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A Tale of Three Cities: The Cold War Tripartite Relationship between
Washington, London, and Paris, 1946-1972

HIST 4460

Dr. Rohde

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Following the Second World War, as the United States emerged victorious alongside the Soviet Union, the American government reassessed foreign relations to determine friends and foes. The subsequent bipolar power struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States compelled the world's nations to identify with either the Soviets or the Americans. In Europe, the divide occurred geographically, pitting the East against the West. In the West, France and the United Kingdom surfaced as the region's most influential representatives of the American camp. The onset of the Cold War forced the United States to adapt its preexisting wartime relationships with Britain and France for the new demands of American Cold War strategy.

American Cold War strategy required allies who safeguarded U.S. interests abroad. Britain and France were optimal choices for this requirement. The United Kingdom held the key to overseas nuclear and military endeavors while France championed itself as the leader of an integrated Europe. Together, France and Britain upheld U.S. containment policy but did not care to share the spotlight as America's sidekick. On one hand, the United Kingdom felt it was America's natural partner and would not accept anything short of preferential treatment. On the other hand, France desired to establish itself as an independent, prominent power and refused to concede second place to Britain. The United States attempted to appease both governments without offending either. Through foreign policy the United States awarded preferential status to the British meanwhile reassuring the French of their value to preserving Western superiority. This careful balance of power between the United Kingdom and France, however, sometimes created unexpected conflicts that offset the American agenda and affected policymaking throughout the duration of the Cold War. The United States and Britain prioritized each other, and the enduring strength of the special relationship ultimately weakened the French relationship with both countries. Consequently, these Cold War relationships have had a lasting impact on international relations. By exploring the Anglo-

American and Franco-American relationships from the Second World War through 1972, when Britain joined the European Community (EC), we will evaluate the relationships in the contexts of European integration; collective defense, nuclear cooperation, and intelligence sharing; and the test of friendship through international conflicts.

Rebuilding Europe

Prior to the Cold War, the United States shared a long history with France and the United Kingdom characterized by both discord and harmony within the scope of foreign relations. The World Wars tested the American relationship with both countries. U.S. foreign relations during the Second World War solidified future Anglo-American cooperation and built the foundation for improved policies toward France. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill foresaw a continuation of the Anglo-American “special relationship” beyond the Second World War. He described the special relationship as a “fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples,” including the British Commonwealth and Empire, which entailed “mutual security” through intelligence sharing and joint military efforts.¹ The American relationship with France was less certain after the United States had recognized the Vichy government and regarded the Free French, under General Charles de Gaulle, with skepticism. Additionally, France flirted with Eastern rapprochement for many years. French leaders viewed Cold War relations between the United States and Soviet Russia as “a transient state of affairs” and believed “that a more independent Europe could alleviate the East-West divide in the long run.”² France considered working to draw back the Iron Curtain, but increased Soviet belligerence of Eastern European nations and policy toward

¹ Winston Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace” (speech), March 5, 1946, transcript and RealAudio, 55:32, History Out Loud, <http://www.hpol.org/churchill>.

² Frédéric Bozo, “France, ‘Gaullism,’ and the Cold War,” in *Crises and Détente*, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 163, DOI: 10.1017/CHOL9780521837200.009.

Germany convinced French leaders to pursue a relationship with the West. Paris concluded that “solving the German problem” entailed “rebuilding West Germany on Western terms and establishing a separate West German democratic state closely integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.”³ Before serious American collaboration with Britain and France could occur, however, Europe would have to overcome the devastation caused by the Second World War.

Britain and Europe entered a period of economic recovery after the Second World War, although historians have determined that the dismal view of the postwar European economy has been exaggerated.⁴ The United States was invested in the economic recovery of its Western allies because strong anti-Communist nations were essential components of Soviet containment.⁵ With Britain, the United States first loaned \$3.75 billion in 1946 after the Truman administration discontinued its wartime Lend-Lease aid. The Anglo-American loan allowed the United Kingdom to more easily transition back to a peacetime economy and had the added bonus of “restor[ing] sterling to convertibility,” reviving the value of Britain’s struggling currency in the global market.⁶ Beginning in 1947, the Marshall Plan affected European countries aiming to rebuild their economies in the wake of the Second World War. In order to receive American aid, the Marshall Plan necessitated that nations practice mutually beneficial economic policies toward attaining economic growth and improved foreign and cooperative trade.⁷ The overarching purpose of the Marshall Plan in the context of American Cold War strategy was “the restoration or maintenance in European countries of

³ Ibid., 161.

⁴ William I. Hitchcock, “The Marshall Plan and the Creation of the West,” in *Origins*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 159, DOI: 10.1017/CHOL9780521837194.009.

⁵ John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 49.

⁶ Donald Markwell, “Anglo-American Cooperation for Internationalism: Keynes’s Second World War Vision for a Post-war World,” in *John Maynard Keynes and International Relations: Economic Paths to War and Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 231-233.

⁷ Hitchcock, “The Marshall Plan,” 158-159.

principles of individual liberty, free institutions, and genuine independence,” promoted through economic recovery.⁸

The United States divided Marshall aid unevenly amongst participant countries, and each nation produced different results.⁹ America allocated the greatest portion of aid to the United Kingdom in the amount of \$2.8 billion. By this time, the British economy was already quite healthy, and thus “Marshall aid amounted to no more than 2 percent of GNP overall.”¹⁰ France was in far greater need of Marshall aid than Britain, and yet the former received less. Aside from the Second World War’s physically destructive effects, France entered the Cold War with “an urgent political need for aid, as it was... facing a Communist challenge from within.”¹¹ Still, the United States allotted less Marshall aid to the French, but with the money it did receive, France produced successful outcomes such as debt relief and industrial expansion. In the first year alone, Marshall aid accounted for 6.5% of France’s GNP.¹² French accomplishments under the Marshall Plan positioned the reconstructing nation as a frontrunner to leading European integration; yet from an early point in the Cold War, the United States set the precedent of regarding France as secondary to the United Kingdom despite France’s demonstration that it could be a valuable partner in pioneering the new and improved Europe.

The Schuman Plan of 1950 tested America’s juggling act of Britain and France. French leaders Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to consolidate German and French coal and steel production. The institution would be supervised by a supranational authority and required participating

⁸ Foreign Assistance Act of 1948, Public Law 472, 80th Cong., 2d sess. (April 3, 1948), 102 Stat. 2202.

⁹ Hitchcock, “Marshall Plan,” 160.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 161-162.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹² *Ibid.*, 160-161.

countries to surrender a degree of sovereignty. Key components of the ECSC included the availability of “coal and steel... to member countries on equal terms” and “common trading practices with outside countries.”¹³ The United Kingdom, although invited to join the ECSC, rejected membership for reasons of its own national interest. First, British leaders resented the nature of the offer as they were not given first notice and were eventually presented with a French ultimatum to join.¹⁴ Second, London disliked the thought of surrendering any degree of sovereignty to an organization based on federalism.¹⁵ Third, the United Kingdom’s economic policies heavily relied on continuing relations with the British Empire and Commonwealth, along with building a transatlantic economic relationship with America.¹⁶ The United States, however, favored the ECSC because it embodied containment of the East through democratic unification of the West; America saw the ECSC as the predecessor to eventual European unity.¹⁷ France headed European unity while Britain clung to its empire, Commonwealth, and the special relationship with the United States. As European integration progressed and the ECSC evolved into the European Economic Community (EEC), America was torn between appeasing its British friends and supporting French leadership of Europe.

As French and British national interests continued to clash, the United States encouraged Britain to align more closely with Europe so that maintaining the Anglo-American special relationship could become compatible with European integration and the benefits integration offered to America. European integration extended American ideals of federalism, “political and economic rational efficiency,” and containment of Germany and

¹³ Christopher Lord, *Absent at the Creation: Britain and the Formation of the European Community, 1950-2* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1996), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷ John W. Young, “Churchill's 'No' to Europe: The 'Rejection' of European Union by Churchill's Post-War Government, 1951-1952,” *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 4 (1985), 926.

the Eastern threat.¹⁸ Britain inched closer toward Europe with the projected European Free Trade Area (EFTA) and applications of full EEC membership. In each of these circumstances, the United Kingdom stipulated that it was only interested in joining Europe on its own terms. France vetoed “Britain’s admission to the Common Market [which] signaled... the end of America’s easy predominance in Western Europe.”¹⁹ The United States could no longer feign support for Britain and its conditionalities – economically, the EEC was too important to American Cold War strategy for the United States to continue placating British attachment to its sovereignty and the Commonwealth.²⁰ In the economic context of the Cold War, the United States ultimately sided with the French after Britain failed to become a team player. This was the only context, however, in which the Franco-American relationship prevailed over the Anglo-American special relationship. Still, previous American preferential treatment of the British over the French negatively impacted U.S. interests in European integration and strained the U.S. relationship with France.

Collective Defense, Nuclear Cooperation, and Intelligence Sharing

Western Europe’s future depended not only on economic security but through collective defense as well. In 1949, twelve Western nations, including the United States, Britain, and France, signed the North Atlantic Treaty which established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The treaty, “a collective security pact,” required mutual defense, in whatever manner a country deemed necessary, amongst member nations in response to outside attack.²¹ NATO became an American Cold War tool in extending U.S.

¹⁸ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 221.

¹⁹ Frank Costigliola, “The Failed Design: Kennedy, De Gaulle, and the Struggle for Europe,” *Diplomatic History* 8, no. 3 (1984), 228.

²⁰ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 222.

²¹ Michael Creswell, *A Question of Balance: How France and the United States Created Cold War Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 11-12.

presence in Europe. In December, member nations devised the military strategy for containment and reaction against possible Eastern attack. They concluded that “the European states would provide the ground forces and the United States would contribute an ‘atomic shield’: overwhelming air power and the ability to retaliate massively with atomic weapons.”²² French leaders, however, grew concerned that an increasing American presence in Europe posed irrefutable benefits to Western nations. Instead, they feared a possible American quest for hegemony. When the United States proposed the formation of the European Defence Community (EDC), “a U.S.-dominated European armed force”²³ and even issued a joint Anglo-American ultimatum for ratification of the EDC, France rejected the treaty.²⁴ French rejection of the EDC infuriated Washington. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called for America “to reappraise its foreign policies [toward France] and to adjust them to the resultant situation.”²⁵ In a Policy Planning Staff (PPS) paper prepared by Leon W. Fuller, the United States formulated its subsequent policy toward Europe under two objectives:

- (1) the strengthening of the *deterrent* effectiveness of the NATO military establishment to a maximum degree (which would also increase its potential effectiveness if war did come), and (2) halting any further trend to the disintegration of the free European community and promoting its economic, political and psychological strength through unity within itself and through closer ties with the extra-continental NATO powers (UK, US, Canada).²⁶

²² Ibid., 12.

²³ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 90-91.

²⁴ Creswell, *A Question of Balance*, 151-152.

²⁵ United States Dept. of State, “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France,” 30 August 1954, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. V, 1115.

²⁶ United States Dept. of State, “US Policy Toward Europe – Post-EDC,” 10 September 1954, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. V, 1173.

As depicted in these objectives, American authorities still viewed a militarily integrated Europe as an essential component of containment but believed that Europe might fail if not guided by more progressive powers such as Britain. In meeting these objectives, Fuller argued that the United States should take a gradual approach in its policies toward France and Britain. Fuller recognized the strengths of America's European allies but suggested they also had inherent weaknesses through which they could be puppeteered. Fuller described "the obvious weakness and incapacity of France" and the fragile nature of Franco-American relations.²⁷ He believed that the United States could "compel [France]" into a "reappraisal of [its] position and policies," fearing that without strong French backing European unity might not succeed.²⁸ Washington's attitude toward Paris suggested that the United States required an alignment of its own policies with French policies, and American government officials believed they could manipulate the French into serving U.S. interests. Toward the United Kingdom, Fuller suggested that the United States respectfully "employ [its] diplomatic resources to induce Britain to work closely with her continental allies" without enacting outright "pressure."²⁹ The United States revered British foreign policy but still wanted to distort it to favor American ambitions. These differing approaches to France and Britain highlight the contrast in the American relationships with each respective nation – the United States saw the United Kingdom as its partner and near-equal while it took a condescending view toward France.

The United States hoped to expand NATO into Europe's nuclear arena. In the early 1960s, the American government proposed the creation of a multilateral force (MLF) for Western Europe. In an attempt to cautiously "satisfy Germany's nuclear aspirations"³⁰ and

²⁷ Ibid., 1171.

²⁸ Ibid., 1175.

²⁹ Ibid., 1176.

³⁰ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 129.

consolidate European nuclear resources, the MLF entailed the U.S. “providing the European NATO states with a fleet of surface vessels with armed... missiles” manned by “crews of mixed nationalities.”³¹ The MLF embodied “economic and strategic rationality” with regard to containment strategy.³² Above all, the MLF offered participating European nations the “illusion” of nuclear control when, in reality, America was the only party with absolute authority.³³ By offering Europe the apparition of autonomy, the United States ventured to solidify an MLF presence on the continent that Americans would ultimately direct. The United Kingdom favored the MLF because final decisions rested in Washington’s hands; Britain distrusted its continental neighbors, and London demanded that the American veto on all MLF actions be upheld.³⁴ Aside from anticipating the MLF would complement its own nuclear program, the United Kingdom so deeply valued the special relationship with the United States that it was willing to sacrifice nuclear sovereignty. France, however, felt differently. France desired national, instead of supranational, nuclear forces which left Germany without nuclear capabilities. French President Charles de Gaulle wished to contain Germany through European integration in the economic arena, not in the nuclear arena. Additionally, Paris resented London for clinging to Washington yet again, this time in the context of the MLF. De Gaulle claimed that “London would ‘always be too intimately tied up with the Americans,’” and refused to share power with the United Kingdom.³⁵ To France, granting Britain any control over European integration meant granting the United States that same control. The French push for its own independent nuclear program in turn “challenged

³¹ Sean Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 158.

³² Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 175.

³³ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, 158.

³⁴ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 176.

³⁵ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 130.

Washington's centralized control of the West's nuclear deterrent."³⁶ During MLF negotiations, Franco-American relations came to a deadlock with the British stuck in the middle. The project would fail due to French frustration and incompatibility with the special partners.

The United States not only sought to strengthen its nuclear presence in continental Europe but the United Kingdom in particular. Britain's position as America's partner in the special relationship made it the optimal choice for American nuclear programs abroad. As America developed its postwar relationship with Britain, questions of nuclear cooperation arose. The United States took a cautionary approach immediately following the Second World War with the 1946 McMahon Act which forbade Americans from "passing atomic information to a foreign state."³⁷ As later outlined in a 1951 document, however, the Policy Planning Staff viewed the United Kingdom as more than an ideological ally in "maintaining the leadership of the free world" – the United States, the PPS noted, coveted "the use of British bases" and aimed "to make the most effective and efficient use of [U.S. and U.K.] total capabilities."³⁸ At the time these words strictly implied pooling military resources, but in the same report, the PPS acknowledged that Britain would likely try to align its own atomic energy program closer to the American program. The PPS recommended that the United States would have to "assure that the U.S. and the U.K. programs [were] complementary and also that the U.K. [had] available adequate information to permit judgments comparable to [America's] own" in terms of strategy.³⁹ Washington made no concessions of nuclear secrets but suggested that it was open to the possibility of future cooperation with London.

³⁶ Ibid., 130.

³⁷ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, 17.

³⁸ United States Dept. of State, "Outline for Discussion at JCS Meeting November 21, 1951," 20 November 1951, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, vol. IV, 981.

³⁹ Ibid., 983.

The United States continued to loosen its restraints on nuclear information. In 1958, Congress repealed the McMahon Act and amended the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 in order to allow the president “to give restricted data on atomic weapons only to those countries (like Britain) that had made ‘substantial progress’ in the nuclear field in order to improve their atomic weapons design, development and fabrication capabilities” as long as it did not threaten national security.⁴⁰ The United Kingdom was the only nation that met these vague requirements. The special partners then extended their nuclear relationship through the Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) which formalized and solidified nuclear collaboration of research and development to the present day.⁴¹ The United States at no point awarded this advantage to France. Washington limited its nuclear approach to Paris while granting London every privilege it could afford.

The MDA paved the way for further nuclear cooperation between the United States and Britain. By 1958, the United Kingdom’s own nuclear program was failing, and in 1960, Eisenhower authorized the sale of Skybolt, an American air-launched missile, to Britain as a replacement for its faltering Blue Steel and Blue Streak. In exchange, the United Kingdom allowed the United States “to build a base for Polaris in Scotland and an early-warning radar system” in northern England.⁴² Polaris, an American submarine-launched missile, became the focal point of discussion during the 1962 Nassau summit in which U.S. President John F. Kennedy and U.K. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan met after the American cancellation of the Skybolt project. Macmillan found Polaris a promising investment and convinced Kennedy to negotiate a deal. The prime minister advocated Britain’s worth as a nuclear ally to the United States and argued that the “loss of Britain’s status as a credible, independent ally

⁴⁰ John Baylis, “The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement: The Search for Nuclear Interdependence,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 3 (2008), 445.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁴² Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, 157.

could not benefit” America.⁴³ By promoting Anglo-American nuclear interdependence so strongly, Macmillan exacerbated the rift between the United Kingdom and France during European integration negotiations. De Gaulle had not been invited to the Nassau dealings; however, Kennedy also offered the sale of Polaris to France in an attempt to smooth relations not only between Britain and France but between France and the United States. De Gaulle interpreted the offer as a worthless insult since “France had neither the warheads nor the submarines required for the Polaris missile.”⁴⁴ The French president also rebuked the offer as an American effort to further its strongholds in Europe.⁴⁵ Nuclear negotiations between the United Kingdom and the United States were sometimes rocky but resulted in a continuation of the Anglo-American special relationship and further alienation of France.

Intelligence sharing further solidified the Anglo-American special relationship. The United States and the United Kingdom shared a history of intelligence cooperation prior to the Cold War; however, this aspect of the special relationship was not formalized until 1947 under the UKUSA agreement. The UKUSA agreement linked American, British, Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian communications and signals intelligence organizations. Of particular importance was the working relationship between Britain’s Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and America’s National Security Agency (NSA). Together, the two intelligence organizations closely monitored national and international activities that threatened British and American Cold War interests.⁴⁶ This close monitoring of nations included those of continental Europe which was supposedly France’s sphere of

⁴³ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 173-174.

⁴⁴ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 132.

⁴⁵ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 175.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 168-169.

influence.⁴⁷ During the 1946 negotiations of the UKUSA agreement, a top secret document detailed the guidelines for intelligence interactions with “third parties” meaning “all individuals or authorities other than those of the United States, the British Empire, and the British Dominions.”⁴⁸ Members of the UKUSA intelligence network agreed to maintain the network’s secrecy from third parties. When intelligence coordination was required with third parties, all UKUSA nations had to consent to such consultation with the guarantee that any actions taken would not compromise the group’s disguise.⁴⁹ Completely unbeknownst to France, the United States and Britain grew very close through the intelligence sharing component of the special relationship. The UKUSA secret affair provided the Americans and British with yet another reason to prioritize each other over the French.

International Conflicts and Tests of Friendship

In 1956, the United Kingdom and France double-crossed America by executing military action against Egypt after Egyptian leader Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal owned jointly by the British and French. The United States reacted by advising the British and French to pursue a diplomatic settlement with Egypt. The Eisenhower administration wished “to keep the Third World open to Western, particularly American, influence... and protect the huge stakes [in the Middle East] of American oil companies and minimize Arab resentment of Western help to Israel” who became another aggressor of Egypt.⁵⁰ Washington feared that British, French, and Israeli military action against Egypt would result in colonial wars and Soviet takeover of the Middle East. However, Britain and France, unbeknownst to

⁴⁷ William Wallace and Christopher Phillips, “Reassessing the Special Relationship,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2009), 273.

⁴⁸ National Security Agency, “British-U.S. Communication Intelligence Agreement,” 5 March 1946, http://www.nsa.gov/public_info/_files/ukusa/agreement_outline_5mar46.pdf, 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁰ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 113.

the United States, issued an ultimatum to Nasser to withdraw his troops from the canal and proceeded to bomb Egypt after Nasser refused.⁵¹ President Eisenhower viewed British and French actions as a violation of the Tripartite Declaration of 1950.⁵² He was also disheartened by the British betrayal of the Anglo-American relationship. Despite British decision-making during the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower remained committed, at least in name, to maintaining the special relationship. In a message to U.K. Prime Minister Anthony Eden, Eisenhower stated, “Whenever, on any international question, I find myself differing even slightly from you, I feel a deep compulsion to reexamine my position instantly and carefully.”⁵³ Regardless of the ongoing disagreements of 1956, Eisenhower felt compelled to reassure the British of their priority status in American foreign policy. Washington did not ignore Paris but treated it as an afterthought to London. Eisenhower blamed the French for initiating Israeli militarization and, through diction, regarded the French as secondary in letters to Eden (e.g. “I think it is important that our two peoples, as well as the French, have this clear understanding of our common or several viewpoints.”).⁵⁴ Because the United Kingdom did not want to find itself ostracized from the United States, the British finally gave in to American pressure for peace leaving the French no choice but to follow suit, much to their dismay.⁵⁵

In 1962, the Kennedy administration faced its most challenging international emergency with the missile crisis in Cuba. When determining his approach to the missile crisis, Kennedy heavily relied on his Executive Committee (ExComm) for guidance in decision-making. ExComm led Kennedy “to impose the quarantine after discovery of Soviet

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁵² United States Dept. of State, “Message From President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden,” 30 October 1956, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, vol. XVI, 849.

⁵³ United States Dept. of State, “Message From President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden,” 8 September 1956, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, vol. XVI, 435.

⁵⁴ Dept. of State, “Eisenhower to Eden,” 30 Oct. 1956, 848-850.

⁵⁵ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 114-115.

missiles in Cuba; to steer a middle course between air strikes and doing nothing; [and] to finesse the eventual linkage between dismantling of the Soviet missiles and removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey.”⁵⁶ However, members of Kennedy’s Executive Committee were not exclusively American – “according to... the editors of the ‘Kennedy tapes’ (transcripts of recordings secretly made by JFK in the Oval Office and Cabinet Room),” Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and British Ambassador David Ormsby-Gore were “de facto members.”⁵⁷ These high-ranking British officials were more closely linked “to the evolution of [American] policy” during the Cuban missile crisis than even the U.S. legislature.⁵⁸ Kennedy made many private telephone calls to Macmillan at his Downing Street residence.⁵⁹ The special partners discussed matters such as the implications of invasion versus diplomacy.⁶⁰ The British prime minister “took pride in the way he had asserted the ‘special relationship’ over... France.”⁶¹ Although historians dispute the extent of British influence on American policymaking during the Cuban missile crisis, the United Kingdom received substantial consideration compared to France. The United States failed to consult with its continental European allies during the missile crisis. Upon meeting with Secretary of State Dean Acheson following crucial American decision-making, President Charles de Gaulle “greeted Acheson with the central question: ‘In order to get our roles clear... have [you] come... to inform me of some decision taken by your President – or have you come to consult me about a decision which he should take [?]’... Acheson replied, ‘I have come to

⁵⁶ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁹ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, 160.

⁶⁰ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

inform you.”⁶² De Gaulle realized an argument would prove pointless – the United States would proceed as it saw fit without regard for French interests. The French president still lent his “unconditional support” of the American position during the Cuban missile crisis with the indispensability of “Western cohesion” against the Soviet threat in mind.⁶³ Still, this incident only added to French resentment of key American Cold War actions.⁶⁴ The Anglo-American special relationship undoubtedly triumphed over and stunted the struggling Franco-American friendship during the Cuban missile crisis.

American foreign interests often clashed with British imperial interests; despite their differences, however, the United States and the United Kingdom managed to resolve issues of major contention. At the onset of the Cold War, Britain still retained colonial and commercial influence in many areas of the globe including the Middle East where the Soviet Union loomed on the periphery. The United States distrusted any form of imperialism other than its own but recognized the need for continued British economic influence in areas vulnerable to communist infiltration.⁶⁵ In 1951, the United States voiced its support for a Middle East Command through which the United Kingdom would “strengthen” and “exercise responsibility” over the region.⁶⁶ The United States only began to take control of Middle Eastern affairs when it felt Britain was failing to secure the region against the Soviet threat.⁶⁷ In the case of Iran, “the United States found itself in a middleman position between British

⁶² Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 128.

⁶³ Bozo, “Gaullism,” 167-168.

⁶⁴ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 128.

⁶⁵ United States Dept. of State, “Memorandum by the Acting Department of State Member (Matthews) to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee,” 1 April 1946, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. I, 1170.

⁶⁶ Dept. of State, “Outline for Discussion,” 20 Nov. 1951, 982.

⁶⁷ Tore T. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers: Anglo-American Conflict and Cooperation, 1952-7* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 19-20.

colonialism and Middle East nationalism.”⁶⁸ The democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) in March 1951 prompting the United Kingdom to shut down its AIOC refinery. Iran “retaliated by breaking off relations with Britain in October 1952.”⁶⁹ The United States felt that this action exposed Iran to Soviet encroachment, especially as the British convinced American policymakers that Mossadegh was becoming increasingly dictatorial, tolerant of communists, and resistant toward relations with the United States.⁷⁰ American officials thought Iran might attract the Soviet Union “because of its key strategic location and large petroleum resources” and decided to support the United Kingdom in its imperialistic Iranian endeavors largely because the United States valued its “worldwide relations with the British.”⁷¹ Together, American and British intelligence organizations successfully staged a coup (Operation Ajax), overthrowing Mossadegh on August 22, 1953.⁷² In effect, the United States had allowed British imperialism to conquer Iranian democracy. The Anglo-American relationship withstood other trials in the Middle East; the Franco-American friendship nearly split over matters in Indochina.

Unlike British imperialism which Americans accepted in many areas, the United States abhorred French colonialism. This fundamental difference between American views of British and French influence in the Third World sparked a chain of events that would cause the Franco-American friendship to deteriorate. U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt “observed in May 1942 that ‘the French did not seem to be very good colonizers.’ French conduct in Indochina, he suggested, ‘was at considerable variance with the general practice of

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 19-20.

⁷¹ Ibid., 21-23.

⁷² Ibid., 23.

Great Britain and the United States to encourage natives to participate in self-government to the limit of their abilities.”⁷³ Ironically, Charles de Gaulle would later cite French pro-nationalism as a point of contention between France and the hegemonic United States.⁷⁴ Early relations between France and the United States nonetheless focused on American rigidity against French colonialism. In the 1950s, the two nations held opposing views of the escalating situation in Vietnam – “whereas U.S. leaders viewed the war principally as a Cold War struggle against communism, their French counterparts saw it primarily as a campaign to preserve colonial prerogatives.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, the United States sought a decisive victory over communism in Vietnam while France hoped to negotiate a settlement.⁷⁶

Following the early years of conflict in Vietnam, American disdain for French colonial policy eased; however, as the United States rapidly increased military intervention, France retaliated. President de Gaulle felt that “the United States had backed France insufficiently before 1954... and had mistakenly refused to allow the 1956 elections to reunify the country.”⁷⁷ He lashed out by extending a French hand to nationalists across the globe battling “hegemonic superpowers.”⁷⁸ In January 1964, France recognized Red China.⁷⁹ De Gaulle went a few steps further when he expressed compassion for nations resisting American suppression.⁸⁰ France blamed the United States for Vietnam’s problems and

⁷³ Mark Bradley, “Slouching Toward Bethlehem: Culture, Diplomacy, and the Origins of the Cold War in Vietnam,” in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966*, ed. Christian G. Appy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 21.

⁷⁴ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 139.

⁷⁵ Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 41.

⁷⁶ Creswell, *A Question of Balance*, 150.

⁷⁷ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 140.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

viewed Vietnam as the only place where France could attempt to resist American hegemony. French leaders criticized the United States for “trying to prevent the inevitable with massive military force and intervention so complete as to eliminate any vestige of South Vietnamese independence or French influence.”⁸¹ The United States repeatedly ignored de Gaulle’s advice on matters in Indochina. The French president began to publicly voice his doubts about the American role in Vietnam prompting a negative reaction against France in U.S. foreign relations. Relations only worsened when, in 1965, de Gaulle wrote a sympathetic letter to Ho Chi Minh.⁸² Ultimately though, French actions “had little impact on the course of the war” and vocal opposition to American foreign policy was idle chatter.⁸³ By 1966, however, the Franco-American friendship had become so strained in Europe and the Third World that de Gaulle pulled the French out of NATO; they have only rejoined in recent years.⁸⁴ From that moment forward in the Cold War, France pursued a policy of détente and inched closer to the East. The United States and France still remained allies, but bad blood between the two nations made future Cold War relations difficult.⁸⁵

The tripartite power relationship of the United States, Britain, and France spanned across many areas of Cold War foreign policy. America dominated both relationships and attempted to manipulate them for its own benefit. When first establishing the postwar Anglo- and Franco-American relationships, the United States clung to Churchill’s idea of a “special relationship” and swayed France into the Western alliance on American and British terms. Suitably, the United States allocated more aid to the United Kingdom than to France when

⁸¹ Ibid., 140.

⁸² Ibid., 140-141.

⁸³ Ibid., 143.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 144-145.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 147.

funding European recovery. France soon began to orchestrate European integration while Britain chose to latch on to its special relationship with America. The United States found itself between two countries with incompatible national interests. Ultimately, America backed European integration but prioritized Britain in all other Cold War contexts. American leaders relied on the United Kingdom to head collective defense initiatives and support U.S. nuclear authority in Europe. The special partners also developed a relationship of nuclear cooperation, a privilege not awarded to France. Whenever the United States and Britain made concessions to their awkward partner, France expressed disinterest because it felt estranged from the other powers. The Anglo-American special relationship grew below the surface through intelligence sharing; the two became closer leaving little room for France. Britain and France tested the tripartite relationship through the Suez Crisis. The United Kingdom buckled under U.S. pressure leaving France alone and forced to comply. During the Cuban missile crisis, America collaborated extensively with Britain and merely informed France of the international emergency's outcome. Finally, the United States respected British imperialism in the Middle East and discredited French imperialism in East Asia. The Franco-American friendship consistently failed in comparison to the Anglo-American special relationship; the United States alienated France and nearly stressed the friendship to its breaking point.

In 1972, the European Community finally welcomed the United Kingdom into its ranks. C.L. Sulzberger, a Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign affairs correspondent for the *New York Times*, argued that British entry into the EC meant a decisive split from the United States and the special relationship.⁸⁶ Sulzberger assumed that British entry into the EC equated a realignment of the United Kingdom's loyalties. This was not the case. In the same article, Sulzberger acknowledged that although Britain could be puppeteered by "the apron

⁸⁶ C.L. Sulzberger, "High Cost of Victory," *New York Times*, November 12, 1972, accessed October 14, 2011, ProQuest (119361737).

strings which bound it to the United States since” the Second World War, “Britain [was] a special ally, favored even over France.”⁸⁷ The United States earned the United Kingdom’s loyalty and respect throughout the duration of the Cold War. Unfortunately, the closeness of the special relationship damaged the Franco-American friendship. To be sure, the shaky Anglo-French relationship made matters worse. Britain and France took a firm stance against the United States when they deemed necessary; but in most cases, the British usually succumbed to American wishes whereas the French would often challenge or defy American pressure. France resented the Anglo-American relationship for altering French foreign policy; France prided itself as an up-and-coming independent, world power, and the Anglo-American relationship often destroyed that image. By prizing its relationship with the United Kingdom so deeply, the United States damaged the French ego. On the Cold War stage, the Americans played Dr. Frankenstein, and the French portrayed the monster – the United States was responsible for French resistance to American hegemony. Although difficult to prove, had the United States treated France with higher regard, the French might have better complied with American Cold War policy. France kept Britain out of Europe for many years, rejected several American proposals for European programs, and muddied Western predominance in other areas of the world. These French actions impeded upon key components of American Cold War strategy. Luckily, the United States managed to thrive without France immediately by its side; however, years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and dissolution of the Soviet Union, repercussions and continuities from these Cold War relationships can still be observed.

⁸⁷ Ibid., E11.

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