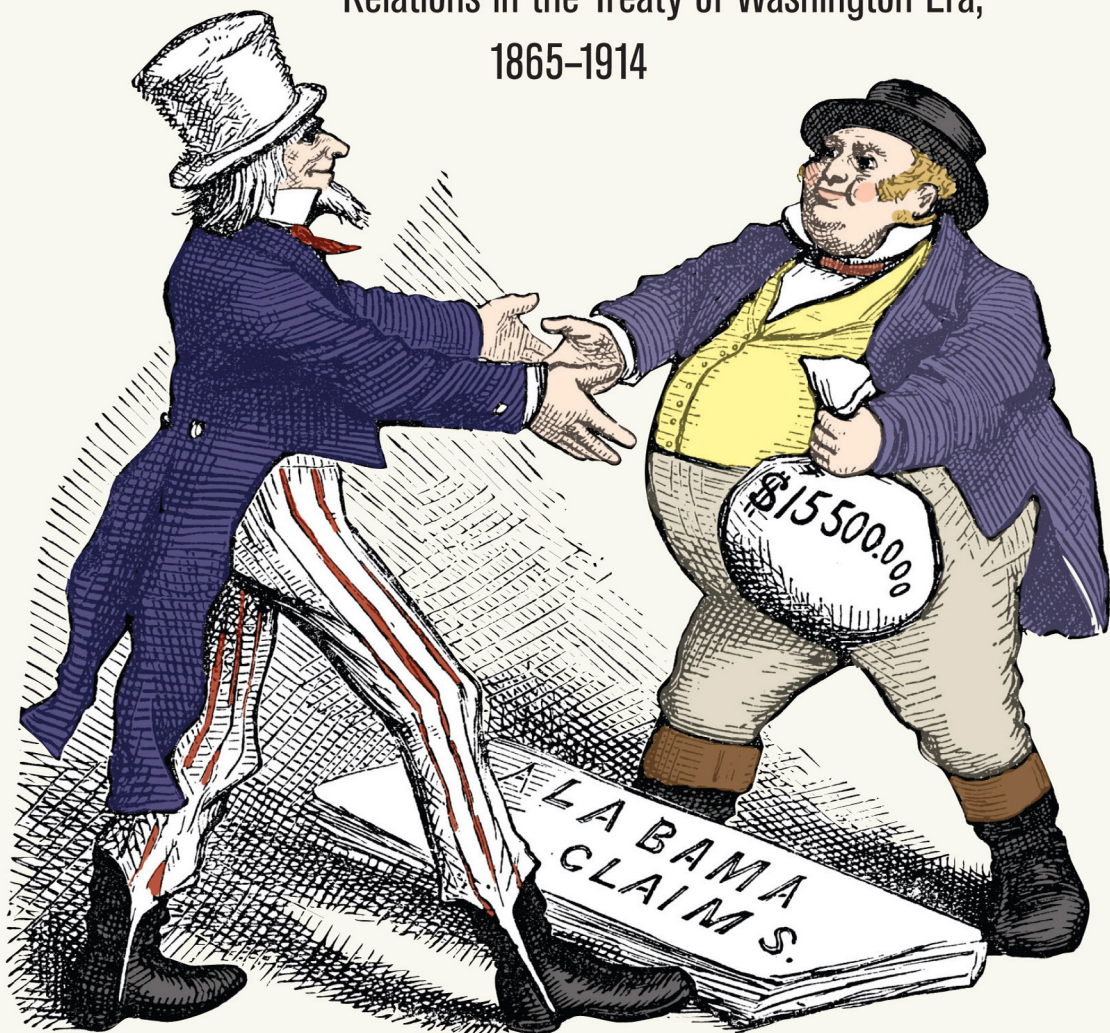
Myers, Phillip, "Dissolving Tensions: Rapprochement and Resolution in British- American-Canadian Relations in the Treaty of Washington Era, 1865–1914" (2015). *New Studies in U.S. Foreign Relations*. 13.
https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/new_foreign_relations/13

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Kent State University Press at Digital Commons @ Kent State University Libraries. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Studies in U.S. Foreign Relations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Kent State University Libraries. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kent.edu.

Dissolving Tensions

PHILLIP
E. MYERS

Rapprochement and Resolution in British-American-Canadian
Relations in the Treaty of Washington Era,
1865-1914



NEW STUDIES IN U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mary Ann Heiss, editor

The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945–1965

AMY L. S. STAPLES

Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939–1960

BRADLEY LYNN COLEMAN

NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts

EDITED BY MARY ANN HEISS AND S. VICTOR PAPACOSMA

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

PHILLIP E. MYERS

The Will to Believe: Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and America's Strategy for Peace and Security

ROSS A. KENNEDY

Leading Them to the Promised Land: Woodrow Wilson, Covenant Theology, and the Mexican Revolution, 1913–1915

MARK BENBOW

Modernity and National Identity in the United States and East Asia, 1895–1919

CAROL C. CHIN

Seeing Drugs: Modernization, Counterinsurgency, and U.S. Narcotics Control in the Third World, 1969–1976

DANIEL WEIMER

Safe for Decolonization: The Eisenhower Administration, Britain, and Singapore

S. R. JOEY LONG

Arguing Americanism: Franco Lobbyists, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, and the Spanish Civil War

MICHAEL E. CHAPMAN

Trilateralism and Beyond: Great Power Politics and the Korean Security Dilemma during and after the Cold War

EDITED BY ROBERT A. WAMPLER

NATO after Sixty Years: A Stable Crisis

EDITED BY JAMES SPERLING AND S. VICTOR PAPACOSMA

Uruguay and the United States, 1903–1929: Diplomacy in the Progressive Era

JAMES C. KNARR

"Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden": The United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente

LOUISE WOODROOFE

NATO before the Korean War: April 1949–June 1950

LAWRENCE S. KAPLAN

Greek-American Relations from Monroe to Truman

ANGELO REPOUSIS

Informal Ambassadors: American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865–1945

DANA COOPER

Addressing America: George Washington's Farewell and the Making of National Culture, Politics, and Diplomacy, 1796–1852

JEFFREY J. MALANSON

Dissolving Tensions: Rapprochement and Resolution in British-American-Canadian Relations in the Treaty of Washington Era, 1865–1914

PHILLIP E. MYERS

Dissolving Tensions

Rapprochement and Resolution in
British-American-Canadian Relations in the
Treaty of Washington Era, 1865–1914



PHILLIP E. MYERS

The Kent State University Press
Kent, Ohio

For Cathy

© 2015 by The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio 44242

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 2014049293

ISBN 978-1-60635-252-6

Manufactured in the United States of America

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Myers, Phillip E.

Dissolving tensions : rapprochement and resolution in British-American-Canadian relations in the Treaty of Washington era, 1865–1914 / Phillip E. Myers.

pages cm. — (New studies in U.S. foreign relations)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-60635-252-6 (hardcover : alk. paper) ∞

1. United States—Foreign relations—Great Britain. 2. Great Britain—Foreign relations—United States. 3. United States—Foreign relations—Canada. 4. Canadian—Foreign relations—United States. 5. United States—Foreign relations—1865–1921. I. Title.

E183.8.G7M95 2015

327.73041—dc23

2014049293

19 18 17 16 15 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

List of Illustrations	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction: Palmerston's Panacea	1
1 Seward's Statecraft	17
2 Russell's Resolve	32
3 Gladstone's Group	53
4 The British Conservatives and Clarendon Seek Settlement	64
5 Gladstone's Grit	79
6 The Fisheries and the Road to Negotiations	89
7 Geopolitics and the Treaty of Washington Era	100
8 Chill of Indifference	117
9 Threshold of Negotiations	136
10 Fish and the Devil	149
11 Informal Negotiations in January 1871	161
12 An Unseemly Paradox	169
13 Defining the Triangle	184
14 Doom or Salvation?	205
15 The San Juan and Fisheries Arbitrations	223
Conclusion: Saving the Rapprochement	239
Notes	251
Bibliography	299
Index	317

Illustrations

Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, British Prime Minister	2
Charles Frances Adams, Minister to Britain	8
William Henry Seward, U.S. Secretary of State	18
Map of the San Juan Islands water boundary dispute	23
CSS <i>Alabama</i>	33
Lord John Russell, British Foreign Secretary	33
CSS <i>Alabama</i> leaving the Merchant ship USS <i>Tonowanda</i>	34
Palmerston addressing the House of Commons	35
The Blockade on the “Connecticut Plan”	37
CSS <i>Nashville</i> burning the USS <i>Harvey Birch</i>	38
Lord Palmerston	39
CSS <i>Nashville</i> , Confederate warship	40
CSS <i>Nashville</i> and USS <i>Tuscarora</i> at Southampton	42
USS <i>Kearsarge</i>	45
Sinking of the CSS <i>Alabama</i> by the USS <i>Kearsarge</i>	46
Lord Clarendon, British Foreign Secretary	57
CSS <i>Alabama</i> burning the USS <i>Hatteras</i>	58
2nd Earl Granville, Liberal Foreign Secretary	61
John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberly, British Colonial Secretary	62
Charles Sumner, Radical Republican Leader	76
William Ewart Gladstone, Liberal Prime Minister	80
Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, British Foreign Secretary	102
Edward Geoffrey Smith Stanley, the forgotten prime minister	102
American High Commissioners for the Treaty of Washington, 1871	185
British High Commissioners for the Treaty of Washington, 1871	185
Caricature of the Joint High Commission, “Settlement Over the Alabama Claims”	206

Acknowledgments

This book is the result of six years of research and writing and is the sequel to my *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations*, which The Kent State University Press published in 2008. One point that became clear as this study progressed was that the diplomats left Civil War tensions behind in order to dissolve the remaining tensions while continuing to define the wartime rapprochement. The research and the way I have structured this book are meant to show that interpretations which believe there was a serious threat of a British-American war after 1865 that would no doubt have involved Canada was, in diplomats' minds, impossible. Instead, I have found that the prewar and postwar rapprochement selected the opposite path of peace through traditional and newer diplomatic methods to resolve the tensions. In this way, the contingencies that marked the unfolding of a new era, together with the continuation of the British-American peace that had become clearer as the Civil War progressed, advanced the more civilized effect of comprehensive diplomacy that took six years to define itself and the new era that it created. This era was played out for three decades after 1865 and had notably dissolved the British-American-Canadian tensions by 1912.

This book could not have taken its present form without the comments of Professors Duncan Andrew Campbell, Neils Eichhorn, and Howard Jones. They convinced me that in what would have been the last two chapters that I was indeed beginning to write about something else. Those chapters have now been omitted, and their comments were correct in clarifying the density of my writing that I could not see without their guidance. I am thankful for the insightful copyediting of Michael Levine. Professor Mary Ann Heiss, the editor of this series at Kent State University Press, was supportive in her writing that complemented the comments of my colleagues. Megan Queen Campbell offered her interest and abiding friendship while creating her own consulting company. My wife Cathy was alongside and patiently shared the frustrations and elations of authorship, and our conversations helped me

with a clearer understanding of British-American-Canadian relations than I had thought about. I dedicate this book to her. Joyce Harrison, the acquiring editor at Kent State University Press, simplified the process. My thanks go out to her and the staff at the Press. But any errors and oversights are my responsibility.

I also thank Lady Jane Clarendon, Dowager Countess of Clarendon, and her son, who are the trustees of the Papers of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon held at the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. I appreciate the permission of the University of Oklahoma Press for use of a map of the San Juan Water Boundary Dispute in one of its publications.

Introduction

Palmerston's Panacea

The British-American rapprochement was both an old and a new paradigm of American foreign relations. It was old because the rapprochement existed prior to 1861, a child of the treaties of the 1840s and 1850s. It was new because negotiations of each treaty between the United States and Britain had consistently been characterized by concessions, goodwill, informal understandings, and deliberate omissions to get the treaties signed and approved by Parliament and Congress. In other words, through all of the British-American treaties since the Jay Treaty of 1794, these themes persisted to benefit British-American understanding. The rapprochement grew before the War of 1812 and remained steadfast during the American Civil War. It remained a leading tenet in British-American relations. It peaked in 1908, and it held fast during World War I and afterwards. It was overall solid enough to keep British-American relations stable in the twentieth century. This paradigm and its nuances produced a new perspective about the issues in American foreign policy that throws new light on British foreign policy as well. It also casts revealing shadows back on antebellum American foreign policy that, in turn, illuminates events taken for granted in explaining the advent of American empire and the Republic's entry into world affairs from the Mexican War through World War I. Robert L. Beisner argues that "1865–1900 was an era in which one American diplomatic paradigm supplanted another."¹ The new paradigm for purposes of this study was the steady progress in resolving British-American tensions through joint high commissions, international arbitrations, and expert testimony in these forums that were absorbed by the rapprochement.

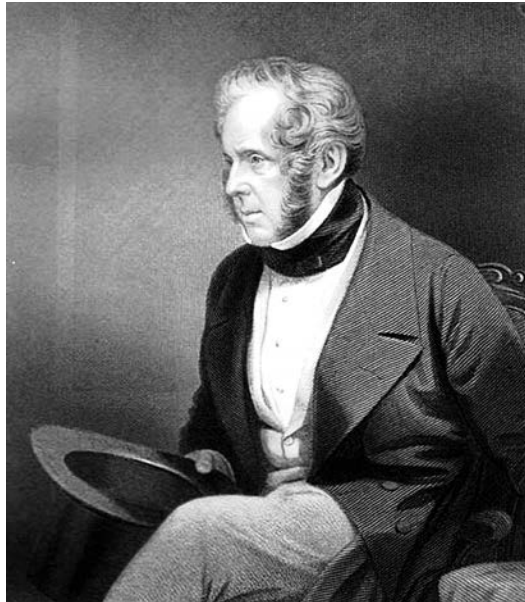
The rapprochement was the conduit through which American foreign policy changed in these decades in the joint effort at dissolving tensions up to the extent that Britain's assistance, through its willingness to understand the tensions and make concessions forthwith, enabled American foreign policy to mature. Britain, on the other hand, drew into mutuality with the new American foreign policy by

moving away from its so-called splendid isolation into a role in international affairs that required American assistance and understanding by the mid-1880s. The change emerged full-blown in the years prior to 1914, when the need for American friendship increased as global power rivalries became more acute.

Many factors, such as mutual naval support and the traditional close economic ties, nurtured this changing partnership that had animated part of the history of British-American relations since American independence. At first just a glimmer in the rapprochement, a close economic relationship grew because millions were being made in trade and investments by both Britain and the United States. Britain and the United States therefore toiled to stabilize this financial and geopolitical relationship. The outcome of informal understanding—the rapprochement—was more perceptible in the 1840s than previously in hallmark treaties such as the Webster-Ashburton and Oregon Treaties in the 1840s and in the 1850s with the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and the Fisheries-Reciprocity Treaty, which demonstrated the growing importance of Canada and attempted to sort out strategic territorial and commercial tensions in North America. In both of these decades of treaty making, mutual willingness to negotiate rather than fight made diplomacy paramount.

The United States lacked international credibility until its Civil War victory but understood that Britain was a willing partner in negotiations. Lord Melbourne, the prime minister, influenced Henry John Temple, the third Viscount Palmerston, his foreign secretary, who had been in the British national government for several decades by 1830 and was to go on to become Liberal prime minister twice in the 1850s and 1860s, to respect U.S. boundaries in North America. Palmerston remained

Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, British Prime Minister 1859–1865. From J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Life and Times of William Ewart Gladstone*, Vol. 1.



perturbed about Britain making, as he saw it, an undue number of concessions to keep the peace.² From this position he adjusted to a more liberal stance over time after seeing that transatlantic peace was best for his domestic politics. Closer relations with the United States was a part of Palmerston's realism and peace kept the rising British middle class and aristocracy in support, so that Palmerston could continue running the government. One point that needs to be made about Palmerston which is too often missing from analyses is that he placed the continuation of peace over other foreign policy considerations. He was a noninterventionist as the Confederacy painfully learned during the Civil War, when he and Foreign Secretary Russell stuck to the strict neutrality that they had planned before the war. He took political heat for this priority at times, especially from the European Powers, but he was conscious of how to survive from his decades of experience. He catered to public opinion. For example, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 embittered him, with his misgivings about Foreign Secretary Lord Ashburton's American favoritism, and Palmerston had further misgivings about its concessions to American slave trading. A longtime abolitionist, Palmerston finally sided with his erstwhile political enemy, Lord John Russell, on the issue. Palmerston's most recent biographer, David Brown, states that they simply acquiesced in a *fait accompli*.³ This mutual awareness began blending foreign policy objectives that eventually enabled the United States to gain suzerainty over North America without "aggressive posturing," which put tensions on diplomacy but allowed American foreign policy to mature and enabled Britain to withdraw from the North American balance of power in peace without embarrassment.⁴

Early in the post-Civil War Era, the two governments were prepared to negotiate all of the tensions in one comprehensive treaty negotiated in Washington just after Palmerston's death in October 1865, a treaty that both synthesized the diplomacy of his age and established a new era for the rest of the nineteenth-century British-American relationship. Without this treaty, and had the relationship lacked the patience and understanding that enabled the two nations to persist in their adherence to its provisions, the histories of the United States, Britain, and Canada would have been much different at the dawning of the new century. By 1871, the two democracies had plenty of practice at the negotiating table.

My previous book, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations*, demonstrated that Civil War disputes failed to create an unprecedented crisis in Anglo-American diplomacy that required "desperate diplomacy"; cautious diplomacy early in the war as in the *Trent* Affair persisted with diplomatic cooperation carrying the balance of relations by the summer of 1863. British and American officials dealt with each other in the Civil War according to a template established in the antebellum years. This template was a realistic appraisal of each other's strengths and recognition of constraining national factors both external and internal. *Caution and Cooperation* demonstrated that historians have too

often focused on the flare ups and missteps that they believe made war always lurking within the relationship and not enough on experience drawn upon and actions taken to prevent grave dangers. A traditional diplomacy ruled. This oversight is why far from being an outlier in the Anglo-American diplomatic saga, the Civil War era led to a subsequent era that was defined by the Treaty of Washington, which the pragmatic diplomacy of Palmerston and Lincoln followed. Also, historians have not detected that the Civil War was important for the arousal of a pragmatic mutual British-American foreign policy, beginning with the mutual solution to the *Trent* affair worked out quickly in December 1861 by the two governments. Far from worsening Anglo-American relations, the Civil War actually witnessed an overall improvement.⁵ The added understanding that the war brought to relations contributed immensely to the Treaty of Washington era of dissolution of tensions beginning immediately after the treaty. The Civil War tensions were dissolved within the decade after 1865, and a new tier of tensions amid growing British-American compatibility was negotiated shortly thereafter so that other powers could perceive that the Anglo-Saxon world was a bloc in the unruly decades prior to 1914. Thus, the Civil War conditioned the British-American relationship for decades to come. It embellished the Industrial Revolution that had begun first in Britain and later in the United States during the 1840s and transferred economic power from planters to industrialists and financiers, which in turn modernized the American domestic configuration and overseas structure—in the form of high tariffs; British and American naval cooperation in Latin America, China, and the Pacific; and, by 1910, Canadian-American reciprocity—for entering global history.⁶

In many respects, Britain and the United States were in the same situation in the 1865–1867 period as they were in the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s in that they demonstrated a realistic appraisal of each other's strengths and of their external and internal constraints. They continued to be best commercial and financial partners. They reformed their democracies to lead the world. The deaths of the two nations' political giants—Palmerston and Lincoln—in 1865 resulted in no change in diplomacy except to perfect the work already waiting to bring more patience and understanding to a host of transatlantic tensions. This work proceeded from 1865 through the outset of World War I. Thus, "imperialism," as Beisner argues, was not a new phenomenon of American diplomacy. In this sense, partly from the British impress upon it, the new American foreign policy was more liberal than today's, following along with the maturation of the British-American rapprochement, which nurtured the ideas of imperialism of British and American thinkers, contributed an anomaly, and redefined the geopolitical perspective and policy making of both governments.⁷ Carrying on the liberal features of American foreign policy after 1865—free security (maximum security with the deterrent influence of the Royal Navy), nonintervention, and isolationism—all ingredients of the old diplomacy, continued to prevail in American foreign policy making. These charac-

teristics of American foreign policy began to change from 1890 to 1895 except that the constant characteristic was the existing rapprochement as a balancer, which survived the years of anomalies and, as during the Civil War, actually was strengthened to benefit America's new international obligations. In opposition to Beisner, there was, then, throughout the Treaty of Washington era, a constant that survived from America's still sailing "upon a summer sea" to an America that entered a more violent sea. Lord Bryce, a stalwart friend of the United States, was a powerful connection in Anglo-Saxon liberalism and a foreign policy of rapprochement. His *American Commonwealth* (1888) "encouraged a realignment of understanding a new perception of the United States as ally and friend." His was the top study of the relationship and had sold 212,000 copies by 1910.⁸

During the Civil War, Palmerston's "policy of non-intercourse with the Confederacy and armed neutrality towards the Union was popular with the overwhelming majority of the British public—whatever their class or political affiliation."⁹ His long experience in office had enabled him to make good political use of newspapers to cultivate public opinion.¹⁰ The gist of his panacea was that politics was everything to him. He wanted to die in office as prime minister and he got his wish. Palmerston's panacea hinged on his boast that he had never led Britain into a major war. His successors, led by William Ewart Gladstone, his chancellor of the Exchequer and longtime political enemy, ironically continued his plan. Gladstone was a pragmatist like his late rival but friendlier to the United States as a consequence of his democratic liberalism, which after the Civil War he used to cover up his wartime interventionism that Palmerston had swatted down in the fall of 1862. Palmerston showed on occasions like this that he would not let Gladstone or anyone else dictate his foreign policy.¹¹ The prime minister focused his power upon humbling Gladstone. He might have prodded George Cornwall Lewis, the erudite secretary of war, who, like Granville, was opposed to intervention, to decry Gladstone's Newcastle speech advocating that the South should be an independent nation in September 1862, which his government had not approved. Lewis and Granville doubted that the South had won enough military victories to prove that it could defeat the North and be independent. The split was by no means "total and irrevocable," as Howard Jones writes, adding that Lewis was preoccupied with his argument, which he alone seemed to have created, asking when could it be determined that the South was likely to be victorious and deserved recognition of its independence. How could anyone ever know?¹²

Part of Palmerston's panacea was his decisiveness at the end of the intervention crisis in 1862. Palmerston's clearer thinking and that of Minister of War Cornwall Lewis and Lord Chancellor Granville deflated the third most powerful cabinet minister. That did not hurt Lewis in his competition with Gladstone for party leadership (which became a moot point when Lewis died suddenly in the spring of 1863). Nevertheless, Gladstone was known for his persistence. He

was still thinking about his support for intervention thirty years later when he tried a weak argument to excuse his error by saying that “I really, though most strangely, believed that it was an act of friendliness to all America to recognize that the struggle was virtually at an end.” In his speech at Newcastle on 7 October 1862, he contradicted Palmerston’s nonintervention policy when he said that he believed that the South had made a nation and should be independent, and that slavery would die of its own accord if the war were stopped. He agreed that in return for the demise of slavery, which meant economic hardship for the South, the United States could have Canada, which was another error in judgment that omitted many considerations.¹³

Gladstone was best when he was among the intangibles, and the intervention crisis was the time. The very intangibles, such as when would the South prove it was worthy of independence, was what attracted Gladstone in this struggle but defeated him in the debate. His feeling was grossly misplaced. If he did not intend to unseat Palmerston with the speech, he forgot that Palmerston would not depart from neutrality. Gladstone unwittingly collided against the core of Palmerston’s panacea—whose caution was what defused the crisis. Gladstone’s grit had been misplaced and mistimed. His arguments were more valuable after the Civil War than during the war itself. Yet one must argue that part of Palmerston’s panacea applied to contributing the potential for the Treaty of Washington, since he neutralized wartime tensions to enable a smooth transition from neutrality for Gladstone to create the treaty in 1871. In this way, his panacea made substantial contributions, and beyond those facts, to shaping this new era.

Moreover, Palmerston’s resolve and Gladstone’s postwar pronouncements about the accomplishments of American democracy ironically contributed to the immediate effect of the Civil War on British-American relations. Despite his egregious error about the North’s prosecution of the war, Gladstone survived and his political career continued on the rise to war’s end. In that sense, these twists in his thinking about the war called for a compromise out of uncertainty about what Britain and the United States should have done during the war itself. As a compromise between certainty and a better answer, the rapprochement, which meant caution, was the safest medium to temper relations. Palmerston had accomplished his panacea for peace by teaching Gladstone a lesson in caution and a more astute assessment of the realities of the times. The irony of 1862 for Gladstone was that buried in his Newcastle speech were his indications that he was appalled by violence. But he expressed his mental struggles with his humanitarian sensitivities and did not offer a way to avoid the bloodshed, which might have brought Palmerston himself directly into that mental struggle, and once joined in the argument, Palmerston might have dismissed Gladstone despite the risk to himself and his ministry. That point was never reached because unlike Palmerston, Gladstone did not see that bloodshed had to beget more bloodshed before

the war could be decided. Gladstone and Russell went on to define the rapprochement's basic tenets as caution, compromise, and cooperation to echo past diplomacy. After the intervention matter was closed to cabinet debate and Palmerston's cautious, realistic policy was clear, both Gladstone and Russell ran away from the controversy. Gladstone wrote, "I am afraid we will do little or nothing on the business of America. . . . Both Lord Palmerston and Russell are right. The United States affair is ended, and not well."¹⁴

Diplomatic experience in resolving these disputes created a legacy of discernment. The main objective before 1860 for statesmen was peaceful accommodation. Palmerston told Russell in February 1861 that he wanted a peaceful policy "as long as we . . . by negotiation and management . . . avoid rupture and open collision." He meant for his policy to apply broadly to the United States and to France.¹⁵ During the Civil War, the prewar legacy of rapprochement held through wartime cooperation to avoid expanding the war. Palmerston and Russell did not want the Confederacy as a friend or the Union as an enemy. They maintained strict neutrality and built cooperation. Over all stood Palmerston's panacea of not getting involved in any war. Early in the Civil War, Palmerston wrote, "I am not disposed in any case to take up arms to settle the American war by force." He was unwilling to recognize Confederate independence. Palmerston wrote these words five months before the intervention crisis in the fall of 1862.¹⁶ Thus, when the crisis broke, Palmerston already understood the outcome that he wanted. Although he was riding an irony, he was adaptable as a veteran politician. The liberalism in his panacea was at work. He would not disturb democratic governments like the United States.

Palmerston's panacea of caution, cooperation, and a wait and see foreign policy benefited the Union as the war reached midpoint. The foreign policy of Britain and the Union manifested the caution of both governments. Cooperation resolved the *Trent* affair in the first year of the war, which played on the American secretary of state William Henry Seward's caution during the intervention controversy less than a year later. He clearly advised the American minister to Britain since 1861, the astute Charles Francis Adams, during the intervention crisis to remain cautious and not to respond to information from anyone about intervention. Adams was to leave if Britain intervened. Like Palmerston, Seward and Lincoln hoped to wait out the crisis. Seward also cooperated with the cautious and peaceful problem solver, British minister to the United States, Richard Bickerton Pemmell, Lord Lyons, to create the antislave trade treaty of 1862; to assure that officials on both sides along the Canadian-American border guarded against Confederate agents; to demilitarize the Great Lakes; and to make the joint effort (though unsuccessful as it turned out) to save the lucrative Canadian-American Fisheries Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 after the war ended. Further cooperation followed in the numerous prize cases tried in American courts of blockade-runners captured by the Union navy, many of which were owned by British subjects.¹⁷



Charles Frances Adams, Minister to Britain, 1861–1868. (Library of Congress)

Britain's refusal to press the prize case verdicts demonstrated favor for the United States and showed that Britain was not going to start a naval war. Their two navies worked throughout the war to preserve caution in naval operations by exchanging operational plans along the East Coast and the Caribbean. The movement showed a measure of the naval cooperation that would result in Britain reducing the Royal Navy in the Caribbean by the 1890s and into the early twentieth century. Britain accepted American naval hegemony there because, in essence, the possibility of the two navies working together as a deterrent against violation of the Monroe Doctrine, mostly threatened by Germany, that nation's expansionism being a common concern in the evolution of Great Power relations, actually increased British-American strength in the Western Hemisphere. A similar arrangement worked itself out in the Eastern Hemisphere, thus expanding Palmerston's panacea for deterrence instead of war. This naval cooperation was historic, since the Royal Navy used Caribbean ports during the First and Second World Wars and continued to govern strategic locations like Jamaica and Bermuda that during and after the Civil War saved Britain's North Atlantic and West Indian squadrons money for maintenance and fuel in the age of steam and by its nature provided additional security for the United States.¹⁸

Palmerston had changed during the Civil War in vying with Gladstone to increase naval expenses. He quietly grew pragmatic in wanting the Royal Navy strong enough to be a deterrent without making increases in its size that would be ex-

pensive, would intensify Gladstone's distaste, and might attract opposition to his government. The Royal Navy as a panacea became less than what Palmerston had thought as he blanketed himself with caution. The panacea of a joint naval force with the United States began during the Civil War and continued in discussions and actions, especially in the Caribbean and the Pacific, through 1898 and afterwards.

After the Civil War, diplomats dispelled tensions through negotiations. The new paradigm was an incubator for dissolving tensions. Palmerston's foreign policy was based on "controlling other nations by working with them."¹⁹ This was particularly true with the United States when it came to naval deterrence. Stephen Tuffnell writes about this key feature of Palmerston's rapprochement: "The irony of United States' potency and isolation in the Western Hemisphere was its dependence on British naval dominance to protect it from outside threats."²⁰ In tough situations, continued discussions achieved resolution. Palmerston was concerned with both the United States and European powers, particularly France in Europe and Russia in the Near East and Central Asia, which was still stunned after its defeat by Britain and France in the Crimean War. Here the prospect of the rise of Prussia, which was in the shadow of Russia and that pressed Western Europe, was assuaged by the rapprochement in British-American relations and the failure of France to divide Britain and the United States before and after the Civil War.²¹

The Second French Empire of the opportunist emperor Napoleon III was in decline in Europe and elsewhere, with his imperialism in Mexico defined by the deployment of thirty-six thousand French soldiers and the installation of Emperor Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph in Mexico City. Palmerston was concerned that if Britain and France went to war, the United States would take advantage of the situation and become "impertinent and the United States might ally with France."²² But the chances of Britain and France fighting were slim, as Jeremy Black holds: "The conclusion here is that British caution reflected the long-term trend in policy seen for decades, but was crucially assisted by a comparable degree of caution and restraint on the part of Lincoln's government."²³

After the Civil War, the French problem in Mexico lingered and Palmerston's foreign policy lost force. A gout-ridden octogenarian with sixty years of political experience at the center of British government from 1809 to 1865 as foreign secretary, secretary of war, and prime minister, Palmerston was weary of Foreign Office affairs with the decline of British power in Europe and questions hanging about Washington's course after the Civil War. The European status quo was maintained to deter any one power from control of the Low Countries, Britain's principal commercial outlet in Europe. Except for protecting its commerce in Europe, Palmerston's pragmatic policy and lack of territorial ambitions on the Continent gave credibility and diplomatic maneuvering room with the European powers. This policy required diplomatic independence to enable the Royal Navy or diplomacy to allay tensions in global trouble spots, including the Mediterranean, the Middle

East, Europe, China, and North America, and to accomplish objectives of peace without fighting.²⁴

Through hard experience, Palmerston had learned to be selective in choosing his battles. Long ago he had created a maxim for his panacea. It was "that any country would always give up three out of any four questions at issue even though successful powers managed not to reveal which three." Meanwhile, the 1840s and 1850s saw him quit his nationalistic policy to protect Britain's prosperity, and by 1860 he had "managed to mask the relative decline of British leverage." He succeeded against heavy international odds, although his policy became less successful in the 1860s and fewer statesmen listened to him.²⁵ Palmerston learned that if he did not push the powers, they would not push him, and he could stay prime minister. As seen with the United States, British foreign policy in Palmerston's last years experienced a new paradigm that recognized America's concomitant ascent as a world power. The mutuality was defined when Britain and the United States, whether one was in descent and the other in ascent, were forced to depend upon one another to deter uncertain international relations. The rapprochement's flexibility prevented their foreign policies from failing, as the following chapters will demonstrate. By 1865, Palmerston's nonintervention in the Civil War had strengthened the liberal tradition in British foreign policy of supporting liberal states like the United States. Palmerston, although an aristocrat, represented the international interests of the liberal bourgeoisie.²⁶ In his declining years, which coincided with the Civil War, Palmerston was stimulated more by middle-class attitudes than traditional vested interests, which meant not squandering Britain's wealth on war but in fostering British commerce with expanding economies like the United States.

Thus, his panacea at the end became "liberal advancement—increased freedom, increased liberty, moral and environmental improvement."²⁷ In the autumn of 1862, "he urged caution in order not to stir up aggressive feeling."²⁸ He and his successors, both Liberals like Palmerston and Conservatives like Lord Derby and his son, Edward Henry Stanley, who would become the fifteenth Earl of Derby and Conservative foreign secretary under his father and Disraeli, took pains to hold the line for the peace that the rapprochement advanced. Their foreign policy grew into a bipartisan one that encouraged the makings of a mutual foreign policy of restraint from the United States as well. In a consistent manner, Liberals post-Palmerston and Conservatives until 1868 tried to settle matters through cautious private diplomacy. Britain's decline resulted from the similar foreign policy tenets of both the Liberals and Conservatives. It mattered little who was in office. This bipartisanship spread over the coming decades to embrace the mutuality in Anglo-American foreign policies.

The political strength of the Conservatives was never sufficient to traduce "Old Pam's" nonintervention. But the Conservatives were at any rate not any more inclined to intervention. The popularity of Palmerston's foreign policy with the Brit-

ish public made it difficult for the Conservatives to attack him.²⁹ Because of British anxieties about North American commerce, Irish Home Rule, and Canada, Palmerston employed his wait and see policy, which was picked up by the United States and that had gotten his government through the Civil War. He was not going to lose office over Canada because most MPs who spoke during the Canada debate on confederation on 13 March 1865 argued that British-American relations were friendly despite concerns about Irish-American filibustering in Canada and the construction of gunboats on the Great Lakes, which, Seward informed Sir Frederick Bruce, the British minister to the United States, were for revenue collection. This debate occurred during the British-Canadian Confederation Conference in London led by Sir John A. Macdonald, the iridescent strong arm behind the Canadian confederation movement. Macdonald was a loyal advocate for the British Empire and the dominant Canadian statesman of the late nineteenth century. He helped Palmerston's ministry encourage the confederation of Canada because of the tensions of the Civil War and the historic British support for Confederation.

Thus, in July 1867 Canada joined with the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia under the British North American Act. Canada East (Lower) and West (Upper) were separated and respectively named Quebec and Ontario. Soon British Columbia joined. The British North American Act aimed at strengthening the British possessions along an east-west axis, with the prairie in the west and the Maritimes in the east. Macdonald got his wish to maintain Canada's place in the British Empire. London still ruled over the new government in Ottawa, but the badly needed Canadian nationalism would spawn from British and French roots.³⁰ While Canadian nationalism began to brew, Macdonald's view of the United States resembled Palmerston's. As Duncan Andrew Campbell has it, "No, he was not fond of the United States, but ultimately, he turned out to be one its important friends—albeit by default."³¹

Confederation and more independence (with more responsibilities) for Canada marked the descent of Palmerston's panacea in the mid- and late 1860s. In his biography of Palmerston, historian David Brown avers that "Palmerston was riding the diplomatic waves, not steering through them."³² Palmerston wanted to settle tensions in North America to free his ministry of tension in Europe and elsewhere.³³

Palmerston's aims were congruous not only with Macdonald's but also with those of American secretary of state William Henry Seward. From 1862 to 1869, when he left State, Seward concluded some forty-four treaties with Britain and other governments that defused tensions. His actions, with British support, spanned the world. He extended American-Chinese relations in 1868, secured territory to construct an isthmian canal with Nicaragua, and bought Alaska in 1867. He alleviated stress on the British regarding anti-British immigrants to the United States when Fenians who wanted to free Ireland from British rule threatened Canada. The resulting Naturalization Treaty, signed on 13 May 1870, erased

the five-year waiting period for British subjects to become American citizens. This citizenship would continue if naturalized Americans ever returned to Britain, and it ended a traditional British-American tension.³⁴ This treaty coincided with House of Commons debates led by Gladstone and his Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule. The treaty meant that the Fenians could no longer use British law against American law because now they would be treated under American law. If they were imprisoned in Britain, they would be extradited to the United States for trial. Fenians could no longer provoke an issue over naturalization, which was a blow to liberating Ireland from British rule.³⁵ These treaties affected “the treaty of all treaties of the nineteenth century” between Britain and the United States, the Treaty of Washington of 1871, the centerpiece of this study.

Palmerston realized that North American tensions had been eased because Anglo-American territorial rivalry had been negotiated several decades before the end of the Civil War with the cession of the Oregon Territory to the United States, the establishment of Texas statehood, and the American victory over Mexico ending the struggle for the balance of power in North America.³⁶ In 1841, amid these changes, Lord Stanley (the fourteenth Earl of Derby), the British colonial secretary, wrote in a global sense that “I am not anxious for the formation of new and distant colonies, all of which involve heavy direct, and still heavier indirect expenditure, besides multiplying the liabilities of misunderstanding & collision with Foreign Powers.” Britain wanted to hold its position in North America as economically as possible to improve commerce rather than to add responsibilities.³⁷ Canadian leaders, such as Lord Sydenham, the governor general, knew that friendly British-American relations were important to commerce with the United States along the Eastern Seaboard, and Palmerston agreed. Southerners spurned annexation of Canada while urging expansion into Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, all of which they saw as fertile grounds for the expansion of slavery. After the successful free trade Fisheries-Reciprocity Treaty between Britain, the United States, and Canada in 1854, Canadian annexation seemed to have become a dead issue in the 1850s. With this new treaty in mind, Sydenham explained that “Commercial Interests on both ‘sides’ were ‘strong’ enough to prevent a petty war.”³⁸ With this passive policy, Britain did not look for trouble, nor did it seek to become involved in disputes with the United States as in the Hawaiian question in the early 1840s,³⁹ or Texas and California, Oregon, and the Maine-Canadian boundary in the 1840s.⁴⁰

Only Canada remained as a potential trouble spot, and Britain would not fight if Canada elected to join the United States instead of forming a confederation. Neither Britain nor the United States wanted tensions over Canada because the Fisheries-Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 made commerce lucrative for both nations. Indeed, southerners supported the ratification of the treaty because they felt that the invigoration of trade between Canada and the United States would dampen northern

interference with their desire to annex Cuba and other areas in Latin America.⁴¹ They did not want to risk a lucrative relationship that had become “a single Atlantic economy” from 1790 to 1850. This economy included British investments in American infrastructure that fueled expansion. Britain’s approach to North America was the same one it employed toward its other global interests. Duncan Andrew Campbell writes that Britain “preferred profit to conquest.” He also writes that Britain’s far-flung interests meant “when it came to British dealings with the United States, American issues could only occasionally take center stage for, from the British perspective, there were almost always other, more important, concerns in play. In fact, without acknowledging the existence of these concerns, it is impossible to correctly understand the nineteenth-century Anglo-American relationship at all.”⁴²

Following Palmerston’s panacea, Britain believed there were too many tensions to ignore, and in the interests of peace, his successors worked to group them into a comprehensive treaty. Unaware that it was introducing an anomaly into relations, Britain and the United States allowed Canada to blend into this mix to alleviate tensions. What made this policy more difficult was that the Civil War had placed the United States in an unprecedented status of being a power without an overall foreign policy.⁴³ This change, owing to the bloody four years of combat that claimed over 750,000 lives and resulted in a navy of 700 ships and an army of over a million, was acknowledged by the *Spectator* in London in 1866: “Nobody doubts any more that the United States is a power of the first class, a nation which it is very dangerous to offend and almost impossible to attack.”⁴⁴ Those 700 U.S. ships were mostly merchant vessels pressed into service. Yet far from becoming hawkish, the United States had to face the daunting internal task of reintegrating the South into the Union and rapidly disbanding its armed forces to cope with the huge Civil War debt. The United States also faced the challenges of democratic reforms to reconstruct the impoverished South. Britain was faced with outcries for reform to expand the electorate that together conditioned what the Anglo-Saxon cousins could do to resolve their differences. The Civil War drew working-class activists in Britain closer to the Liberal Party.⁴⁵ This was because of the freedoms won by the defeat of slavery.⁴⁶ The advance of freedom into both societies proved tough going. In the absence of national furors, tensions could be managed diplomatically during the paralyzing predicaments that both governments faced with building democracy. National politics had long been mixed with the respective nations’ foreign policies, and in the decade after the Civil War, politics worked in both nations to mitigate tensions in foreign relations and advance resolutions to improve commerce. The role of Reform in Britain and Reconstruction in the United States has not been entertained adequately in assessing British-American relations from 1865 to 1890. To what extent were anomalies that modified relations introduced to shape a new paradigm based on the rapprochement persisting during these two and a half decades? Events discussed in later chapters show fertile years for the new paradigm.

As with Canada, Britain refused to tighten its grip over the Dominion—a confederation of Ontario; Quebec; and the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island—a tightening that would also have been a repudiation of previous colonial policy because it was an axiom of Palmerston to prevent domestic problems. Similarly, Seward eyed expanding commerce in Latin America and the Far East but in a gradual, peaceful manner.⁴⁷

There was a mutuality of concerns about absorbing the democratic feelings that the Civil War had pronounced. Its outcome for the preservation of the Union and Lincoln's pragmatism had a decisive impact in Britain and Europe. The Civil War had been an international conflict, but the powers failed to intervene because Seward made clear that the United States would oppose intervention with force. In 1865 this was a godsend for the United States and Britain. This spirit was alive in 1865–1866, when the *Alabama* claims could have been settled by a candid expression of regret. But Britain under Russell refused.⁴⁸ The positive outcome of this missed opportunity bought time for the United States to change its mind about annexing Canada by its realization that Canadians did not want to be part of the United States.⁴⁹

Britain's actions during the war demonstrated Russell's statements in 1862 and 1863, before the battlefield victor was decided, to the effect that he did not believe Seward's animosity was anything but "rancour," and that he "hardly suspected war with the U.S."⁵⁰ As the war ended, Richard Cobden, a leading British Radical and defender of the Union, wrote, "I feel confident there can never be a war between us and America." Cobden believed that the Homestead Act of 1862, which he thought democratically distributed land to Americans, would help to convince the British people to keep peace with the United States because it made the land free for anyone to occupy and did not "put up magnates over the land." Cobden did not think that the English people would ever go to war "against a country with this fair and promising social system."⁵¹

Dependability for settling disputes peacefully without breaking off relations was a part of the rapprochement's potential and the fabric for the making of a new paradigm which meant that British-American relations could lead the world in arbitration. Palmerston's panacea turned into a strong tradition of peaceful relations from private talks to treaty, marked by international arbitration. Britain and the United States trusted each other to place their disputes into the hands of commissioners chosen by the respective governments and sovereigns of other nations and their agents, and they continued to settle by private talks such as occurred before and during the Washington negotiations from February through early May 1871, thus creating the era of the Treaty of Washington.

Anglophobic and power-conscious American politicians threatened this further softening of relations before and during the Civil War and during early Reconstruction. Nevertheless, the need for reforms in both Britain and the United States

and the mutual desire for peace help to explain the diplomatic climates. In contrast to the need for a social Reconstruction, the Civil War did not result in the need for a reconstruction of British-American relations because the rapprochement reconstructed itself.⁵²

Indeed, relations continued with informal correspondence between Washington and London with private letters between the British minister to the United States and the foreign secretary as Europe rapidly dissolved into conflagration. Even during the American political hostilities of the period from 1865 to 1868, both governments continued to seek resolutions. By 1868, American emotions had eased over Britain's alleged wrongs to the Union. Building on private diplomacy, statesmen and diplomats stood for peace. The diplomacy of resolution was more mature than the relationships among American political leaders. In the largest sense, the paramount will not to get involved in the disputes within and between other nations continued in force. Thus, British-American relations were stable compared to the Reconstruction debate in the United States and the power politics in Europe. In sum, British-American relations grew more dependable while Europe underwent strife for the rest of nineteenth century.

For several years after the Civil War, these variables created a relational paralysis as an obstacle to the resolution of issues between the two nations within both Britain and the United States despite the overriding desire to resolve disputes. American politicians were afraid to settle foreign disputes directly because of the debate over Reconstruction. This debate was between the Radical Republicans in Congress who wanted the Union's victory over slavery clearly realized by bringing equality of citizenship to freedmen through military force if necessary, and those who wanted the South to return to its antebellum culture and politics as if there had been no war. Reconstruction's enemies, for instance, might criticize an American political leader trying to settle disputes with Britain because of emotions over the British involvement in the war despite Lincoln's and Seward's favorable attitude to cooperation with Britain. This fiery and complicated struggle about Reconstruction among Americans seemed to substantiate Palmerston's panacea.

Much the same thing occurred in Britain. The growing struggle in Europe made the British want to continue friendly relations with the United States, and if the latter power could not settle at once, as Britain wanted, patience and understanding could be achieved through the advice of the British ministers in Washington. Britain's patience rested upon knowing that the Americans faced a lengthy recovery from the Civil War. The British believed resolution possible once American politics stabilized. To help reduce tensions during the early Reconstruction Era, Brian Holden Reid explains, the United States did little to threaten Canada with annexation or military actions. It passed on Canadian Confederation in 1867 with hardly a word contrariwise. Jeremy Black posits that "American governments neither sought nor wished greatly to disrupt the consolidation of authority and power

in British North America.”⁵³ American military power was drastically cut back, and as late as 1890, the navy possessed no battleships.⁵⁴ Canada could be brought into British-American rapprochement as a mediator, not an enemy.

Aside from American military and naval weaknesses, the British did not view the Americans as ready to fight, given the passive attitude that Washington displayed toward British North America. A similar pattern existed in regard to American policy toward Mexico. Seward patiently awaited the withdrawal of French troops and the end of the imperial reign of Maximilian, the Austrian Hapsburg puppet archduke enthroned by Napoleon III to challenge the Monroe Doctrine in Mexico. At the same time, in mid-1866, British leaders were aware of France’s predicament with Prussia, which showed no sign of diplomatic resolution regarding the territorial imbroglio between Prussia, Austria, and France, with Russia poised to take back the Bosphorus and Dardenelles Straits to defy the Treaty of Paris of 1856 that had neutralized the Russian navy in the Black Sea. An explosion could occur, and the Black Sea question looked threatening when the Franco-Prussian War began in August 1870, just as the British and Americans were about to negotiate in Washington. One of Palmerston’s axioms had been to defend the Ottoman Empire, and now, again, the Russian proclamation to resurrect its power in the Near East forced Britain to deal with Europe and North America simultaneously. The pressure was on Gladstone and the British Liberals that Palmerston had helped to form in his last years.⁵⁵

Palmerston’s panacea had never reckoned that the United States would take advantage of Britain’s dilemmas to try to weaken the British Empire. Peaceful foreign policy was the American way under the old paradigm. The United States refused to influence developments north of the border just as Britain had avoided interfering in antebellum U.S. territorial acquisitions. The United States had learned from British diplomacy. Britain was the world’s paramount imperial and financial power, and her interests lay in continuing a long tradition of expanding commerce and finance with the United States, not in contesting U.S. territorial expansion. Now the two powers “swapped places,” as Duncan Andrew Campbell points out. During the antebellum and Civil War periods, the British concentrated on “global concerns . . . [and] usually muddled through while the Americans, focusing closely on their continent, had the clearer goals and ambitions.”⁵⁶ British-American policy enabled any tensions that existed about British North America to resolve themselves, as when Britain refused the beleaguered Napoleon III’s request to help him in Mexico in 1866, which enabled the United States to win that power struggle.⁵⁷