

David Reynolds: A Study in Competitive Cooperation

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In the revised and updated paperback edition of *America, Empire of Liberty: A New History of the United States*, published in May 2021, David Reynolds turns at the end of the book to some of the contemporary resonances contained in this one-volume history of the United States. Looking at the threat to American global power inherent in the rise of China, he warned that ‘Cold War analogies are of limited value’ and suggested that ‘what is needed is a policy of competitive coexistence to sustain a relationship “on terms favourable to US interests and values” while acknowledging China’s major place in world affairs.’ Similarly, on the challenges of global warming and climate change, Reynolds writes that ‘combining competition with cooperation is particularly vital in the face of novel threats to the health of the planet.’²

Reynolds’s willing engagement with contemporary events is a familiar theme in his work. He has often pointed to ways that policymakers and historians can learn from each other, perhaps most explicitly in his post-Brexit book *Island Stories: An Unconventional History of Britain*, but also in works such as *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, and *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*. He also made this connection in his television documentaries and in his involvement with groups such as the Foreign Office Historians and History & Policy. To those who have

¹ The authors wish to thank Professor Brian McKercher, editor of *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, for his wholehearted encouragement and support for this special edition of the journal.

² Reynolds, D., *America Empire of Liberty: A New History of the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2021), 520.

followed and been influenced by Reynolds's work over more than four decades, however, it will be the phrases 'combining competition with cooperation' and its variant 'a policy of competitive coexistence' that will immediately leap out. For here, exactly forty years later, is the reiteration of an idea that appeared in 1981 in Reynolds's first book, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance: A Study in Competitive Cooperation, 1937-1941*. The impact this idea had on his students has often been direct and explicit, as in Richard Aldous's book *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship*, Nigel Ashton's *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: The Irony of Interdependence*, and Sabine Lee's *Victory in Europe? Britain and Germany since 1945*. At other times, its debt has been implied, such as in Simon Ball's *The Bitter Sea: The Struggle for Mastery in the Mediterranean 1935–1949* and Kristina Spohr's *Post Wall, Post Square: How Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl, and Deng Shaped the World after 1989*. Competitive cooperation has been an extraordinarily influential concept within modern international history, most certainly for those whom Reynolds supervised at Cambridge, but many others besides.³

³ Reynolds, D., *Island Stories: An Unconventional History of Britain* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Reynolds, D., *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century* (Harlow: Longman, 1991, 2nd edition, 2000); "History & Policy: What we do," accessed 6 September 2021, <https://www.historyandpolicy.org/about-us/what-we-do>; Reynolds, D., *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance: A Study in Competitive Cooperation, 1937-1941* (London: Europa, 1981); Aldous, R., *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship* (New York: WW Norton, 2012); Ashton, N., *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: The Irony of Interdependence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Lee, S., *Victory in Europe? Britain and Germany since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2001); Ball, S., *The Bitter Sea: The Struggle for Mastery in the Mediterranean 1935–1949* (London: Harper

Reynolds did the groundwork for competitive cooperation in his 1980 PhD thesis, supervised by Harry Hinsley, then Professor of the History of International Relations at Cambridge and former star Bletchley Park cryptographer. That thesis had the even more emphatic title, ‘Competitive Cooperation: the creation of the Anglo-American alliance: 1938-1941’. Reynolds first outlined the concept to academic readers in a review article in *The Historical Journal* entitled, ‘Competitive Cooperation: Anglo-American Relations in World War Two’. Taken together, the PhD thesis, the article and the book represent foundational texts for many international historians.⁴

Reynolds’s starting point was a frustration shared among ‘a new generation of scholars’, influenced by Christopher Thorne, that previous historians had tended to ignore the ‘ebb and flow of the Anglo-American relationship’ and a determination that ‘we need to be more sensitive to its eddies and currents’. His own response was to bring out the ‘profound ambivalence’ of the Anglo-American relationship. ‘One might set it out simply in this fashion’, he wrote in the *Historical Journal* at the same time he wrapped up his doctoral studies:

For the British, the idea of a special relationship was essentially a response to weakness. Ever since the 1890s, the U.S. had seemed the least threatening of her

Press, 2009); Spohr, S., *Post Wall, Post Square: How Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl, and Deng Shaped the World after 1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

⁴ Reynolds, D., ‘Competitive Cooperation: The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance: 1938-1941’, University of Cambridge: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1980; Reynolds, D., ‘Competitive Cooperation: Anglo-American Relations in World War Two’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1980), 233-245.

competitors and therefore, cutting her losses, the most attractive potential ally against the rest, especially given the similarities of language and culture. The United States was willing to cooperate closely at certain points in the century, particularly in World War Two, when Britain's foes seemed to be America's, when they posed an apparently mortal threat, and when America seemed particularly vulnerable. At other times, in the absence of an overriding common threat and of complementary strengths and weaknesses, the element of competition became more apparent. But even in 1940-5 competition provided the counterpoint to the melody of co-operation. While seeking to sustain their common interests as established powers, Britain and the United States were also “bargaining for supremacy.” It was indeed a relationship of competitive cooperation.’⁵

This was a line he repeated in *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, but now even more firmly stated. The wartime alliance, which ‘undoubtedly constituted one of the closest diplomatic relationships in modern history’, was also ‘a temporary marriage of convenience, with competition the persistent counterpoint to the melody of cooperation.’ It was a relationship where ‘inside the framework of collaboration to sustain their common interests as established powers, Britain and America manoeuvred for advantage and pre-

⁵ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, 283, 285. Thorne, C., *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978); Reynolds, ‘Competitive Cooperation: Anglo-American Relations in World War Two’, 244-5.

eminence.’ And again, the signature sign-off: ‘it was indeed a relationship of competitive cooperation.’⁶

What is also striking about this early work is how Reynolds established what he called ‘the wider cultural framework’ for writing history. There was a plea for analytical nuance, eschewing the twin temptations of “sentimentality” and exaggerated “hostility”. He emphasized the importance of balance, as ‘we need to explore the areas of agreement *and* the areas of difference.’ Relationships must be viewed as “three-dimensional.” Similarly, he offered the injunction that effective analysis ‘requires sensitivity to the way events were seen at the time’ and reminds his readers not to ‘forget that events now long in the past were once in future’. There was robust criticism of historians of Anglo-American relations, particularly British ones, who had failed to immerse themselves in archives on both sides of the Atlantic, with Reynolds observing that ‘it is clear’ students of the topic ‘must undertake serious research in both countries’ archives.’ Reynolds pointed to the importance of history itself for the actors and situations he studied, as he reminded his audience that when policymakers were ‘confronting an open future they drew on their own past, particularly on experiences of the Great War.’

That final point would directly inform Reynolds’s later book, *The Long Shadow: The Legacies of the Great War in the Twentieth Century*, which showed how the first world war and its aftermath shaped ‘the sense of British identity, which would endure for much of the twentieth century.’ And in what would become another of his seminal contributions to the study of international history, Reynolds foreshadowed his fascination with Churchill’s writing of his own history. ‘Since its publication between 1948 and 1954 Sir Winston Churchill’s massive history, *The Second World War*, has guided the thinking of historians’,

⁶ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, 294.

he wrote in the opening line of *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, before quoting Sir Jack Plumb, the master of Christ's College, Cambridge, where Reynolds would become a fellow in 1983. 'They move down the broad avenues', Plumb wrote of historians of Churchill's wartime premiership, 'which he drove through war's confusion and complexity.' It was a quote Reynolds would use again in the introduction to his Wolfson Prize-winning book, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* and it marked the beginning of Reynolds's engagement with how 'Churchill made history as statesman and as historian.'⁷

Looking back in the late 1990s, Alex Danchev, a scholar of Anglo-American relations from the same generation as Reynolds, would label the idea of competitive cooperation as 'the epitome of Functionalism', which he defined as work in sharp contrast to earlier historical accounts of a "special" Anglo-American relationship. Linked to the theory of "functional cooperation", competitive cooperation was thus meant to be, Danchev noted, 'neither militant nor inspiring', because 'Functionalists aim to reconstruct, not convert.' That interpretation of his work was one that Reynolds himself rejected, or at least disputed. 'Functionalism is not a label that I would use', he notes in the introduction to *From Cold War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s*. Certainly his work had been 'influenced by the realist approach to international relations', but 'as I explored in *Britannia Overruled*, 'power' takes many forms—tangible and intangible, hard

⁷ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, 292. Reynolds, "Competitive Cooperation: Anglo-American Relations in World War Two," 244-5. Reynolds, D., *The Long Shadow: The Legacies of the Great War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 4. Reynolds, D., *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), xxi.

and soft.’ As Exhibit A he pointed to his book *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945*, which had ‘emphasize[d] the need to understand Anglo-American relations within the framework of culture as well as power.’ For Reynolds both form *and* function mattered: international historians needed to study power and policy, culture and discourse.⁸

Not the least of these social and cultural trends for Reynolds was the way in which policymakers ‘manipulated (and were manipulated by) language, a prime vehicle of culture.’ It was no coincidence that he should make this point shortly after the publication of *In Command of History*. That book reimagined and reconceptualized the study of Churchill and the history of histories. As Simon Ball notes in his own book, *Secret History: Writing the Rise of Britain's Intelligence Services*, which was deeply influenced by *In Command of History*, Reynolds had ‘laid out an agenda for anyone presuming to write the history of a history’, not least in showing that ‘a book about histories had to take those histories seriously.’⁹

By setting archive material from Churchill’s writing of the war memoirs (correspondence, drafts, the final text, etc.) alongside documents from the 1940-45 premiership, *In Command of History* illustrated how at different times ‘in several respects all this [Churchill’s account] is a distortion of what actually transpired’ and how ‘his clear labels

⁸ Danchev, A., *On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 2-3; Reynolds, D., *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 4-5; Reynolds, D., *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Random House, 1995).

⁹ Reynolds, *From Cold War to Cold War*, 5; Ball, S., *Secret History: Writing the Rise of Britain's Intelligence Services* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 6-7.

distort contemporary reality.’ The book is not directly about competitive cooperation, but one of its side effects, in showing where ‘Churchill’s version proved influential’, how he ‘conditions the reader’, and at which points ‘most historians follow him’, was to reinforce and expand the earlier work. It was exactly the kind of three dimensionality that Reynolds had highlighted in *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*.¹⁰

Reynolds’s corpus of work suggests that three-dimensionality for him is a matter where form follows function. Although he began as a historian of Anglo-American relations, he has defined and interpreted that relationship in the broadest possible way. Just as he urged British historians to get into the American archives, he has also immersed himself in the United States itself and American history. He held fellowships not just at Harvard (“the other Cambridge”) but in the American “heartland” of Nebraska and Oklahoma. Even his personal life, with his American wife, Margaret, brought him each summer to the United States. Unusually for a British historian of the Atlantic relationship, some of Reynolds’s work, including his television and radio documentaries, has focused exclusively on American history without any major British dimension—not just in his familiar world of the Roosevelts, but also in the ambitious history of the United States, *America: Empire of Liberty*, which began as a 90-part BBC radio series and was later described by the Pulitzer Prize winning American historian Joseph J. Ellis as ‘the best one-volume history of the United States ever written.’¹¹

¹⁰ Reynolds, *In Command of History*, 200-203; Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, 292.

¹¹ Ellis, J. J., Review: *America, Empire of Liberty*, *The National Interest*, September/October 2009.

That three dimensionality as a scholar of the Atlantic Alliance also embraced European scholarship and issues. As Reynolds himself points out in *Island Stories*, his engagement is long running, with Brexit providing an ‘opportunity to reflect anew on some of the ideas I had previously developed in *Britannia Overruled* and *The Long Shadow*.’ While Reynolds has self-evidently influenced his own PhD students, this European engagement is also a good example of how he himself has been open in return to their influence. From the outset, beginning with Sabine Lee and including other historians writing in this volume, he welcomed international students and later collaborated with them in works such as *Transcending the Cold War*, with Kristina Spohr, illustrating that for him supervision has been a two-way conversation.¹²

Just as striking has been Reynolds’s embrace of Russian scholarship when many dismissed it as pointless and doctrinaire. This approach can be traced back to the conference he organized in Cambridge in July 1991 with leading Soviet and American scholars just as the Soviet Union was collapsing. The result—*The Allies at War: the Soviet, American and British Experience 1939–1945*, edited with the American scholar Warren F. Kimball and Soviet scholar A.O. Chubarian—was a work of pathbreaking international partnership that saw western historians taking the work of Russian historians seriously as the Soviet-era archives became available to them for the first time. It was, ironically, one of the few enduring examples of what the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, called ‘a common European home, for a new way of thinking.’ Certainly, it became a productive seam for Reynolds himself, who went on to edit *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin’s Wartime*

¹² Reynolds, *Island Stories*, 243; Reynolds, D., and Spohr, K., eds., *Transcending the Cold War: Summits, Statecraft, and the Dissolution of Bipolarity in Europe, 1970–1990* (Oxford: OUP, 2016).

Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt with the Russian scholar Vladimir Pechatnov. That book, wrote the editors, was ‘the result of lengthy research, conducted in a spirit of genuine international collaboration.’ It was as much a credo of Reynolds’s approach to history as it was a statement of fact.¹³

That sense of partnership and widening the discourse is something that Reynolds has taken seriously as a leader of the discipline of international history, including as a thoughtful interlocutor with its detractors. As far back as the late 1980s, he had shown an interest in the future of the discipline itself, establishing the international history research seminar at Cambridge, which coalesced around his own PhD students and those of his colleague Zara Steiner. More broadly, this same cohort engaged with the international historians at the London School of Economics, initially under the influence of Donald Cameron Watt—a figure whom Reynolds cites, along with Steiner and Christopher Thorne, as formative on his ‘own intellectual development as a young historian.’¹⁴

More recently Reynolds was a participant in the AHRC-funded Practice of International History in the 21st Century Network (PIH21) that addressed how ‘the philosophical and methodological assumptions that underpin the practice of international

¹³ Reynolds, D., Kimball, W. F., and Chubarian, A. O., eds., *Allies at War: The Soviet, American, and British Experience, 1939-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1994); Joannon, P., “The Cathedral and the Dacha: De Gaulle’s and Gorbachev’s Visions of a Broader Europe,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1991): 51; Reynolds, D., and Pachatnov, V., eds., *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin’s Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), xv.

¹⁴ Reynolds, D., ‘International History, the Cultural Turn and the Diplomatic Twitch’, *Cultural & Social History*, Vol.3, No.1, (2006) 75-91, 87.

history have been challenged in fundamental ways over the past two decades.’ The cultural turn, transnationalist approaches, and global history have all in their different ways both invigorated and threatened the practice of international history. Reynolds was one of the earliest international historians to rise to the challenge of defending international history as a discipline while also pointing to opportunities for synergy and collaboration.¹⁵

His rigorous but pluralistic approach was on display in his much-cited 2006 article, ‘International History, the Cultural Turn and the Diplomatic Twitch’, published in *Cultural & Social History*. The choice of venue—the ‘debate forum’ of a new journal published by the Social History Society—was significant because it showed a willingness to play away from home. His objective was to deliver ‘some personal reflections’ on the “cultural turn”, then ‘on the way to the cultural history of everything’, as Peter Burke quipped, from a historian ‘interested in reflecting conceptually about the practice of history and convinced of the need to build bridges within our fragmented discipline.’ Reynolds sketched the ‘number of ways in which international history has been enriched by the cultural turn’, not least in ‘opening up new areas of research’ and ‘correcting a tendency towards documentary positivism.’ But he also gave a forceful defence of how ‘it would be profoundly unfortunate if international historians lost their traditional concern with top-level decision-making.’

‘What matters are critical moments of decision’, he wrote:

Historians are searching for individual agents and causal links in a way that may seem old-fashioned but is clearly of enormous historical importance and which arouses

¹⁵ Practice of International History in the 21st Century Network, University of Glasgow:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/historyresearch/researchprojects/thepracticeofinternationalhistoryinthe21stcenturynetwork/>

interest far beyond the confines of academia. In other words, despite the welcome new interest in the cultural dimensions of international relations, traditional questions about states, power and policy still matter, especially at the interface between peace and war.

It was the reason why, he concluded, ‘future generations will keep twitching back to issues of war, peace and decision-making long after our current culture wars have turned into history.’¹⁶

The article was a fine example of the multifaceted role that Reynolds has played over the course of more than forty years in academic life. His work, not least *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance* and *In Command of History*, stands as ground-breaking in its own right, influencing both his contemporaries and the scholars who followed in profound and demonstrable ways. But his impact has been about more than just writing good history; it has shaped his profession and helped define the discipline of international history itself. One straightforward manifestation of that influence is this special edition of *Diplomacy & Statecraft* in which a number of his former research students reflect on the influence of his ideas in the study of contemporary international history.

Sabine Lee and Martin Theaker both engage with the question of Anglo-American nuclear relations, but from different perspectives. Lee’s focus is on the wartime development of the Atomic Bomb, while Theaker looks at the post-war development of the independent British nuclear programme, focusing on its civilian applications, during the era when the McMahon Act of 1946, which blocked almost all nuclear cooperation with the United States, was in force.

¹⁶ Reynolds, ‘International History, the Cultural Turn and the Diplomatic Twitch’, 75-91.

Lee's article considers what might be termed the purest case of Reynolds' concept of "competitive cooperation" in action. Viewed through this lens she weighs the significance of the British contribution to the wartime success of the Manhattan Project. The word "success" is used here in the narrow sense of overcoming the huge scientific, technical and engineering challenges involved in manufacturing an atom bomb for use against Japan before the end of the war. Beginning with the seminal Frisch-Peierls memorandum of March 1940 which established the theoretical feasibility of building an atom bomb, she goes on to weigh the significance of the subsequent British contributions, both through the Maud Committee report of 1941, and the pooling of British efforts with the US via the despatch of the UK scientific mission to Washington, known as the British Mission on the Hill, in the wake of the August 1943 Quebec agreement.

As David Reynolds has argued, the British decision to pursue nuclear weapons development was 'framed in terms of cost versus credibility' within a 'complex matrix of identity and security'.¹⁷ In other words, Ernest Bevin's famous post-war observation that he wanted the bomb with the "bloody" Union Jack on top, tells us much about the considerations of international prestige and great power status which lay behind the economic and political decisions over its development in London.

While Britain had a lead in the field during 1941, Churchill was reluctant to pursue full blown cooperation with the United States. Lee describes Churchill's reluctance to pool efforts with the US in late 1941 after the Maud Cttee report as a grave error. As the US programme developed during 1942, the position reversed, and Churchill's appeals to pool Anglo-American efforts were rebuffed in Washington. It was only through personal

¹⁷ Reynolds, D., *Island Stories. Britain and Its History in the Age of Brexit* (London: William Collins 2019), 88-9.

diplomacy with Roosevelt at the Quebec conference in August 1943 that Churchill was able to overcome this reluctance and secure British entry into a joint programme. But he did so on highly unequal terms.

How then to compare the British and US contributions to the joint Manhattan Project? The US effort was huge and the British mission small. But crucially, the personnel provided by the British were of the highest quality. Leslie Groves, who headed the Manhattan Project, called British research contribution 'substantial' and British scientists' role 'invaluable'. Key members of the British mission led research groups at Los Alamos.

Lee concludes therefore that 'taking both the small size of the British contingent on the Hill as well as the significance of individual roles and achievements, one has to come to two conclusions:

- i) the United States would have achieved their target of producing a nuclear weapon ahead of the German enemy, with or without British support;
- ii) the impact of the group of scientists from Britain who participated in the Manhattan Project was far greater than the numbers might suggest.'

Overall, while the project was clearly dominated by the United States without British participation, the timescale for the delivery of a functioning weapon may well have been longer, and the weapon might not have been ready for operational use in August 1945. Lee ends, though, by putting the broader considerations of economic might, political status and international prestige into a more specific context. 'For the majority of scientists and others working with Americans', she writes, 'the main concern was that the project would be a success – it was of little consequence 'whose' success it would be.'

Both Lee and Theaker quote David Reynolds's judgement in his 1982 work *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, to the effect that British attitudes towards the United States during the interwar years could best be summarized as 'a blend of doubt, hope

and fear.’¹⁸ Both see it as an equally apt framework in which to understand Anglo-American wartime and post-war nuclear relations. With this framework in mind, Theaker shows how London’s early postwar civil nuclear relations with Washington quickly evolved from a state of tenuous cooperation to one of outright competition.

With Britain forging ahead with its own nuclear programme in the post-McMahon Act era, several paradoxes quickly emerged. Firstly, there was the paradox of specialness: on the one hand, Britain was considered too unreliable to enjoy American cooperation; on the other, Britain was too poor to abandon the pursuit of such cooperation. Secondly, there emerged what Theaker terms the ‘string and sealing wax’ approach which quickly became synonymous with British ingenuity. In other words, a virtue was made of economic necessity. Trying to find solutions to complex problems at the lowest cost became a sort of national nuclear virtue: an attitude to be treasured as a source of pride against more profligate American methods.

Britain’s position in pursuing its civilian nuclear programme was made even more difficult by the challenges of limited qualified manpower and the international demand for talent. Put simply, Civil Service pay scales choked nuclear recruitment streams, with junior Scientific Officers often earning 30% less than they might make in comparable private sector posts. This was coupled with a transatlantic brain-drain which remained problematic for British science in general throughout this period.

On the positive side of the ledger, by pursuing their nuclear programme on a shoestring, the British did provide a template for other budget-conscious nations which sought basic nuclear capabilities. The plants the British developed were simple but

¹⁸ Reynolds, D., *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-41: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 10-15.

functional, and their nuclear processes were cost-effective. In short, the British could provide everything which a potential customer looking for an entry point into the civilian nuclear game might wish to buy.

But there was also a crucial Anglo-American difference over the emerging market for civilian nuclear technology. While Britain preferred to use established commercial methods to sell civilian nuclear technology for the export market without the intrusion of any complicating political factors, the United States wanted to create a new international atomic order which it would head and dominate. Theaker notes that although no US President ever forbade London from pursuing a civil nuclear programme, by dominating the international Uranium market, they certainly conspired to create a nuclear fuel-poor environment which greatly limited Britain's technical options.

With the United States as the ongoing benchmark for the British programme throughout the immediate post-war decade, a process of constant comparison forced Britain's atomic administrators to define their own nuclear identity. As a result, both of their material weakness but also of their belief in their superior efficiency and integrity, the British forged an institutional nuclear culture, Theaker argues, that was becoming independent from that of their former partner. From this observation, Theaker draws a broader conclusion to the effect that whereas notions of extending London's supremacy by harnessing US power enjoyed popularity in political corridors, in the civil atomic world the position was quite different. British industrialists and nuclear engineers instead wanted the United States to remain isolated not only for reasons of commercial competition, but also because of their belief that the global nuclear marketplace should be developed on an efficient, technically sound basis. To this extent, in the civilian nuclear field, at least on an institutional level, the British came to prioritise different values than did their American peers. Competition and enforced independence thus spawned differing Anglo-American nuclear cultures.

It is to this question of differing Anglo-American cultures that Simon Ball addresses his attention in his piece considering the contrast and convergence in British and American responses to political assassination. In contrast to the nuclear field, the starting point here was not one of similar priorities or past cooperation. Looking at the period between the late 1960s and the mid 1980s, Ball argues that the US and UK began with very different cultures of assassination, but that the 1980s proved to be a period of structural convergence driven by practical collaboration to combat international assassination threats.

Ball puts three main arguments. Firstly, that assassination was central to US but not to British political culture. This difference was partly due to a high-profile series of murders in the United States in the 1960s: John F. Kennedy in 1963, Martin Luther King in April 1968 and Bobby Kennedy in June 1968. This point reflects David Reynolds's observation that these murders had an almost 'alchemical' effect on US political culture.¹⁹

Secondly, Ball argues that the history of assassination demonstrates the different international trajectories of Britain and the United States by the 1980s. Put simply, Britain had retreated from its global role to become principally a European power whereas the United States had retained its global position. To this extent, US foreign policy 'happened in the world', whereas that of Britain was more European-focused. This did not, though, insulate Britain from all global threats, and it is noteworthy that although the PIRA campaigns constituted the greatest domestic terror, and hence assassination threat, Britain also experienced a number of assassinations, or attempted assassinations, which were Middle Eastern in origin.

Thirdly, Ball argues more broadly that the Anglo-American response to assassination constructed a new social reality, in a fashion that mere diplomacy could never achieve. To

¹⁹ Reynolds, *America, Empire of Liberty: A New History of the United States*, 376-7.

demonstrate this, he moves through a discussion of the Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy assassinations, to the Church Cttee investigation into CIA activities, before discussing assassination attempts of a Middle East origin. These included operations mounted by Black September, such as the attempt on the life of Jordanian Ambassador Zeid Rifai, in London, in December 1971, and the various operations mounted by the Palestinian splinter group led by Abu Nidal.

Indeed, it was the activities of Abu Nidal which eventually forced the British government to change tack in 1978 and stop treating assassinations as isolated incidents. In particular, the assassination of the PLO's moderate representative in London, Said Hammami, by Abu Nidal at the behest of the then Iraqi Vice-President, Saddam Hussein, forced a rethink in what had been up to that date the rather lax and ad hoc British security arrangements. The Said Hammami assassination was linked to Abu Nidal's attempt on the life of the Israeli Ambassador, Shlomo Argov in London in June 1982, which triggered the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The link was confirmed by the US authorities, which passed intelligence to Britain to the effect that this operation had also been organised at the behest of Saddam Hussein, who by this time was President of Iraq.

Ball also considers Libyan terrorism, noting the assassinations in London of the Libyan dissidents and enemies of the Qaddafi regime, Mustafa Ramadan and Mahmoud Nafa, in 1980. These attacks led to the head of the Libyan People's Bureau (or Embassy) in London, Musa Kusa, who declared his public support for them, being declared persona non grata in June 1980.

In terms of the protection of politicians and diplomats, it took the attempted assassination of Margaret Thatcher by the PIRA in October 1984 to bring the rather more lax UK practices into line with the tougher regime in place in the US. The Brighton bombing also brought about much closer UK-USA cooperation over the PIRA threat. Up to that point the

UK had tended to take a much more relaxed approach to the individual security of senior politicians and diplomats.

Ball concludes that ‘when it came to assassination, the United States and Britain were culturally dissimilar. The assassination wave of the 1970s and 1980s created a new cultural affinity between the United States and Great Britain.’ In the security field, therefore, Britain was only ‘Americanized’ in the 1980s, and not before.

If Ball considers a facet of the Anglo-American relationship which witnessed convergence over time, Andrew Scott in his contribution looks at a period in which relations are widely assumed to have diverged. The Heath-Nixon years of the early 1970s witnessed an unusual combination of exceptional circumstances, with Britain joining the EEC, the United States convulsed by the withdrawal from Vietnam and Watergate and the Cold War entering a new phase of triangular diplomacy and détente. As Scott notes, against this backdrop, many historians have followed the lead of Henry Kissinger in his memoirs, who portrayed Prime Minister Edward Heath as so intent on proving his European credentials that he was willing to sacrifice the special relationship to achieve his ends. To this extent, the Heath years have been portrayed as an historical anomaly in which the traditional pattern of close cooperation was replaced by a deliberate distancing from the British side.

Scott makes two main counter arguments to this claim. The first is that the Heath government was by no means an anomaly in pursuing EEC membership. That process had been instigated a decade earlier under Macmillan and was continued, albeit after initial reluctance, by the Wilson government. Secondly, he argues, to a large extent the difficulties in the relationship in the early 1970s originated in Washington not London. Kissinger’s and Nixon’s modus operandi, which involved excessive secrecy, meant that the British were often kept in the dark until the last minute about key decisions which affected their interests. The 35 minutes notice provided to London about Nixon’s announcement of the ‘opening to

China' in 1971 was a case in point. Britain was itself in the process of upgrading its own relations with communist China and Heath was upstaged in his attempts to foster a new relationship with Beijing by Nixon's dramatic announcement.

As regards Britain's turn to Europe, taking the argument a stage further, Scott asserts that if any party had changed its established position, it was the United States under the Nixon administration, which proved much more wary than its predecessors about the implications of Britain joining the EEC. Kissinger's exasperation about the British response to his unilateral announcement of a "Year of Europe", coupled with his search for sanctions which might punish the British for their unsatisfactory performance as an ally, would have been unthinkable under any previous administration.

Scott's work stands alongside that of other revisionist historians, such as Alex Spelling and Thomas Robb, who have also challenged in different ways the notion of the Europhile Heath single-handedly undermining the special relationship.²⁰ But while the view he presents of the place of the early 1970s in the broader sweep of Anglo-American relations is one of continuity he concludes with an eye to the future suggesting larger changes might be on the way: 'Now that Britain has left [the EU], with policy-makers seeking a global role elsewhere, it's likely that Anglo-American relations will both find a new impetus in London, but also lose some of their value in Washington.'

In his contribution considering US-Soviet strategic arms limitation during the 1970s, James Cameron inverts David Reynolds's competitive cooperation framework, and dubs the

²⁰ See for example: Spelling, A., 'Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations, 1970-74: A Reappraisal', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 20/4, (2009), 638-58; Robb, T., *A Strained Partnership: US-UK Relations in the Era of Détente, 1969-77* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

relationship one of “cooperative competition”. Comparing the successful SALT I agreement of 1972, with the still born SALT II agreement of 1979, Cameron argues that ‘while SALT I achieved a temporary balance between the cooperative and competitive elements of arms control, SALT II’s demise was in large part due to the fundamental contradictions at the heart of both superpowers’ use of strategic arms limitation as an instrument of cooperative competition.’

Historians have devoted considerably more attention to SALT I than SALT II for the rather obvious reason that SALT II never came into force. But both agreements had in common the fact that they were born of both cooperative and competitive impulses. The latter element proved essential in the domestic political context since it was important to bring along a wide enough domestic constituency, including military and Congressional sceptics. Moreover, unlike the wartime Anglo-American relationship the essence of the US-Soviet relationship was competitive: hence the applicability here of the term “cooperative competition” rather than “competitive cooperation”.

Cameron explores why SALT II failed within this framework. Part of the problem was that SALT I left the harder areas of disagreement, especially new technologies such as Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles (or MIRVs) to one side meaning they had to be confronted as part of SALT II. Matters were then complicated still further when the US negotiating team tried to balance the swift erosion of the MIRV lead which the US had boasted at the time of SALT I, through the introduction into the SALT equation of restrictions on future deployment of cruise missiles. But here, the Ford administration ran into domestic political difficulties, confronting the Pentagon’s unwillingness to sign up to a specific limit on the deployment of weapons which were not yet in existence and hence could not be deployed.

Still a further complication lay in the realm of theatre nuclear weapons. From the Soviet point of view, US missiles deployed in Europe should be part of the strategic nuclear equation since, after the failure of Khrushchev's Cuban gambit in 1962, it had no comparable theatre weapons targeted on the United States. When the US refused to entertain this trade, the modernization of Soviet theatre nuclear weapons deployed in Europe was part of the Kremlin's response. Again, domestic politics played a part here this time on the Soviet side. Brezhnev's agreement to exclude the UK and French nuclear deterrents, as well as U.S. forward-based systems, from both SALT I and II was very controversial with the Soviet leadership, arousing the ire of Defence Minister Andrei Grechko. Internally, it is probable, although not certain that Brezhnev may have authorised the deployment of the new SS-20 missile to Europe in part to placate the Soviet military. In turn, what was perceived in Washington, and in Western Europe, as the Soviet escalation through this deployment helped undermine the SALT II process.

In the end, SALT II fell victim not only to changing international circumstances, particularly the erosion of détente due to conflict in the Third World, but also to its own limitations. Cameron concludes that 'this was the fundamental truth of SALT II. The limits negotiated simply codified both sides' existing plans – and in some cases did even less than that.' So, the incentives to implement what by 1979 would have been a domestically politically very costly agreement were simply insufficient. Cooperative competition gave way to simple competition and the renewal of the Cold War in the early 1980s.

In their contribution, Andreoni, Albers and Haeussler consider a similar period, but their focus is on the development of British foreign policy following Britain's accession to the EEC. In particular, they analyse British policy towards China, the United States and the key member states of the EEC to see how far EEC membership changed London's approach. They find that contrary to the ingrained image of Britain as a reluctant and awkward member

of the EEC, Britain did play its part in the emergence of a coherent Western European voice on the international stage during this era. What was crucially lacking, however, was an overarching strategy which might have blended the different elements of British policy together and allowed London to gain the maximum benefit from its EEC membership.

The starting point for their analysis is David Reynolds's observation in his seminal study of British foreign policy, *Britannia Overruled*, to the effect that Britain's entry into the EEC was 'perhaps the most profound revolution in British foreign policy in the twentieth century'.²¹ In terms of China policy, they note that the pace and depth of change in the British case was particularly striking. Whereas, in 1967, the British possession of Hong Kong had been on the brink of civil war, with British subjects in Beijing effectively taken hostage by the PRC and its diplomatic mission being burned to the ground, by 1972, Britain was well on the way to become the PRC's chosen partner in Western Europe. The key player in further this Anglo-Chinese rapprochement was Edward Heath, who as prime minister also oversaw Britain's admission to the EEC. Heath was deeply respected by the Chinese Communist leadership. By putting strengthening bilateral relations ahead of the preservation of Britain's imperial legacy in Hong Kong, Heath put Britain at the head of the European queue in building close relations with China.

But subsequent British governments proved unable to capitalise on Heath's opening. In particular, under the Thatcher governments of the 1980s, Britain's imperial instincts resurfaced in the form of Thatcher's doomed attempt to hold on to Hong Kong. Thatcher's approach, they argue, showed how the persistence of postcolonial mindsets still resurfaced occasionally, and how they frequently compromised British foreign policy. The contrast with

²¹ Reynolds, D., *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 224.

continental states like West Germany and France was striking in this regard. Unburdened by colonial ambitions, these countries concentrated instead on promoting exports and transnational exchange and thus were better able to take advantage as Chinese economic reforms started to take place. So, the early European turn, as opposed to the imperial return in Britain's relations with China was not sustained.

In terms of the Anglo-American relationship, the authors argue that there was a gradual distancing throughout the 1970s and 1980s as a result of the UK finding more of a community of interest with its European partners over key issues. Even under Thatcher in the 1980s, the controversy over the building of the Siberian gas pipeline, which Washington wanted to subject to sanctions due to the imposition of martial law in Poland at Soviet behest, showed Britain lining up with its European allies in defence of their common economic interests. Andreoni, Albers and Haeussler share Scott's view that the Heath years were not an isolated aberration and that the English Channel by and large came to seem narrower than the Atlantic Ocean as the 1970s and 1980s progressed. But there were exceptions to this rule: Thatcher's isolated support of the US bombing raid on Libya in 1986 being a case in point.

Finally, with regard to relations with the EEC nations themselves, the authors argue that the extent of the 'Europeanization' of British foreign policy was not always appreciated by other EEC member-states, mainly because of strong and recurrent tensions in other areas of EEC politics. The British budget question, especially the antagonistic way in which the debates over it were fought, tended to overshadow other areas of developing cooperation. Bad blood shed over Britain's financial contribution to the EEC meant that London did not always gain the credit it might have accrued for the cooperative and sometimes leading role it played in other areas such as the establishment of the single market.

Despite the constructive activities of British officials, then, the inconsistent and sometimes contradictory course plotted by their political masters meant that an over-arching British European strategy was effectively stillborn during the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, in their contribution examining US-Soviet-German relations in the post-Cold War era, Kristina Spohr and Karel Pirimae examine the concept of competitive cooperation in a trilateral context. They show that while US President Bill Clinton, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Russian President Boris Yeltsin sought to create a new European order based on cooperation, trust, mutual security and open markets, the international environment dictated that competition, and rivalry, would persist. This was due in part to the post-imperial identity crisis Russia suffered in the 1990s, and in part to the aspirations of the newly created or liberated states in the former Soviet sphere which wanted to pursue NATO membership.

The authors begin by noting that Russia was given no guarantees about a freeze on NATO enlargement in the talks surrounding German reunification in 1990. Subsequent Russian claims to the contrary constituted special pleading. Nevertheless, to bind Russia into the Western-led international order from 1993 onwards, Clinton and Kohl pursued a personalised approach to building support in Russia for Western values. In essence, they concluded that it was essential to support Yeltsin to facilitate a Russian democratic transition.

But the gathering Russian economic crisis by 1993 left Yeltsin in desperate need of dollars to prop up his country. In the short term, his entreaties were answered when the G7 offered Russia a support package which enabled Yeltsin to win a domestic referendum on his economic reform plans in April 1993. But, in the wake of this deal, Yeltsin's illiberal turn at home, coupled with the success of nationalist parties (such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democrats) in the Duma elections underlined that the political situation in Russia remained fragile and chaotic. The reliance of the US and German leaders on Yeltsin as the lynchpin of their relationship with Russia was therefore a risky and precarious strategy.

Clinton and Kohl subsequently tried to keep Yeltsin afloat economically and politically with repeated cash injections and political victories, such as Russia's admission to the World Trade Organisation in 1995 and the G8 in 1997. But they also opened the door to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joining NATO which was a bitter pill for Yeltsin to swallow. Clinton proved particularly receptive to appeals from the central European states for NATO membership due to their persistent fears of Russia.

In the end, Kohl and Clinton's attempt to prop up Yeltsin as the personal guarantor of Russia's tilt to the West was a failure. Under his successor, Vladimir Putin, Russian suspicions reasserted themselves. Despite the brief cooperative interlude in the 1990s, competition and conflict re-emerged and provided the dominant refrain of the relationship from the 2010s onwards.

In sum, then, the contributions to this special issue show how David Reynolds's work has influenced and shaped historical research in diverse aspects of contemporary international history, which go well beyond the original Anglo-American wartime framework of which he wrote at the outset of his career. The contributors to this volume are happy to acknowledge, to paraphrase the words of Jack Plumb, that they have moved down the broad avenues David Reynolds drove for them through history's confusion and complexity.