

A STUDY OF ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT
IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP
DURING THE REAGAN-THATCHER PERIOD, 1981-89.

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To my parents, Chih-Hao Chang and Hung-Ying Liu

ABSTRACT

How do leaders of an alliance manage crises in which the interests of the members of an alliance conflict with each other while, at the same time, maintaining the functioning of an alliance? This thesis seeks to make a contribution towards better understanding of allies' crisis behaviour and offers a new model to explain this. In order to undertake the study, four crises in the US-UK 'Special Relationship' during the Reagan-Thatcher years (1981-1988) have been selected: the Falklands War 1982, the US invasion of Grenada in 1983, the US air raids on Libya in 1986, and finally the Persian Gulf reflagging operation of 1987. The particular focus is upon the way in which crises were managed by the two governments and how these events impacted upon their wider relationship. It also argues that the nature of a certain type of crisis undermines the Anglo-American special relationship. By examining and analysing the allies' crisis behaviour in these four case studies, this thesis tries to determine whether the relationship between the two allies enabled them to co-operate more effectively in times of crisis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ASAT	Anti-Satellite Weapons
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EC	European Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IRBM	Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MAU	Marines Amphibious Unit
MNF	Multi-National Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NJM	New Jewel Movement
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
NSPG	National Security Planning Group
OAU	Organization of African Union
OAS	Organization of American States
OECS	Organization of East Caribbean States
PRG	People's Revolutionary Government
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
RMC	Revolutionary Military Council

SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
TEZ	Total Exclusion Zone
TWA	Trans-World Airline
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
WEU	Western European Union
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Alliances and crises have been topics of great importance to the study of international relations. States form alliances because an alliance is valuable when one considers the military resources and diplomatic support it provides for its members. As Robert Rothstein points out, an alliance is not only 'an instrument to control an immediate crisis, or to fight an imminent war, but also a part of a wider political strategy designed to avert the development of potentially dangerous configurations of power'.¹ In spite of the advantages an alliance provides, however, the members may find themselves in crisis situations where they have divergent views and competing interests with each other. Crises between allies present leaders of alliances with a number of problems. For one of the defining characteristics of alliances is that allies are expected to settle their differences in a mutually acceptable way. The task of 'alliance management' therefore is to manage the relationship so that the impact of the disputes, over a few divergent or conflicting interests do not undermine the more important common interests on which the relationship is built.

In contemporary international politics, alliances have played as great a role as ever because of the political advantages they provide to partners. Consequently, the need to manage these conflicting interests while, at the same time, maintaining the functioning of an alliance becomes ever more important. In the study of crises, however, most of the existing literature has encompassed 'crises between adversaries' or between potential enemies for

¹ Rothstein, R. L., *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.51.

the very reason that the risks and outcomes of this type of crises may be far more significant than 'crises between allies'.² Very few books pay attention to 'crises between allies'. Books on the subject, however, include Snyder, G., *Alliance Politics*; Neustadt, R., *Alliance Politics*; and Richardson, L., *When Allies Differ*.³

Unlike crises between adversaries, the risk in 'crises between allies' is not so much about the dangers of going to war with each other, but about dangers to the functioning of, or even to the very survival of, a pattern of close co-operation. Crises between allies are important as they raise questions about the nature of alliances, the specific problems of the unequal partnership in an alliance system, the priorities of different security issues of allies, the right of each state in an alliance to determine its own interests, and about different perceptions of alliance commitments and obligations. How do leaders of an alliance manage situations in which the interests of the members of an alliance conflict with each other?

In his theoretical study of crises that arise between friendly states or members of a long-standing alliance, *Alliance Politics*, Snyder focuses on two stages in the life of an alliance:

² Books in this field include: Allison, G., *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971); Bell, C., *The Conventions of Crisis* (London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1971); Frie, D.(ed.), *Managing International Crises* (Westmead, Farnborough, Hampshire: Gower Publishing Company Ltd, 1978); Matthews, R.O., Rubinoff, A. G. and Stein, J. G.(eds.), *International Conflict and Conflict Management* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989); Nicholson, M., *Conflict Analysis* (London: The English Universities Press Limited, 1970); Roberts, J.M., *Decision-Making during International Crises* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Snyder, G. and Diesing, P., *Conflict Among Nations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977); Snyder, G., *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and P. Williams, *Crisis Management: Confrontation and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1976).

³ See Neustadt, R. E., *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Snyder, G., *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Richardson, L., *When Allies Differ* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

its formation and its subsequent management. However, the historical cases which he chose to study as empirical evidence were taken from the period 1879 to 1914 and therefore were well removed from the Cold War world. Both Neustadt and Richardson chose to focus on cases in the Anglo-American alliance and sought to explain why two allies as close as the United States and Britain managed to mishandle two crisis in their relationship to the detriment of their interests. The crises Neustadt examines in his book, *Alliance Politics*, are the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Skybolt affair of 1962, while in her book, *When Allies Differ*, Richardson focuses on the Suez crisis and the Falklands War of 1982. Neustadt sees a pattern of crisis behaviour and his explanation for why the two allies engaged in such behaviour concentrated on three factors: the personalities involved, divergences of policy, and different orders of priority. The most important finding of his work is that 'close acquaintance is more burdensome than beneficial, more conducive to misreading than to accurate perception' and 'misperceptions evidently make for crisis in proportion to the intimacy of relations'.⁴

Richardson points out that the natures of Neustadt's two cases are actually very different and that this impairs his analysis. She reexamines the Suez crisis and offers the Falklands War of 1982 as another case. The Falklands War, she argues, in many ways is a much more appropriate comparison to Suez than the Skybolt incident. Since Neustadt's pattern of crisis behaviour is not applicable to the Falklands crisis, she suggests that the explanation for the two allies' crisis behaviour lies in the imperatives of bureaucratic politics in the

⁴ See Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p.73.

United States and in the activities of transnational actors, such as the two navies of both countries who cooperated closely during the Falklands war.⁵

In a similar way to Neustadt, this thesis seeks to make a contribution towards understanding the pattern of crisis behaviour which pertained to a relationship at a particular time. In order to undertake the study, the Anglo-American alliance during the Reagan-Thatcher period has been chosen to act as the basis for the research and four specific crises have been selected: the Falklands War in 1982, the US invasion of Grenada in 1983, the US air raids on Libya in 1986, and the Persian Gulf reflagging operation in 1987. One may ask why choose these four crises as there obviously are other crises in the Reagan-Thatcher years, such as the row of the two allies over the Siberian gas pipeline, the controversy over the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or the case of Lebanon in which Britain supported the US by sending a British contingent in the Multi-National peace-keeping Force (MNF) to Beirut.

These four crises are chosen in consideration of the following two criteria: the severity and the importance of a crisis. As Brecher and Yehuda point out, the high severity of a crisis can be measured by several indicators: the issues at stake must be military-security or show severe strains; the extent of crisis actors' involvement has to be great, the level of violence in the crisis must be high; and the risk of a decrease in cohesiveness (or even resulted in a

⁵ As Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye defined, 'transnational' actors meant nongovernmental actors and adopted the term 'transgovernmental relations' to refer to 'sets of direct interactions among subunits of different governments that are not controlled or closely guided by the policies of the cabinets or chief executives of those governments'. See Keohane, R., and Nye, J., 'Transnational Relations and World Politics', *World Politics*, Vol.27, No.1, October 1974, p.43.

termination) of an alliance must be high.⁶ By measuring these factors, one gains an idea of the volume of conflictual interactions among the protagonists of a crisis. Importance here refers to the quality or irreversibility of structural change, and the effects and implications of a crisis on the future relationship of members of an alliance. With regard to three other crises mentioned above, the case of Lebanon has not been selected because the British involvement in this crisis was rather limited, with only a small contingent of observers, and the volume of conflictual interactions between the two states was not great. In respect to the Siberian gas pipeline and the SDI controversy, there was a lack of violence in each crisis, although they both had considerable implications for relations between the United States and Britain.

In the four cases studied here, the unique qualities of the Anglo-American alliance and its sense of purpose were called into question, and its very unity was under threat. In terms of the severity and importance, it is obvious that the extent of the two allies' involvement in each case was great, the risk of a decrease in cohesiveness of an alliance was rather high, and the implications for future Anglo-American relations were also important. Though the nature of the four cases are distinct and very different, they do share a characteristic: in each case one member of the alliance took action against a third country which seemed to encroach upon its interests, and in doing so jeopardised its ally's interests. In the case of the Falklands, Britain prevailed while the United States was reluctantly dragged into taking sides in a conflict it sought to avoid; in the case of Grenada, the United States prevailed, but caused major discord in the alliance; in the case of Libya, Britain, though initially

⁶ See Brecher, M., and Yehuda, H. B., 'System and Crisis in International Politics', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 11, 1985, pp.17-36.

unwilling, eventually acceded to a US military operation against Libya; while in the case of the Persian Gulf reflagging operation, though the two countries seemed to disagree over the strategy of military action, co-operation finally prevailed. In each case, both the US and UK looked to the other as their closest ally and displayed considerable goodwill, trying to co-ordinate their divergent interests, but the two allies still failed to resolve their differences and so were unable to manage the crisis to their mutual advantage. Judging from the strains they raised in the Anglo-American relationship and the issues they raised for alliance management, these four crises thus present fascinating cases for study.

Neustadt describes the pattern of crisis behaviour found in the Suez Crisis and Skybolt Affair in the following way. The crisis is woven from four strands: muddled perceptions, stifled communications, disappointed expectations, and paranoid reactions. The phases of crises, he explains, start like a spiral, in turn, 'each ally misreads the other, each is reticent with the other, each is surprised by the other and each replies in kind' while 'only when one bows low before the other's latest grievance does the spiral stop'.⁷ However, this pattern of behaviour in some ways, does not fit into the four crises analysed in this study. In the case of the Falklands War, as Richardson argues, though expectations on both sides were disappointed and reactions were sometimes paranoid, perceptions were not muddled and communication was obviously not stifled.⁸ In regard to Grenada, though there were disappointed expectations, communication was not particularly stifled. In the case of Libya, there were no muddled perceptions and paranoid reactions, expectations were not disappointed and there were no obstacles in communication. Finally in the case of the

⁷ See Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p.56.

⁸ Quoted in Richardson, *When Allies Differ*, p.6.

Persian Gulf reflagging operation, though the expectations were disappointed, the perceptions of the two sides were not muddled, communication was not stifled and the reactions were not paranoid. However, there was still initial discord in each of the cases and the functioning of the alliance was several times in danger. This study therefore argues that Neustadt's pattern of crisis behaviour is only applicable to some extent to these four cases and the explanation for discord lies elsewhere. This study offers a new Model of the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour which shows a much greater applicability to crises which happened during the Reagan-Thatcher period. It suggests that, in addition to Neustadt's explanations, there is another reason for discord in alliances. It is that: in a crisis situation when the interests of members of an alliance involved are concerning core-security issues, the leaders of the alliance tend to ignore, or even disregard the effects of their policies on allies, as they assume that allies will accept or easily cope with a situation. An explanation of this suggests that the nature of certain type of crises undermines the Anglo-American special relationship. It argues that since crises are situations where decision-making gets pushed up to the highest level very quickly and involve the senior executive levels, such as Heads of State or Foreign Ministers, these are the occasions which can undermine the Anglo-American relationship because the lower operational level officials, who carry out the day-to-day contacts and build up the trust between each other, are excluded from the decision-making process.

The reason for choosing the period from 1981 to 1988 is because it offers several cases of alliance co-operation and crisis for analysis. On the one hand, the relationship between the US and UK reached one of its lowest points since the Suez crisis of 1956 over the Grenada

affair when the US intervened without consulting the British beforehand. On the other hand, since the assault on Western interests in the Middle East and Latin America no longer came directly from the Soviet Union, but from a more multi-faced challenge, there were examples of close defence co-operation between the two allies in out-of-(NATO) area operations which reflected a common appreciation of the need to co-operate and maintain Western interests in the world. The main object of this thesis is not to pay attention solely to the Anglo-American relationship or to explore in depth the complex disagreements within the bureaucracies of the British and American governments. Rather, it attempts to discern the crisis behaviour of the two allies in each case and explain the sources of friction between them. The particular focus is upon the way in which crises were managed by the two governments, the extent of Anglo-American collaboration, and how these events impacted upon their wider relationship. By focusing on these questions, it is possible to discern a pattern of crisis behaviour from the four chosen crises which has a wider applicability. Secondly, this thesis seeks to determine what the Anglo-American special relationship meant to the two countries in practice. By focusing upon the divergent views of the two countries in relation to the obligations and commitments of the Anglo-American alliance, it is possible to trace similarities and dissimilarities in the attitudes and policies of the US and the UK towards their alliance and thus determine whether this relationship enabled them to co-operate more effectively in times of crisis.

In order to undertake this study, material has been gathered from many different sources. A scarcity of primary sources on the British side, such as records concerning the decision-making process, is a major problem. This thesis thus draws on private interviews with

persons involved in the decision-making processes and with practical experience of the crises. These include interviews with two former Ministers for Defence, three former Ambassadors to the United States, two of Mrs. Thatcher's private Secretaries and many other officials in that period. Primary sources, such as personal memoirs, Parliamentary Debates and various newspapers, as well as some secondary literature, have also been consulted. On the US side, publications include *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States of America: Ronald W. Reagan, Congressional Records*, and published documents from the Department of State and Department of Defense have been invaluable.

Chapter 2 begins by looking at three different sorts of literature related to this study: the Anglo-American special relationship, alliance theory and crisis management. By reviewing this literature, it attempts to give an overall impression of how post-war Anglo-American relations developed, the history and theories of alliance and the development of thinking on the study of crisis management. Based on these ideas, a 'Model of the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour' will be developed and the explanation of this Model will be offered.

The following four chapters, Chapters 3-6, investigate the four historical case studies in the Anglo-American relations bearing on the pattern of crisis behaviour in the Model; the Falklands War, the US invasion of Grenada, the US air raids on Libya and the Persian Gulf reflagging operation. The object here is to assess whether the outcomes of the four case studies are consistent or inconsistent with the Model. By using the Model as the structure for these case studies, the chapters look at each of the crises and determine to what extent

the crises accord with the Model. Each of these chapters begins with a brief introduction on the relations between the protagonists; this is followed by studies of the Anglo-American relations; and each chapter winds up with an analysis of alliance management and the process of crisis behaviour of the two allies.

Chapter 7 uses material drawn from these cases bearing on the 'Model of the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour' to interpret the different processes of crisis behaviour and examine the successes and failures of alliance management. By interpreting the evidence available, it seeks to answer the questions that have been raised in previous chapters. Finally, it draws lessons from the four case studies, sums up the arguments on the Model, and explains the contribution of this thesis for the future understanding of Anglo-American relations.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE ON ALLIANCE THEORY, THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT.

Circumstances have required Britain and the United States to act in close partnership with each other for much of the twentieth century. The term 'Special Relationship', which came out from Winston Churchill's 'iron-curtain' speech at Fulton in March 1946, is often used to describe relations between them and suggests an alliance which is not only very close and intimate, but uncommon and different to those between other states.⁹ Skeptics have viewed relations between Britain and the United States as no more than an ordinary alliance. It has even been commented that the special relationship is a 'long-dead myth', and it never really existed at all.¹⁰ For most observers of Anglo-American relations, however, there is 'something which is inherently different, unique and distinctive' in the Anglo-American relationship throughout the post-war period that makes the two countries co-ordinated their activities to a degree that remains unprecedented.¹¹ It can be measured in terms of their common heritage, close nuclear relationship, intelligence-sharing, similar ideology and relations in NATO, and among other factors.

⁹ James, R. R., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963* (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), Vol. VII, pp.7 & 289 (Fulton, 5 March, 1946).

¹⁰ Quoted in Dickie, J., *'Special' No More. Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), p.xiii.

¹¹ Turner, A. C., *The Unique Partnership: Britain and the United States* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), p.5.

However, if relations between Britain and the United States can be regarded as being 'special and exceptional', we may ask: why are some allies much closer and more friendly than others? What gives the Anglo-American relationship its specialness and uniqueness? Before we consider these questions, we must define and analyse issues which characterise the study of alliances in general.

I. ALLIANCES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Alliances have always been a fundamental element of the international political system central to the functioning of international relations. The literature on this subject is extensive and wide-ranging.¹² Hans J. Morgenthau has emphasised the importance of alliances by referring to them as 'a necessary function of the balance of power operating in a multiple state system.'¹³ While Ole Holsti has said that alliances are 'apparently a universal component of relations between political units, irrespective of time and place.'¹⁴ Some authors use the terms *coalition*, *pact* or *bloc* interchangeably to indicate alliances, while others consider alliances as 'techniques of statecraft, international Organizations, or

¹² The most prominent works include: Beer, F.A.(ed), *Alliance: Latent War Communities in the Contemporary World* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970); Holsti, O.R., Hopmann, P. T. and Sullivan, J. D., *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: Wiley, 1973); Liska, G., *Nations in Alliance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962); Morgenthau, H.J., *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1967); Neustadt, R., *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Riker, W., *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962); Rothstein, R., *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Snyder, G., *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Walt, S. M., *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Wolfers, A.(ed), *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959); and Wolfers, A., (ed), *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962).

¹³ See Morgenthau's *Alliance In Theory and Practice*, in Wolfers, *Alliance Policy in the Cold War*, p.175.

¹⁴ Quoted in Holsti, Hoppmann & Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, p.2.

regulating mechanisms in the balance of power'.¹⁵ In *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliance*, Holsti and his co-authors define an alliance as 'a formal agreement between two or more nations to collaborate on national security affairs'. Liska suggests that an alliance 'associates like-minded actors in the hope of overcoming their rivals'.¹⁶ More recently, Stephen Walt refers it as 'a formal or informal relationship of security co-operation between two or more sovereign states'.¹⁷ A *formal* treaty – either open or secret – is required, as Walt argues, because the acceptance of mutual obligations may prevent one of the allies from following a policy which the other considers 'adventurism'. Legitimising that pursuit by putting it into a formal treaty also assumes some level of commitment and an exchange of benefits for both parties: severing the relationship or failing to honour the agreement would presumably cost something. In addition, the treaty should be confined to national security issues; in this sense, it excludes a broad range of formal agreements on trade, cultural affairs, and the like.

But why do states form alliances? An important part of international relations theory involves work to examine the development of an alliance. Such theory concerns itself with propositions about why states form alliances, how alliances are maintained and why alliances disintegrate. However, there is little agreement among the alliance theorists about the origins of alliances because the decision to ally is very seldom determined by principle. Basically, alliances are formed as a response to perceived threats. However, they also reflect the expedient calculations at the root of nearly all decisions concerning the use of

¹⁵ Quoted in Holsti, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, p.4.

¹⁶ Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*, p.3.

¹⁷ Walt, *The Origins of Alliance*, p.1.

power. One position is that nations who have characteristics in common, such as ideological beliefs, are more likely to align with each other than with dissimilar nations. Another group of theorists hold a different view. They regard alliances as the pragmatic expression of transient interests, rather than as the international manifestation of sentimental ties arising from common ethnic, cultural, ideological or other attributes. There are also authors who use game theory to analyse alliance behaviour. In the next section, drawing on the works of Holsti and his co-authors, these pieces of literatures will be roughly divided into the following groups and briefly explained: Balance of Power Theories; Coalition Theories or Game Theory; National Attributes and Alliance Participation Theories; Utility Theories; and Affiliation Theories.¹⁸ At the same time, since some of the commonly held general propositions about alliances bear on the origins and evolution of Anglo-American relations, the section also reflects on how far these common theoretical propositions about the formation of alliances could be confirmed in the Anglo-American relationship.

Balance of Power Theories

The oldest and most popular theory of alliances is derived from 'balance of power' theory. Balancing is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat and the term 'balance of power' here refers to 'a particular distribution of power among the states of that system such that no single state and no existing alliance has an 'overwhelming' or 'preponderant' amount of power'.¹⁹ This theory sees international system as unequal and

¹⁸ For details, see Holsti, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, p.8.

¹⁹ Quoted in Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.4.

unbalanced in terms of power. However, this inequality can be balanced if weaker states co-operate together. This can be used against the prevailing threat and thus prevent hegemony, allowing states to preserve their identity, integrity and independence, and perhaps deterring aggression or war. Most importantly, in a balance of power system, states should be prepared to desert old allies and seek new ones whenever such a realignment would serve to benefit the balance of power. Thus the theory locates the motivations for alliance formation primarily in the attributes of the international system, especially the distribution of power and threats to the balance of power. Alliance partners are formed as a matter of expediency and are chosen because of common need, not for reasons of shared values, institutions, or a sense of community.²⁰ Holsti and his co-authors have tried to arrange and classify all the propositions distilled from the literature on alliances. One of the most pertinent is that external threat provides cohesion to an alliance, as Liska points out,

Conflicts are the primary determinants of alignments ... the weaker state rallies to one stronger power as a reaction against the threat from another stronger power. ...²¹

While Boulding stated:

Existence of an external enemy serves to unify alliances.²²

It is also argued that the removal of the threat will cause the disintegration of the alliance.

As Wolfers pointed out that:

²⁰ Holsti, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, p.4.

²¹ Liska, *Nations in Alliances*, pp.12-3.

²² Boulding, K. E., *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p.162.

Diminution of external threat, or of the will to meet it, will tend to undermine alliance cohesion.²³

Similarly from Stevens:

Lack of a strong threat weakens alliance cohesion.²⁴

However, from balance of power theories we could only understand some of the motivations underlying alliance policies for some periods or regions. There are still a number of alliances that do not fit the theory and its proponents rarely offer systematic tests of general hypotheses. There also seems little agreement from one author to another and propositions extrapolated from an empirical investigation of one alliance are flatly contradicted by evidence available from another alliance. In *Alliances in Theory and Practice*, Morgenthau started out with theoretical reflections about alliances and gave a lengthy discussion of alliances supported by a variety of historical illustrations.²⁵ While Liska and Rothstein also provided similar analyses, Liska relies on anecdotal evidence to support his points and suggests that,

Opportunistic alignments may occur when a state believes that the effort to balance power will fail. ...²⁶

²³ Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, p.29.

²⁴ Stevens, F. B., 'Why Alliances Fall Apart', *U.S. News and World Report*, No.50, 1961, p.45.

²⁵ See Morgenthau's *Alliance in Theory and Practice*, in Wolfers, *Alliance Policy in the Cold War*.

²⁶ Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*, pp.42-56.

Although Liska provides many apt examples and interesting case studies on individual alliances, he does not attempt to assess the relative validity of his propositions. In the Part I of *Alliances and Small Powers*, Rothstein bases his studies on two important twentieth-century case studies of Belgium and the Little Entente in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁷ His argument revolves around the security problem which confronts most Small Powers and the focus of his study is the problem of achieving security via an alliance policy. In Part II, he discusses Great Power-Small Power relationships in specific historical systems of international relations. The generalizations in that section are much more concrete and specific than those in the preceding one, and they attempt to indicate the extent to which Great Power-Small Power relationships alter in response to changes in the international system. Part III is the least theoretical and the most policy-oriented section, which discusses various aspects of Great Power-Small Power relationships in the contemporary world. Case studies on individual alliances can provide interesting evidence but may not tell us much about how different states would behave in different circumstances.

Paul Schroeder also argued that alliances are formed either to:

oppose a threat; to accommodate a threat through a pact of restraint; or to provide the great powers with a tool of management over weaker states.²⁸

Though he supports his arguments with a survey of the major European alliances from 1815 to 1945, he does not examine which of the possible motives for alignment is most

²⁷ See Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*.

²⁸ Schroeder, P., *Alliance, 1815-1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management, Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (Kansas: Klaus Knorr, Lawrence, 1976).

common or identify the factors that might affect the strength of each. Under these circumstances, Walt argues that there are still remaining doubts regarding the universal applicability of this hypothesis as most of the relevant literature relies too much on balance of power concepts.

In terms of Anglo-American relations, the history of the last fifty-four years seems to illustrates the propositions on the balance of power theory and confirms that threat is one of the most important reasons in the formation of the Anglo-American relationship. It is clear that the close co-operation between the two allies initially grew out of a sense of shared perceptions of threat, first from Germany, then from the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. The arguments that 'the removal of a strong threat will weaken alliance cohesion' is also true as the transatlantic relations during the Wilson-Johnson and the Heath-Nixon eras was undermined by superpower détente. However, despite the erosion in Anglo-American relations, the linkages in the fields of nuclear collaboration, intelligence co-operation remained close. In the early 1980s during the Reagan-Thatcher period, the Anglo-American relationship was revived and became even closer due to intensity of the Cold War and strained East-West relations.

Coalition Theory (or Game Theory)

Coalition theory has a very recent origin and its proposition of central interest is the 'size principle'. The basic elements of the theory are drawn 'deductively from the logic of N-person 'game theory' – normally of the zero-sum variety - rather than inductively from

historical evidence'.²⁹ Though they share a number of characteristics with balance of power models (both place heavy emphasis on calculation of advantage and assume that national attributes other than power are at best of secondary importance for purposes of explaining alliances), the coalition theorists do differ from the balance of power theorists on one point. In contrast to the object of the balance of power theorists, the primary motivation in game theory approaches is to form a coalition consisting of a group of dominant nations. William Riker examines the political coalitions by using the optimal size of n -person alliances.³⁰ Glenn Snyder used two-person game theory to illuminate the trade-offs that states face in seeking to maintain allied support while avoiding the risk that allies will entrap them in unwanted wars.³¹ Their conclusions were consistent with balance of power theory. However, there were a number of difficulties when applying it to international politics. For instance, game theory models are based solely on the distribution of power and the structure of possible payoffs, they do not take into account the impact of perceptions, ideology, and geography; and the zero-sum premises are particularly questionable in the light of contemporary, post-Cold War international politics. Besides, when international politics are characterized by intense ideological conflict for which domestic energies and mass emotions are mobilised, the process of alliance formation is unlikely to be dominated solely by calculations of capabilities.

²⁹ Holsti, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, p.6.

³⁰ Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalition*.

³¹ Snyder, G., 'The Security Dilemma In Alliance Politics', *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1984, p.461-495.

National Attributes and Alliance Participation

National attributes and alliance participation is another school which contrasts with both the balance of power and coalition theories. It emphasises 'one or more national attributes - other than power or capabilities - as important considerations in alliance policies'.³² Theorists here do not deny that an increase in external threats will give rise to alliance formation, or that calculations of national interest or power will have an impact on alliance formation. But in addition, they argue that nations cannot be treated as 'undifferentiated entities if we wish to understand their propensity to enter into alliances as useful instruments of foreign policy'.³³

Therefore, some of them link one or more national attributes to the propensity of states to join or avoid external military commitments. For instance, alliance policies in some ways reflect leadership and general domestic needs, such as the requirements of status and internal stability. As Liska argues,

The three main grounds for alignment area: security, status and internal stability.³⁴

Others link one or more attributes to a greater or lesser propensity to seek alliances. For instance, Guetzkow has emphasised the importance of historical experience:

³² Holsti, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliance*, p.10.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.11.

³⁴ Liska, *Nations in Alliance*, p.30.

The more successful a nation's past experience with self-reliant policies, the less the tendency to join alliances.³⁵

Utility Theories

Another challenge to balance of power theory has emerged from the ranks of utility theorists. They suggest that states form alliances to increase their utility, measured in terms of security risk, or welfare. Michael Altfeld concludes that,

alliances do not appear to be random... potential alliances which fail to increase both partner's security almost never form.³⁶

David Newman claims to disprove balance of power theory by showing that states whose power is increasing are more likely to form alliances, because they are more attractive partners.³⁷ However, the utility theory does not identify who will ally with whom; it can only predict when states may seek alignment with someone. Furthermore, the fact that states whose capabilities are increasing tend to form alliances does not refute balance of power theory because a state whose security positions are threatened will probably attempt to increase its relative power while simultaneously seeking an alliance with another states.

³⁵ Guetzkow, H., 'Isolation and Collaboration: A Partial Theory of Inter-Nation Relations', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 1, 1957, p.154.

³⁶ See Altfeld, M. F., 'Decision to Ally: A Theory and Test', *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1984, p.538. Also in Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p.9.

³⁷ Newman, D., *Security and Alliance: A Theoretical Study of Alliance Formation* (New York: diss. University of Rochester, 1984).

Affiliation Theories

Affiliation theories approach alliance formation from 'a sociometric perspective, addressing themselves to the similarities and differences of two or more nations as an element in their propensity to align'.³⁸ It is claimed that nations, in their choices of allies, are 'likely to exhibit a preference for partners with whom they share common institutions, cultural and ideological values, or economic interests'.³⁹ Among the propositions in the affiliation theories, many advocate that common ideology is both an impetus and a unifying bond in alliances. As Liska argues:

Ideology provides the rationalization for alliances.⁴⁰

In addition, though relative capabilities have also been considered an important factor in alliance formation, there is little consensus on its effects. For instance, some argued that 'the attraction of strong states for the weak is based primarily on economic need'⁴¹ while others argued that 'underdeveloped nations will seek to pursue a policy of nonalignment with existing blocs'.⁴² As a result, as Holsti argued, although most of the propositions on affiliation theories have been valid explanations for one alliance or another, there inevitably exist contradictions among them which therefore suggests that none of them is likely to be valid for all alliances.

³⁸ Quoted in Holsti, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, pp.12-14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁴⁰ See Liska, *Nations in Alliances*, pp.61-2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁴² Quoted in Good, R. C., *State-Building as a Determinant of Foreign Policy in the New States*, in Martin, L.W. (ed.), *Neutralism and Nonalignment: The New States in World Affairs* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p.8.

In relation to the Anglo-American relationship, the history of Anglo-American relations seems to confirm the propositions of affiliation theories. Long-standing natural affinity, based on a common language and a broadly similar culture, was obviously relevant to the feelings of mutual compatibility that were evident on both sides of the Atlantic. It was also because of democratic ideology, common institutions and sentimental attachments, that the 'special' quality of the relationship was emphasised. These propositions are seen as valid explanations for the Anglo-American alliance because common interest and ideology are a very important impetus and unifying bond in forming this relationship.

Recently a significant work by Walt suggests that alliances can be understood as efforts to balance power and threats respectively.⁴³ However, there has been less effort in explaining intra-allied relations. An exception is the work of Glenn Snyder, who admirably classified the intra-alliance strains as the 'alliance security dilemma, entailing mutual fears of abandonment and entrapment'.⁴⁴ Although the existing scholarship on alliances is useful as a source of hypotheses, it does not tell us which hypotheses are valid.

To sum up, the Anglo-American relationship can be seen as a mixture of these propositions on alliance formation. Changing perceptions of the threat to their common interests clearly have been the most important factor which made the two states draw close to each other while erosion has taken place when there has been the lack of strong threat. Fortunately, both Britain and the United States have recognised a mutual interest in continuing a

⁴³ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

⁴⁴ Snyder, G., 'The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics', *World Politics*, Vol.36, No.4, 1984, pp.461-495.

spectrum of collaboration and it is this continuing 'interest' rather than 'sentiment' that explains why the alliance has been maintained. It also seems that common interests and ideological affinity have been assets of some importance, as they have contributed to the common perception of security problems and to a close personal relationship at all levels. It should further be noted that while other factors, such as similarities in a same language and culture, may be inadequate as an explanation of why the alliance came into existence, these intangible determinants cannot be dismissed as unimportant.

II. THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The Nature of the Special Relationship

Intangible Factors

For writers such as Allen, Ball, Ovendale, and Turner, the roots of the Anglo-American special relationship lie in both history and the particularly close cultural affinities, sentimental attachments, similar institutions and a common language. Ovendale has pointed out that 'the relations between Britain and the United States have their roots in the war of the American War of Independence.'⁴⁵ Ball has argued that 'we speak variant patios of Shakespeare and Norman Mailer, our institutions spring from the same instincts and traditions, and we share the same heritage of law and custom, philosophy and pragmatic *Weltanschauung*...Starting from similar premises in the same intellectual tradition, we

⁴⁵ Quoted in Ovendale, R., *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) p.1.

recognize common allusions, share many common prejudices, and can commune on a basis of confidence'.⁴⁶ In a same way, Turner has argued that 'the common language is the basic thread of Anglo-American communion, the basis of the Anglo-American community'.⁴⁷ Allen also proposed that 'the fact that from their (the US and the UK) common heredity, environment, and will, there has developed an increasing similarity; and even sometimes identity, of opinion and action'.⁴⁸

Though these intangible factors go some way to explain why relations between the two states have been close, it is obvious that these two countries have very similar, close ties with other states as well. For instance, Britain has particularly strong ethnic links with countries like Australia and New Zealand, while the United States has links with many continental European states, not least Germany. Furthermore, as Watt points out, before the outbreak of World War II relations between the two were 'about as distant as it is possible to imagine between 'friendly' powers and infinitely less warm than British relations with the French'.⁴⁹ Since the relations between Britain and the United States was not especially close before the World War II, what makes their relations so 'special' and unique now? Why does the term 'special relationship' only apply to relations between these two countries? The answer is that these intangible factors are not the only things which give the relationship its specialness but that it has a *convergence of common interests* which acts as the underlying basis of the partnership.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Ball, G., *The Discipline of Power* (London: Boldly Head, 1968), p.91. Also see Baylis, J., *Anglo-American Defence Relations, 1939-1984*, second edition (London: Macmillan, 1984), p.xvii.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Turner, *The Unique Partnership: Britain and the United States*, p.24.

⁴⁸ See Allen, H. C., *Great Britain and the United States: a History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (London: Odhams, 1954), pp.27-29, 33, 128 and 983.

⁴⁹ See Watt, D., in Bull, H. and Louis, R., *The Special Relationship. Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.3.

Common Interests

At the end of the Second World War, both Britain and the United States have had one interest in common: to preserve the balance of power. The Soviet Union had to be prevented not only from making any incursion into Western Europe but also from extending its influence into the Third World. Any gain made by the Soviets would imply a loss for the West. In order to prevent the Soviets from expanding into the Western sphere of influence, it was necessary to maintain non-communist governments in as many countries as possible. There was also a need both to ensure that areas rich in raw material resources, such as the Middle East with its oil, remained under capitalist control, and to retain control of all the strategic sites necessary to keep open the world's major shipping lanes in times of both war and peace. In these circumstances, Washington required the assistance of at least one other major Western power. Colonial possessions provided the British with a significant amount of political leverage in several strategically vital parts of the world and uniquely qualified Britain to act as Washington's 'universal and indispensable number two'.⁵⁰

It was this shared perception of common interests that lay at the heart of the close relations between the two governments throughout the post-war period. In this sense, the underlying basis of the Anglo-American relationship was based on common interest instead of emotion. In the late 1960s British policy-makers were aware that they no longer possessed the capability to sustain a global military presence as both their strength and influence were

⁵⁰ Sanders, D., *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.188-190.

declining in each of Churchill's three famous overlapping circles - the Commonwealth, the Atlantic Alliance, and Europe. In these circumstances, London became increasingly unwilling to commit resources to out-of-area operations and as a result, the 'specialness' of the special relationship gradually fell off as Britain became less useful to the United States.

However, Britain is still an important ally of the United States for her situation has some unique features. For instance, its possession of nuclear weapons, membership of the UN Security Council, access to political and military intelligence, its political stability, its willingness to devote an unusually high proportion of GNP to military purposes, and most importantly, as Raymond Seitz has pointed out, its membership of the European Union - all these are valuable to the United States. According to Seitz,

If Britain's voice is less influential in Paris or Bonn, it is likely to be less influential in Washington ...

Britain's role in the European Union is indispensable to the relationship.⁵¹

All these assets ensure that British views must be taken into account in certain specific areas of policy. However, as Watt argues, along with Britain's decline, the British can no longer ensure either:

- (a) a purely British veto over any single American policy (except where, as in the case of bases in Britain, British sovereignty is directly involved); or

⁵¹ Correspondence with Lord Howe of Aberavon, 27 January 1998. Quoted in Howe, *Europe and America: Britain's Opportunity* (London: the First Annual Douglas W. Bryant Lecture under the auspices of the Eccles Centre for American Studies, the British Library, 1995), p.8.

(b) a purely British ability to influence the general direction of American foreign policy.⁵²

As Britain's own capabilities changed and it gradually became one among a number of allies for the United States, what made the special relationship remained strong enough to provide Thatcher with the solid diplomatic base which she needed in order to rebuild London's links with Washington once she took office? For many observers, there is another crucial source which underpins the basic stability of Anglo-American relations - its defence relationship with the US.

The Intelligence-Defence Relationship

A third area which has demonstrated Britain's consistently special relationship with the United States has been their close collaboration in the defence sphere. In regard to the intelligence axis between Britain and the United States, it was interdependent from World War II onwards. Both Britain and the United States have had built up an extensive apparatus of secret warfare, especially in the fields of overt and covert propaganda, sabotage and assassination, espionage, aerial reconnaissance, communications intelligence and counterintelligence. The developing US-Soviet confrontation in the late 1940s not only bound together British and American political and military establishments but also their intelligence work. The UK-USA agreement on the exchange of intelligence was concluded in 1947, which provided for the extension and development of the extremely fruitful pooling of information, particularly signals intelligence which had existed during the Second World War. It was due to the close intelligence link that the Prime Minister

⁵² Quoted in Watt, in Bull and Louis, *The Special Relationship*, p.4.

Macmillan became aware of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 six days before President Kennedy officially informed his allies.

In the nuclear sphere, too, British leaders were looking for close co-operation. Although the British desires of continued collaboration in the military and commercial fields of atomic energy were rejected after the American Congress passed the McMahon Act in August 1946, much of the wartime nuclear relationship was effectively restored following the repeal of McMahon in 1958 and the subsequent special agreements on the supply and exchange of materials, information and facilities. Following the repeal of the McMahon Act, not only could Britain receive information from the US on the design and production of nuclear warheads, but also Britain was the only state to benefit from the agreement and the path was now cleared for Britain to receive American nuclear hardware in the future - as the American decisions to supply, first Skybolt, and then Polaris, were soon to demonstrate.⁵³ The deployment of Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) in Britain in turn led much closer collaboration on nuclear questions. For instance, when the Americans deployed IRBMs on Britain's territory, they provided for a 'dual key' mechanism which meant that the missiles were not supposed to be launched without the approval of both the British and US governments. In the field of nuclear-sharing, it seems that the very act of sharing itself served to increase that sense of trust still further. Even as London and Washington gradually drifted apart politically in the late 1960s and 1970s, relations between the two still exhibited an intimacy in nuclear matters that neither country could ever achieve with a third party.

⁵³ For details, see Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations, 1939-1984*, pp.90-91.

A recent work by David Reynolds discusses current work on the revisionist themes of Anglo-American rivalry and of America's rise and Britain's decline. In the light of this recent research, Reynolds argues that though we must take seriously the competitive aspects of the Anglo-American connection and see the 'special relationship' primarily as a stratagem of British diplomacy rather than as a metaphysical entity, there are certain unique features about this relationship which should not be overlooked.⁵⁴ These distinctive features became apparent from the late 1940s onwards and included:

- (i) The so-called 'consultative relationship between the two bureaucracies': the habit of regular and informal consultation between opposite numbers in Whitehall and Washington, made easy by the sharing of the same language.
- (ii) The intelligence axis created during the Second World War and revived under the UK-USA agreements of 1947-8.
- (iii) The particularly close contact between the navies of the two countries:
- (iv) The atomic alliance between the two countries: the sharing of nuclear technology, fuels and information made the Anglo-American a unique alliance as no other US ally has the same access to America's most guarded technology.⁵⁵

Furthermore, in addition to power-political factors and the argument that external threats resulted in the formation of the Anglo-American relationship - Reynolds argues that the

⁵⁴ See Reynolds, D., 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations', *International Affairs*, Vol.65, No.1, 1989, pp.89-111.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.98.

ideological ties that strengthened the bond are also worthy of fuller examination. He examines the following two themes: first, the place of the liberal political tradition in Anglo-American relations and, secondly, the contribution of that relationship in shaping the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁶ Finally, Reynolds argues that the real difference between the 1980s and the 1940s is that the Anglo-American relationship is 'no longer special in *importance*' though it remains 'special in *quality*' in some of its aspects, such as intelligence and nuclear matters.⁵⁷

Another recent work is 'On Specialness' by Alex Danchev in which Danchev canvasses the three modes of scholarship concerning the Anglo-American Special Relationship:

- (i) The Evangelical mode - those who thought that 'specialness' was like scriptures and required not examination but exegesis and revelation;
- (ii) The Functional mode - those who regarded the Anglo-American relationship as a combination for a purpose instead of a sentimental attachment;
- (iii) The Terminal mode - those of a Terminal persuasion posited a former Anglo-America and believed that the 'Specialness' is, and always was, self-deception. They are interested in Anglo-American make-believe, especially the parallel drawn with the Greeks and Romans.⁵⁸

Since none of these provides us with an adequate account of specialness, Danchev

⁵⁶ Reynolds, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations', *International Affairs*, Vol.65, No.1, 1989, pp.98-109.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.110-111

⁵⁸ For details, see Danchev, A., 'On Specialness', *International Affairs*, Vol.72, No.4, 1996, pp.737-750.

interrogates the meaning and usage of the Special Relationship by arguing that there is no absolute standard, no fixed requirement, and no general theoretical framework for the special relationship. Finally he proposes ten criteria for specifying the distinguishing features of the special relationship:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1.transparency | 6.clandestinity |
| 2.informality | 7.reliability |
| 3.generality | 8.durability |
| 4.reciprocity | 9.potentiality |
| 5.exclusivity | 10.mythicality |

In his other work, 'On Friendship: Anglo-America at fin de siecle', Danchev uses Aristotle's three kinds of friendship to explain the Anglo-American Special Relationship:

- (i) Friendship based on utility,
- (ii) Friendship based on pleasure, and
- (iii) Friendship based on goodness.⁵⁹

He contends that the Anglo-American alliance has always been founded on utility as the potential of the relationship has been governed by two basic requirements: the British ability to deliver and the American willingness to defer. To take this point further, Danchev argues that in the Post-Modern Age, when the ground for such friendship disappeared due

⁵⁹ See Danchev, A., 'On Friendship: Anglo-America at fin de siecle', *International Affairs*, Vol.73, No.4, 1997, pp.747-759.

to changing circumstances, the parallel with Greeks and Romans was replaced by 'Pay and Play' in which a stake buys a say.⁶⁰

To summarise the above literature, it seems clear that the Anglo-American special relationship has been 'special' in terms of language, culture and law; in terms of common interests which are often in tune with each other during times of crisis; and in terms of their close defence relationship. Therefore, it is concluded that the nature of the relationship is actually 'a product of the particular mix of these factors rather than any one on its own'.⁶¹

The Transatlantic Relations in the early 1980s and the Anglo-American Relations during the Reagan-Thatcher Period

In 1979, East-West relations deteriorated markedly with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and its introduction of new missiles into the European theatre, the SS-20s. For the Western powers, it seemed that the Soviet Union had attained a level of military preparedness never seen before and appeared to match western military innovations. In response to this, the new American president, Ronald Reagan, came into office in 1981 not only with a determination to revive and win the Cold War but also an attempt to restore American power and to reassert American interests worldwide. In order to meet the threat from the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc and return the US to a position of global

⁶⁰ See Danchev, 'On Friendship: Anglo-America at fin de siecle', *International Affairs*, Vol.73, No.4, 1997, pp.756-757.

⁶¹ Quoted in Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations, 1939-1984*, p. xviii.

dominance in economic, military, political and ideological spheres, the overriding aim of the Reagan Administration was to restore American strategic superiority over the Soviet Union. Once the 'margin of safety' was restored, the US would be better able to 'defend its interests' around the world, extend its own influence and 'roll back' that of the Soviet Union.⁶²

Reagan's policy towards the Soviet Union was different from that of his predecessors. He believed that détente was a one-way street and he initiated a strategy which not only called for the military containment of the Soviet Union but also its political and economic isolation in the international arena. Reagan's hostility was emphasised by his rhetoric which talked of Moscow as an enemy who reserved 'the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, to achieve their immoral ends.'⁶³ Similarly, in 1983, he called the Soviet Union 'the focus of evil in the modern world' and claimed that its goal was 'the eventual domination of all the peoples of the earth'.⁶⁴

In order to match the superiority of the Soviet nuclear forces in Europe, the Reagan Administration soon decided to expand America's military strength and committed itself to restoring US military superiority. For instance, in US military spending, there was a real increase during Reagan's first term. In 1980, the US defence budget stood at \$197 billion, which was approximately 5.5 per cent of America's gross domestic product. In 1985, the

⁶² Quoted in McMahan, J., *Reagan and the World. Imperial Policy in the New Cold War* (London: Pluto, 1984), pp.1-3.

⁶³ The President's news conference, 29 January 1981. See Public Papers of the Presidents, Ronald W. Reagan, 1981, p.57.

⁶⁴ Quoted from Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States – Ronald W. Reagan, 1983 (Washington, D. C.: 1984, U.S. Government Printing Office), p.363.

figure had risen more than 7 per cent and the defence budget stood at \$296 billion.⁶⁵ In this period, the development of major new strategic weapon systems, such as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and anti-satellite weapons (ASAT), were under way. Plans to modernise tactical nuclear weapons and 'dual-capable' delivery systems were also made.

This emphasis upon the need to meet the Soviet Union's military capacity went together with greater belligerency in Reagan's Third World policies. Being a global power, the US saw the Third World as the major arena of the Cold War and aimed to restore American hegemony. In order to reverse the gains made by the Soviets in the Third World, the Reagan Administration started a campaign to support right-wing guerrillas, suppress Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador and to overthrow Marxist regimes in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique. On the other hand, it demonstrated willingness to intervene in key states or to offer threats of force against states opposed to the US, such as Libya and Nicaragua.

In pursuing this policy, the Reagan Administration expected and sought the political support from its European allies. However, there were serious European-American differences over East-West issues. In terms of Reagan's global strategy, the Europeans were taken aback and distressed by the belligerent posture of the Reagan Administration in the early 1980s. Benefiting both economically and psychologically from the easing of tensions on the Continent, the West Europeans were not about to jeopardise all that had

⁶⁵ Quoted from Kaplan, L. S., *NATO and the United States. The Enduring Alliance*, updated edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), p.141. Also in Halliday, F., *The Making of the Second Cold War*, 2nd edition (Thetford, Norfolk: Thetford Press Limited, 1986), p.235.

been gained by détente. Though accepting the need to restrict the sale of certain Western exports of high technology, the Europeans refused to isolate the Soviets either economically or diplomatically as they believed that Soviet behaviour could be modified by improving the prospects of economic cooperation with the West. The US therefore argued that the West Europeans were not doing enough to assist the US in the global arena while the allies were extremely upset by the Administration's hostility to détente. As a result, the more the United States pressed the Europeans for assistance in the Third World, the greater the strains on the Atlantic alliance.

As regards Reagan's Third World policies, the reason why the Europeans did not share American view was because they did not want to increase tensions with the Soviet in Europe by aggravating East-West tensions in the Third World. The Europeans regarded the nature of these regional problems as primarily socio-economic and instead of using military force, they preferred to deal with the Third World nations by diplomatic and economic means. On the other hand, the West European states believed in upholding international law, particularly the principle of nonintervention in the affairs of sovereign states. This explained the reason why the Europeans strongly opposed Reagan's support for the Contra rebels in Nicaragua and the American invasion of Grenada in 1983.

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher became the British Prime Minister with little background in foreign policy. Based on her instinctive pro-American bias, she believed that a strong American leadership was vital in keeping the West European countries united, and in maintaining extended deterrence. It was essential to prevent American attention being

diverted to another theatre.⁶⁶ She also naturally accepted that British interests were best protected through the continued good favour of the United States and that Europe could not replace that. In November 1980, Reagan came into office with an extreme hostility against 'the evil empire', the USSR.⁶⁷ With Reagan in office, Thatcher's passion for the American connection and her interest in foreign policy matters increased. A very special personal relationship was developed between the President and Thatcher from the start of Reagan's presidency. The two leaders shared the same ideological approach on issues such as free market economy and taxation in the domestic sphere. As regards foreign policy, the two leaders both wanted a strong defence posture and were famous for their strong opposition to the USSR and Communism. This extraordinary relationship could be proved on occasions as when Reagan overruled those in Washington who opposed American aid to Britain in the Falklands War in 1982 and on the occasions when the USSR and Britain's partners in the EEC employed 'Thatcher's good offices to assist them in some of their own dealings with Washington'.⁶⁸ In terms of the intelligence relationship in the Thatcher-Reagan period, American support provided Britain with a larger pool of intelligence information than any of other European allies could. It cannot be denied that, in the Falklands War in 1982, American support for Britain in fields such as weapon systems and the satellite intelligence information, was of inestimable value.

Not only was the relationship between Reagan and Thatcher good but relations between

⁶⁶ Quoted in Croft, S.(ed), *British Security Policy: The Thatcher Years and the End of the Cold War* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), p.147.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Bartlett, *The Special Relationship. A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, (London: Longman, 1992), p.151.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.148.

both side's ministers and officials were also close. Among the more tangible linkages, the most important one was in the collaboration in the nuclear sphere which has been the bedrock of the special relationship. The decision to purchase the Trident C4 missile from the United States in July 1980 and Britain's readiness to deploy American cruise missiles had enhanced British standing in the United States. The Thatcher government was also one of the few in Europe to increase defence spending by 3 per cent between 1979 and 1985 in real terms.⁶⁹

Britain's United States-European policy in the Thatcher period sought to maintain the American commitment to Europe and minimise friction between the two sides. The view Thatcher adhered to was that only by sharing risks with the United States would Britain be able to exert influence, and she was willing to pursue this policy despite criticism from her allies.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the British sometimes tended to overestimate their own importance and to look to the relationship to operate in more areas than the Americans were willing to permit. Thatcher succeeded in stretching the special relationship on many occasions and could lay claim to be the most influential foreign figure in Washington during much of the Reagan presidency. For example, she made efforts to influence the United States over the Strategic Defence Initiative and at Camp David in December 1984, and achieved a major policy coup by getting Reagan's agreement to a four-point accord that limited the American freedom of manoeuvre on the SDI. This was described by the Institute for Strategic Studies as 'Europe's most important political accomplishment since the President

⁶⁹ Bartlett, *The Special Relationship*, p.150.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Croft, *British Security Policy: The Thatcher Years and the End of the Cold War*, p.150.

raised the SDI issue in 1983'.⁷¹ However, she still could not overcome the restraints of the special relationship. The success in limiting the American's manoeuvre on the SDI did not mean that, on issues of fundamental military importance to the US, Britain had any kind of veto over American activity, especially when the United States felt its vital security interests to be at stake, notably the Grenada affair in 1983

III. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

As said at the start of the thesis, according to their nature and the relations of the protagonists, crises can be classified as 'crises between adversaries' and 'crises between allies'. The most salient differences between the two types of crises is that the risk in a crisis between allies is not about the danger of the two going to war with each other, or of one side seeking unilateral gains at the expense of the other. Rather, it is about the dangers to the functioning or termination of an alliance, the issue of burden-sharing, or sharing gains and risks. Though some may argue that crises between allies – or as Bell defined as the 'intra-mural crises' – should be treated as problems of *alliance management* rather than *crisis management*, it should be remembered that the literature concerning alliance management is very limited and these types of crises do share similar characteristics: for instance, they both have the potential for systemic change and produce stresses and strains in a relationship among the members of the alliance; they cause hostility and tension between the protagonists, though may not be so severe; moreover, the level of intensity,

⁷¹ Bartlett, *The Special Relationship*, p.152.

risk and stakes involved may also be of great importance to them.

Definitions of 'Crisis' and 'Crisis Management'

The term 'crisis' is used to describe events or situations which are confined within a short period of time, sometimes days or weeks rather than years. A 'crisis' means a turning-point or a decision-point which can be applied either on the global level or on the individual level. In this study, we adopt Bell's definition of a crisis as 'a tract of time in which the conflicts within a relationship rise to a level which threatens to transform the nature of that relationship'.⁷² Bell argues that the threatened transformation when talking of international crises is from peace to war, but there is an important category which are called 'intra-mural crises of alliance systems', in which the threatened transformation is from 'alliance to rupture'. There are a number of alternative definitions of a crisis used by writers in the field and each of the definitions reflects the writer's own disciplinary attitude. For instance, Oran Young defines it as 'a set of rapidly unfolding events which raises the impact of destabilising forces in the general international system or any of its subsystems substantially above normal levels and increases the likelihood of violence in the system'.⁷³ In addition, a crisis normally implies 'a deliberate challenge and a deliberated response, of a kind which both sides hope will change the course of history in their favour'.⁷⁴ Its period

⁷² Bell, C., *Crisis Diplomacy*, in Martin, *Strategic Thought In the Nuclear Age*, pp.157-186.

⁷³ Young, O. R., *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Crises* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.10.

⁷⁴ Buchan, A., *Crisis Management: the New Diplomacy* (Boulogne-Swe-Seine: The Atlantic Institute, 1964), p.21.

covers ‘the formulation of the challenge, the definition of the issue, the decision on the appropriate reaction to the challenge, the impact of such a reaction to the challenge, the impact of such a reaction upon the adversary and the clarification of his response’.⁷⁵

As regards ‘management’, it implies rational, dispassionate calculated decision-making and control of a crisis. Here it means measures which are taken in order to isolate and mitigate crises. Both Oran Young and Glenn Snyder have observed that ‘the term crisis management has been used rather vaguely in the literature with a variety of meanings and emphases’ and it is seldom defined precisely or employed consistently.⁷⁶ Although Young is referring to its use in a wider and more general field of conflict management, his remark certainly is relevant to this study. For our purpose here, the notion of crisis management describes the aim of remaining as much in control of events as possible or, we could say, it is ‘an attempt to reconcile both the conflicting issues and the common interests of both parties’.⁷⁷

Classifications of Crises

It is important to discuss some categories of potential war-bearing crises. Crises may arise either in the central balance of power, or in local balances of power. According to the origins of crisis, Bell divided crises into four main categories,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Williams, *Crisis Management: Confrontation and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age*, p.27.

⁷⁷ See Roberts, J. M., *Decision-Making during International Crises* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.99.

1. *Adversary crisis of the central balance* - this sort of crisis is potentially productive of major war, either nuclear or conventional, as between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, or between the Soviet Union and the US, e.g. Cuba crisis of 1962.
2. *Intramural crises of the power spheres or alliances systems of the dominant powers*, - potentially productive of local military repression or a punitive strike, e.g. Czechoslovakia 1968 or Hungary 1956 as intramural crises of the Warsaw Pact, and the Suez crisis of 1956.
3. *Adversary crisis of local balances* - which are productive of conventional wars, e.g. Middle East war of 1973.
4. *Intramural crises of regional alliances or Organizations* – e.g. Biafra as an intramural crisis of the OAU.⁷⁸

In Bell's crisis typology, adversary crises occur between states of different alliances who view each other as opponents while intramural crises mean that problems occur between nations of the same alliance. Not every crisis that occurs will fit exactly into one category. A crisis can be classed as either intramural or adversary and sometimes, a crisis may move from one type to another according to the evolution of events. She has emphasised that the essence of true crisis in any given relationship is that 'the conflicts within it rise to a level which threatens to transform the nature of the relationship'. In adversary crisis, it means from peace to war whereas in intramural crisis it is from alliance to rupture.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ There are also two other categories of crises: pseudocrisis and subcrisis, for episodes which are usually called crises but which do not quite live up to the name. For details, see Bell, C., *The Conventions of Crisis. A Study in Diplomatic Management* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.8-9.

⁷⁹ Bell, *Conventions of Crisis. A Study in Diplomatic Management*, p.9.

In Williams' crisis typology, crises can also be classified into two types: a *foreign policy crisis*, and an *international crisis*. The best way of clarifying this idea is to suggest that 'a foreign policy crisis involves an urgent problem facing a *single* government, whereas an international crisis involves certain kinds of stresses and strains in the relationship *between* governments'.⁸⁰ Although the two kinds of crisis are not synonymous, neither are they mutually exclusive. A foreign policy crisis can be - although it need not be - part of an international crisis, whereas an international crisis invariably involves at least two foreign policy crises. The difference, therefore, is partly a matter of substance. The term 'foreign policy crisis' is both broader and narrower than an 'international crisis'. It is broader in the sense that it is less specific and is applicable to a greater variety of situations than those usually encompassed by the term 'international crisis'. It is narrower in that it applies only to the predicament of a single state. A foreign policy crisis has been defined as a situation facing the decision-makers of a particular government which poses a high threat to their values and objectives, takes them by surprise and gives them little time in which to formulate a response. The international situation can be seen as providing the 'occasion for decision' and is treated analytically as a crucial input to the decision-making process. A crisis in international politics is a process of interaction occurring at higher levels and perceived intensity than the ordinary flow of events and a sharp break from the ordinary flow of politics.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Quoted in Williams, *Crisis Management*, p.22.

⁸¹ Neuhold, H., *Principles and Implementation of Crisis Management: Lessons from the Past*, in Frei, D., *International Crises and Crisis Management* (London: Gower Publishing Company Ltd., 1976), p.4 -18.

Two Main Schools of Thought on Crisis Management

One school of thought on crisis management believes that its purpose is to avoid war and that the main object is to search for peaceful resolutions of confrontations. Success is wholly measured by the avoidance of war. The aim is to control the situation and dampen down the conflict. This school sees the crisis itself as the real enemy, and the nations involved are actually partners in the task of eliminating the dangers of war and restoring things to normal. Because of the unpredictable nature and the danger of events going out of control, high risks must be avoided. In this sense, the two sides share the same risks and have a mutual interest in avoiding escalation. It is acknowledged that the fate of each state depends not only on their own behaviour but also on that of the opponent. Consequently, considerable emphasis is placed on the common interests of the participants.

The second school of thought about crisis management lies at the opposite extreme and sees crisis management solely as an exercise in winning. The objective is to make the enemy back down, to gain concessions from him, and thereby to further one's ambitions in the international arena. According to this school, it is the opposing state and not the crisis itself that is the enemy. Far from being a partnership, there is fierce competition or rivalry in which the protagonists attempt to manipulate or influence the adversary's behaviour in desired directions. The central question is not 'will this action increase the probability of war?' but 'will it force the adversary to capitulate?' If higher risks are necessary to achieve desired results then so be it. This is a far more parochial or selfish viewpoint in which successful crisis management is defined as gaining maximum concessions from the

adversary and making minimum concessions oneself: the ratio of gains to losses is the essential measure of performance. To put it slightly differently, it appears that this school of thought regards a crisis as a zero-sum situation in which the gains accruing to one side automatically mean a loss for the opponent. There is no conception of common interest uniting the participants, only of the conflicting interests that divide them. And crisis management is the art of ensuring that in this conflict of interests, one's own will prevails.

Williams suggests that since these two interpretations of crisis management are diametrically opposed, though each interpretation offers considerable insight into crisis management, the insight is incomplete. Therefore, the essential point about crisis management is that it involves elements of both schools. As Williams has argued:

...crisis management is concerned on the one hand with the procedures for controlling and regulating a crisis so that it does not get out of hand and lead to war, and on the other with ensuring that the crisis is resolved on a satisfactory basis in which the vital interests of the state are secured and protected. The second aspect will almost invariably necessitate vigorous actions carrying substantial risks. One task of crisis management, therefore, is to temper these risks, to keep them as low and as controllable as possible, while the other is to ensure that the coercive diplomacy and risk-taking tactics are as effective as possible in gaining concessions from the adversary and maintaining one's own position relatively intact.⁸²

Perhaps the best way of looking at it is as an extension of traditional diplomacy, where the purpose is 'to obtain what one wants without recourse to violence'. However, the outbreak

⁸² See Williams, 'Crisis Management', in Baylis, J., Booth, K., Garnett, J and Williams, P., *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies* (London: Croom-Helm, 1975), p.157.

the peaceful resolution of an international crisis is an awesome task. A crisis situation is intractable and far from amenable to precise manipulation and control. However, even at the best of times, statesmen have only a very tenuous control over events. Even if they foresee certain problems or dangers, there is often nothing they can do to avoid them.

Criteria of Success in Crisis Diplomacy

We have now to attempt to establish some criteria by which crisis diplomacy or crisis management may be classed as successful or unsuccessful. At first sight, it might appear that only one criterion is necessary: *Whether or not war was averted*. But we should be carefully to class what is a real success for crisis management. For example, the Munich Crisis of 1938, in which war was averted for a time, but only for a year or so, has been seen as a bad outcome for the Western powers. This brings up the obvious point that, when we ask whether a particular episode of crisis diplomacy has been a success, we should also ask ‘a success for whom?’. whether it was a success for the whole international society and whether it served the ends of peace or justice or stability. In regard to crises between allies, as Bell suggests, there are three main criteria which can be applied:

1. Was the ability of the alliance to function maintained or impaired?
2. What was the influence of the crisis settlement on the degree of satisfaction of the members with their positions within it?
3. What was the impact of the settlement on the credibility or ‘credit’ of the dominant

member of the alliance, either within the system or outside? ⁸³

IV. MODEL OF PATTERN OF ALLIES' CRISIS BEHAVIOUR

As mentioned before, Neustadt explains a pattern of behaviour found in the Suez Crisis and Skybolt Affair. The crisis is woven from four strands: muddled perceptions, stifled communications, disappointed expectations, and paranoid reactions. The phases of crises, as he claimed, start like a spiral. In turn, 'each ally misreads the other, each is reticent with the other, each is surprised by the other and each replies in kind' while 'only when one bows low before the other's latest grievance does the spiral stop'.⁸⁴ This study suggests that Neustadt's pattern of crisis behaviour was only to some extent applicable to these four crises and now attempts to offer a new model of 'the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour' which shows a much greater applicability to crises which happened during the Reagan-Thatcher period.

The 'Model of the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour' suggests that by observing the process of how a crisis originated, escalated, then de-escalated, we should divide the process of crises into six main phases: (*see Table 2.1 The Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour*)

⁸³ Bell, *Crisis Diplomacy, in Strategic Thought in the Nuclear Age*, p.161.

⁸⁴ See Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, p.56.

Phase 1: Divergences of Interests: A typical crisis starts when there are conflicting interests between the members of the alliance. These conflicting interests are sufficient to produce mild conflict behaviour.

Phase 2: Different Perceptions: Typically the allies share the same information. However, due to their own interests and stakes involved in the crisis, they arrive at different conclusions in interpreting it. As a result, they perceive the crisis in different ways which consequently results in different perceptions between the allies towards the crisis.

Phase 3: Wrong Expectations Towards Each Other: Each side then estimates the reaction of the other party by assessing which of the other's interests that are at stake. Since these estimates are based on different perceptions, each side develops wrong expectations about the other's response or the degree of support that the other will provide.

Phase 4: Irritation or Indignant Feeling: When there are wrong expectations, they cause misunderstandings and miscalculations which bring out irritation or indignant feelings towards each other.

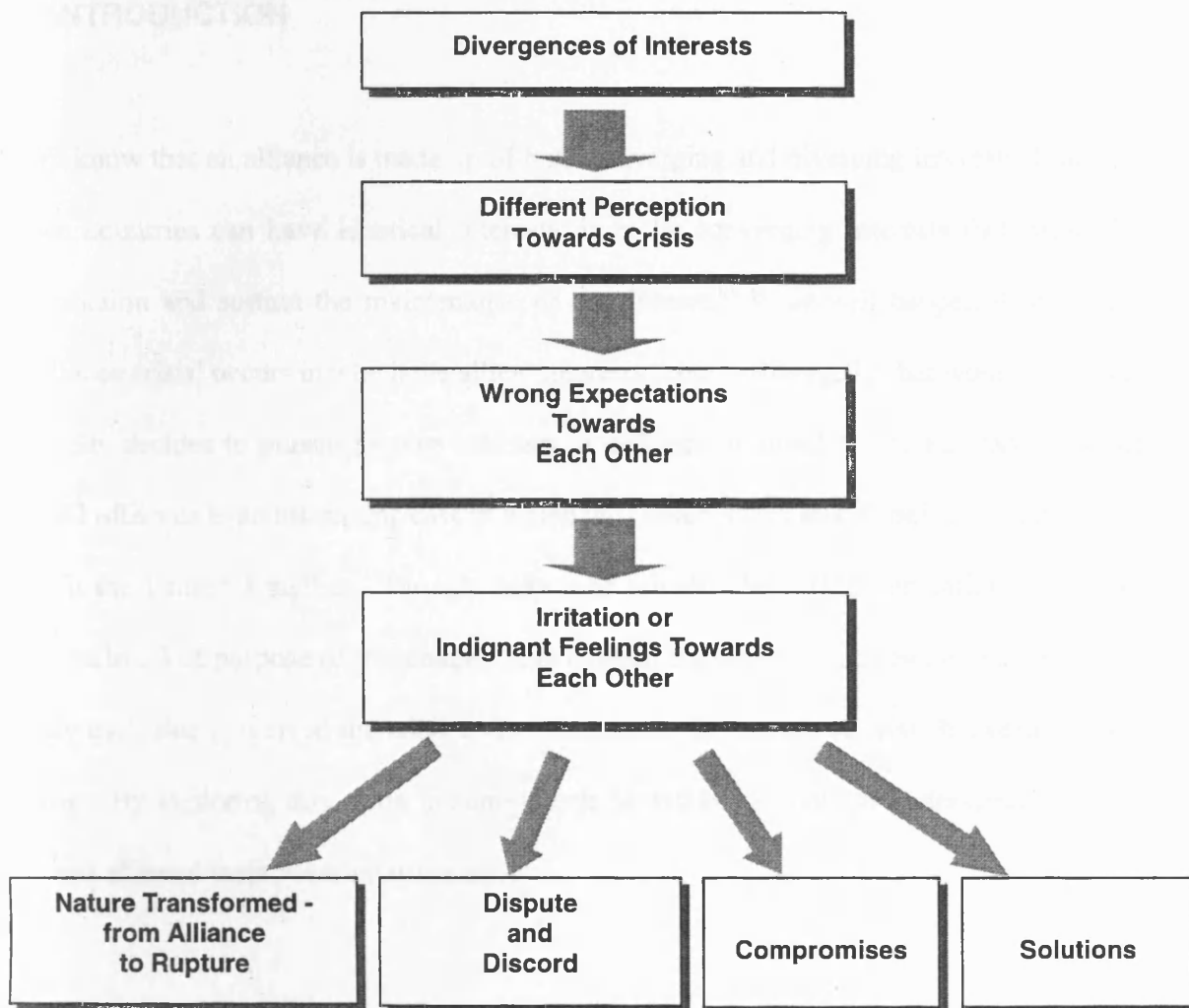
Phase 5: Bargaining or Confrontation Period: The two sides are drawn into a bargaining period or more seriously, a confrontation period, and then comes the threshold of a crisis. It should be noted that in this stage, the degree of tension may rise suddenly and beyond the crisis threshold into a confrontation phase. During this period, the intensity varies and

rarely stays at one level of intensity. The process of crisis may recur. There will be different levels of intensity with peaks and troughs caused by provocative actions.

Phase 6: Outcomes: After a period of time, the process of crisis might come to a final phase with four possible outcomes – ‘*nature of relationship transformed*’, ‘*dispute and discord*’, ‘*compromise*’ and ‘*solution or settlement*’. Once a settlement is found, there may be no change in the alliance. If there be a compromise, the interests of the two parties will again seem to coincide. If there are disputes and discord between the allies, while the threat of transforming the nature of the alliance relationship will not happen, their relationship could be damaged. Finally if no settlement is found, the nature of the relationship may be transformed from alliance to rupture, which can even cause a dealignment or realignment. Allies may become adversaries.

This work is now going to examine four particular historical case studies – the Falklands War in 1982, the US invasion of Grenada in 1983, the US air raids on Libya in 1986, and the Persian Gulf reflagging operation in 1987. It attempts to reflect on how far the Anglo-American alliance confirms or denies the above Model and its particular focus will be upon the way in which crises were managed by the two governments and how the events impacted upon their wider relationship.

Table 2.1
The Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour



Chapter 3

THE FALKLANDS WAR, 1982.

I. INTRODUCTION

We know that an alliance is made up of both converging and diverging interests. Since no two countries can have identical interests, it is the converging interests that cause the formation and sustain the maintenance of an alliance.⁸⁵ What will happen if an 'intra-alliance crisis' occurs in which the allies' interests seem to diverge? What would happen if an ally decides to pursue its own interests in defiance of an ally? The Falklands War of 1982 offers us as an interesting case in which the United States found itself in a controversy with the United Kingdom. Though there was initially discord, co-operation ultimately prevailed. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the different interests of each side, the way each side perceived the crisis and to illuminate the sources of crisis between the two allies. By exploring this crisis in some depth, it will be possible to understand how this event affected their wider relationship.

Background

The Falklands consist of two main islands and about 200 smaller ones covering an area of

⁸⁵ Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred.A.Knopf, 1948), p.181-6.

4,700 square miles, some 300 miles from Patagonia on the Argentinian mainland and 480 miles northeast of Cape Horn.⁸⁶ (See *Map 3.1 - The Falkland Islands*.) The two largest islands are East and West Falkland. In 1982 the islands were both underdeveloped and underpopulated. The population on the Falkland islands was 1849 (including 36 Royal Marines) in 1980. According to the Shackleton Report of 1982, 75 per cent of the population were born on the islands, 95 per cent of them were British and two-third of the islanders displayed a stubborn will to stay British.⁸⁷ The islanders had a form of internal self-government, based on a Legislative Council with six elected members, and Britain was responsible for defence and foreign policy. According to the Shackleton Report of 1976, most of the 4700 square miles of land was owned by British landlords, among them the Falklands Island Company alone owned 46 percent of the land, 50 percent of the 650,000 sheep, and employed one-third of the workforce while others worked for the government.⁸⁸ The immediate economic value of the islands was small with an annual public revenue in the years 1979-1981 of 2 million pounds. The main economic activities were sheep-rearing, the exploitation of kelp as a source of iodine, fishing and hunting and the primary export was wool. In the case of oil exploration which involved operations outside Falklands waters, the Shackleton Report of 1976 said:

⁸⁶ See Latin-America and the United States After the Falklands/Malvinas Crisis, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, 2nd session, July 20 and August 5, 1982, U.S. G. P. O., 1982 (*Congressional Record*, H381-66), p.114. Also in The Sunday Times Insight Team, *The Falklands War* (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1982), p.33. Map 2.1 was reproduced from Fursdon, E., *The Falklands Aftermath* (London: Leo Cooper, 1988), p.xii-xiii.

⁸⁷ Hastings, M. & Jenkins, S., *The Battle for the Falklands* (London: Book Club Associates, 1983), p.7.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Richardson, *When Allies Differ. Anglo-American Relations during the Suez and Falklands Crisis*, p.17.

Map 3.1

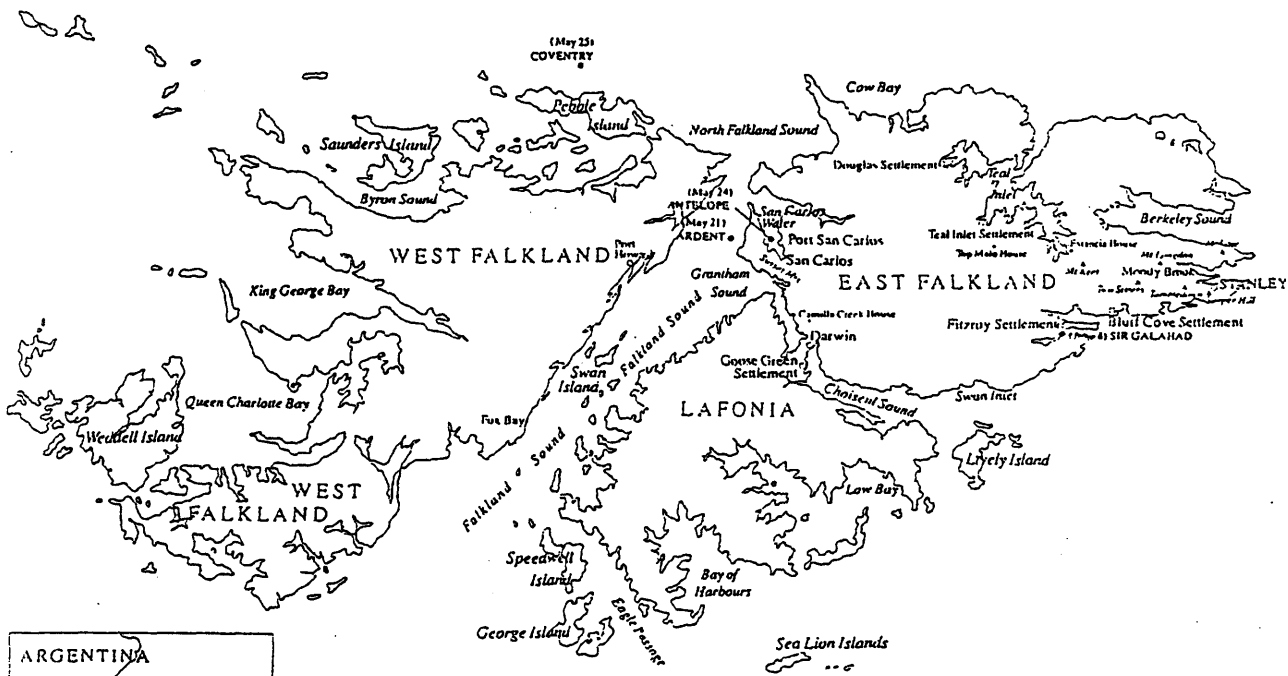
The Falkland Islands

SOUTH

ATLANTIC

OCEAN

(May 25)
• ATLANTIC CONVEYOR



It appears to us very unlikely that any exploration programme can be embarked upon in the offshore Falkland area without the agreement and co-operation of Argentina. Indeed it is doubtful in the extreme that an oil company would accept a unilateral offer of exploration/production licences by the Falkland Islands government without firm assurance that this was also acceptable to the Argentinian. Not only is the exploration/production expenditure too high to undertake such risks but the logistics of an enterprise that avoided Argentina would probably be economically unattractive.⁸⁹

Since it is impossible to find out who first sighted the Falklands and Spaniards, Britons, and Dutch are almost equally entitled to the credit, the islands have therefore acquired a variety of names such as the Sansons, the Sebaldes, Hawkins Land, the Malouines, the Malvinas and the Falklands.⁹⁰ The name Falkland is generally considered to be a derivation from Falkland Sound, the channel between the two principal land masses in the Falkland group which was named by the British sailor, Captain John Strong, who made the first recorded landing on the islands in 1690 when he was voyaging to Chile and was driven east from the Cape in a storm. Strong named the two main islands after Anthony Cary who was at that time a Commissioner, and later First Lord, of the Admiralty.⁹¹ Although Spain's control of its traditional territories in the Americas - which embraced the Falklands - was formally confirmed under the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, this did little to restrain British and French expeditions in the period of intense trade rivalry between eighteenth-century

⁸⁹ 'Economic Survey of the Falkland Islands'. Prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd., July 1976, Vol. 1, p.181.

⁹⁰ See Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.1.

⁹¹ See Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.2. While the Argentinian name for the islands, the Malvinas, is the Spanish form of the French name Les Malouines, an echo of St. Malo, the port in Brittany from which fishermen and seal hunters set out to exploit the resources of the South Atlantic in the early eighteenth century. See Northedge, F. S., 'The Falkland Islands: Origins of the British Involvement', *International Relations*, November 1982, pp.2170.

Spain, France and Britain. In 1829 the new state of the United Provinces of La Plata (Provincias Unidas del Rio de la Plata), the later Argentina, which had broken away from the mother country, claimed that the Falklands were part of its post-colonial legacy from Spain. On 2 January 1833, being instructed by Viscount Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, to take and hold the islands for Britain, Captain James Onslow arrived at the Falklands with two warships and forced the Argentinian commander to leave. Ever since then, for nearly a century and a half – until the Argentinians invaded Port Stanley on 2 April 1982, Britain administered them, first as a Crown Colony, then as a self-governing dependency. Though Britain has occupied and administered the islands from 1833, Argentina never recognised the legitimacy of the British claim to the islands. Nevertheless, due to the conflicting legal claims not being clear, neither can have a conclusive case in the eyes of international law.

The Argentinian case rests on the argument that discovery alone has never been accepted by international lawyers as the foundation of sovereignty. The Argentinians therefore believe that the islands were seized by Britain and rightly belonged to Argentina. In the British case, Britain emphasised that her rights in the Falklands ‘were founded on original discovery, and subsequent occupation of the said Islands’.⁹² Though it is true that English navigators were among the first to visit the Falklands, other European seamen did likewise. Therefore, little credence can be attached to Britain’s claim or be used as a basis for the right to sovereignty over territory in the eyes of modern international law. Second, the British asserted the doctrine of prescription. It broadly states that continuous possession over a period of time constitutes a right to ownership and this right is clearly reinforced if

⁹² Quoted in ‘British and Foreign State Papers, 1832-33’, London, 1836, Vol. XXII, pp.346-7.

that possession is not contested by the world. In international law, however, this is again little more than an affirmation that might, if sustained for long enough, be right. Self-determination is the third principle and also is the strongest British argument. Respect for the wishes of inhabitants - two-thirds of the indigenous population of the islands want to stay British - on matters of sovereignty is enshrined in the United Nations Charter and has underlain decades of decolonisation. However, the Argentinians argue that under this logic any nation can take another's land, implant settlers and claim it.⁹³

On the surface, the position of Argentina and Britain were very clear - the Argentinians wanted to obtain sovereignty over the islands in the belief that national territory had been wrongfully occupied for 150 years, and the British Foreign Office, in the interests of rationalising Britain's overseas commitments, wanted to concede sovereignty. Both parties had not altered their positions since negotiations were initiated under the auspices of the United Nations in 1965. The British proposed the transfer of the sovereignty of the islands to Argentina, with Buenos Aires leasing the islands back to Britain for a number of years, which would enable Britain to continue to defend the interests of the islanders. However, this plan was rejected by the islanders. The problem was that the Falklanders had long depended on British imperial defence against their hostile neighbour, Argentina; once that umbrella of protection was removed they would have become increasingly exposed.⁹⁴ Under these circumstances, the islanders adamantly wished to remain British. These years of negotiation not only had no result but caused equal frustration to both sides.

⁹³ For a review of these debates, see Northedge, 'The Falkland Islands: Origins of the British Involvement', *International Relations*, November 1982, pp.2167-2189.

⁹⁴ Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.7.

In the period before the Argentinian invasion, there were several developments which encouraged Argentina to consider that the British were going to concede sovereignty. First, the British government only maintained a token military presence on the Islands which was obviously incapable of defending them against any serious attack. Second, from 1981 the Thatcher government had become preoccupied with budgetary considerations, and the Ministry of Defence had imposed restrictions on the Royal Navy to save money. In the 1981 Defence Review, the Ministry of Defence decided to lower Britain's capacity to act outside the NATO area, focus naval power mainly on submarines, reduce the size of the Navy and limit the role of Britain's surface fleet.⁹⁵ On 30 June 1981, the Ministry of Defence announced that the ice-patrol ship and the last British naval presence in the Antarctic, HMS *Endurance*, would be withdrawn from the South Atlantic at the end of the 1981-82 tour. The impending removal of HMS *Endurance* was viewed by the Argentinian Junta as a clear sign of reduced British commitment to her possessions in the area.⁹⁶ Third, the new British Nationality Act 1981 had clarified that those inhabitants of the Falkland islands who were not themselves 'patrials or did not have a UK-born grandparent were excluded from British citizenship' and the British government affirmed that it had no commitment to the Falklands which conflicted with this legislative change.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ See the United Kingdom Defence Programme: the Way Forward, 1981. London, HMSO, Cmnd 8288, June 1981.

⁹⁶ Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.32-33.

⁹⁷ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, House of Commons, 11 December 1980, Col. 2425. For an analysis of the right of Self-Determination, see Fox, H., 'Legal Issues in the Falkland Islands Confrontation 1982', *International Relations*, November 1983, pp.2454-2475.

The final, and most important development of all, was the British failure to respond to all the indications of Argentina's increased military preparations despite the fact that plenty of warnings were issued by the Argentinian press. For instance, on 29 January 1982 the *Latin American Weekly Report*, a magazine which itemised and analysed the policies of the Argentinian military regime, indicated that Argentina would be presenting Britain with an ultimatum, calling for more frequent talks and for a firm timetable for the return of the islands. Should Britain fail to comply, negotiations would be broken off, and 'the government will consider military action'. Again on 12 February 1982 the *Latin American Weekly Report* indicated that 'Argentina will set a series of pre-conditions before continuing talks with Britain on the future of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands ... If these (conditions) were not met, other forms of action, including recovery of the islands by military means would be considered.'⁹⁸ However, in the British press, no such warnings were reported which had encouraged the belief in Argentina that Britain was not sufficiently interested in the Falklands. When the British resisted the Argentinian invasion, the President of Argentina, General Galtieri, said that he and his colleagues were 'amased'.⁹⁹

Argentinian-American Relations before 1982

Since 1976 the political circumstances in Argentina had changed as the economic policies of the military regime had multiplied the foreign debt by a factor of four. In December 1981

⁹⁸ See *Latin American Weekly Report*, 12 February 1982, p.10.

⁹⁹ *Observer*, 11 July 1982.

a three-man military Junta replaced the previous military Videla regime in Argentina, with General Leopoldo Galtieri, the new army chief of staff, as President. Galtieri relied on the support of the Argentinian Navy whose Commander-in-Chief was Admiral Jorge Anaya and the Foreign Minister, Nicanor Costa Mendez. However, with such a gloomy economic record, popular discontent with the government was still rising. For Galtieri, the Malvinas not only provided a means of mobilising the country behind the Junta on a popular nationalist issue but could obscure the regime's economic and political embarrassments.

Admiral Anaya, known to have hard-line views on the Argentinian claim to the 'Malvinas' and also to be a close friend of Galtieri, made an agreement with the President in December 1981 which involved assurances on a range of policy issues. These included an understanding that the recovery of the Falklands should be achieved 'within the two years of Galtieri's presidency term, preferably before January 1983, the 150th anniversary of the British seizure'.¹⁰⁰ As a naval officer, Anaya believed that the islands would provide the navy with a southern base from which it could control Cape Horn while remaining safe from Chilean firepower and also with an opportunity for the navy to play a global role. Under Costa Mendez, the Foreign Minister who was firmly conservative and nationalist, Argentina's claim to the Falklands became more than just a slogan. He saw in the pursuit of Argentina's territorial claims against both Chile and Britain a means of strengthening the nation's identity. Costa Mendez was aware that, for the Falklands invasion to be accepted as a *fait accompli*, the Argentinians needed to prepare the diplomatic ground. A legitimate reason had to be created; support from Latin America would be important, as would

¹⁰⁰ Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.46.

American neutrality and possibly a Russian veto in the UN Security Council in the case of war breaking out. According to the Navy's invasion plan, Costa Mendez was sure that the British would not respond militarily because the proposed date for the invasion of the Falkland islands was between July and October 1982, by which time HMS *Endurance* would have already been withdrawn while any likely British naval response made would have seemed impossible by the winter weather of the South Atlantic. As to Third World countries at the UN, Mendez believed they would side with Argentina and there would be insufficient support for a vote favourable to Britain in the Security Council. Even if there were sufficient support, the USSR would veto it because of Argentina's anti-Colonialist stance. As to the possibility of sanctions imposed by Britain, they would be ineffective and short-lived.

What remained uncertain was the attitude of the United States. Over the years the United States had repeatedly claimed that it 'takes no positions on the merits of the competing claims to sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, nor on the legal theories on which the parties rely'.¹⁰¹ As Britain was in possession of the islands, the stance obviously favoured the British side, but the United States consistently asserted its neutrality in the dispute. The relations between the Carter Administration and Argentina had been severely strained due to the Junta's appalling human rights record. However, from 1981 the political circumstances had changed. The Reagan Administration was very interested in the role of Argentina in Latin America and wanted to improve relations between Argentina and the United States. For instance, Secretary of State Alexander Haig argued before a

¹⁰¹ Enders, T., Assistant Sec. of State for Inter-American Affairs, in *Congressional Record*, H381-66, p.117.

Congressional Committee in favour of a restoration of arms sales to Argentina on the grounds that Argentina and the United States shared similar values; also because the present Junta did not violate the human rights of as many of its citizens as its predecessors had. Two advisers to the new presidential candidate Reagan, Roger Fontaine and General Daniel Graham, visited Argentina in 1981. Unlike the Carter government, they averted their attention from the prisons, torture chambers and human rights abuses to discuss ending the arms embargo (implemented under Carter) and greeted the Argentinians as fellow fighters against Communism in Latin America. General Vernon Walters, former deputy head of the CIA, and other military officials of the new Reagan Administration also paid visits to Argentina in the following months. In August Galtieri was invited back as a guest of General Edward Meyer. In November, Galtieri visited Washington where his appointments included dinner with Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, and a meeting with Richard Allen, Reagan's National Security Adviser.

The most important reason for the revival of US interest in Argentina was related to the Reagan Administration's strategy of resisting Cuban-based communist influence in Central and South America. The Reagan Administration believed that if both Argentina and South Africa allied themselves to the United States, it could help ensure the security of the South Atlantic against Soviet maritime power. Besides, Argentina would make an ideal southern bulwark against the spread of communist influence in Central America and be a useful ally in the anti-Communist struggle in Central America. For instance, Galtieri agreed to send troops to Central America to assist the 57 American advisers in El Salvador permitted by Congress. Argentina was said to have 500 soldiers involved in assorted

activities, including establishing intelligence centres and training camps and providing material assistance to anti-Communist troops, throughout Central America.¹⁰²

Since they had developed such close ties with the United States, the Argentinians believed that even if war broke out, the United States would remain neutral. But when Argentinian officials tried to hint at their planned action to the Americans, the Americans did not understand the message, failed to respond and thus gave the Argentinians the wrong impression that the United States would not oppose their invasion of the Falkland islands. For example, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, described the warning she was given by Esteban Takacs, the Argentinian ambassador to the United States, as follows:

He [Esteban Takacs] called me one day and said he'd be in New York and why not have lunch. ... We went to the 21 Club and in the course of lunch he talked about the Argentinians who were arrested on South Georgia ... were just scavengers and fishermen. He said: 'You know people in Argentina take this very seriously. The Argentinian people take this even more seriously than the Beagle Channel dispute.' Well this was like water off a duck's back to me. I probably said: 'That's very interesting' and changed the subject.¹⁰³

Contrary to Argentinian optimism as regards the Americans likely reaction towards an invasion of the Falklands, Haig vigorously denied this, saying 'there is absolutely no basis

¹⁰² Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, pp.45-7.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Richardson, *When Allies Differ*, pp.114-5.

for this misconception since no sane US official could have contributed to such a cataclysmic misunderstanding'.¹⁰⁴

In fact, he argued that the United States repeatedly warned the Argentinians that the US was strongly against military action. However, it seemed that these warnings had not been received by the Argentinian side because even Galtieri himself made clear that he felt both surprised and betrayed by America's support for Britain in the war. The Junta believed that its rapprochement with the United States had secured American acquiescence to an Argentinian invasion of the Falklands.

Anglo-American Co-operation on the Eve of the Falklands War

In February 1982, the old Falklands negotiations which had been postponed by the Galtieri upheaval last year started in the UN in New York. During the talks, the Argentinians demanded a standing permanent commission on the Falklands issue under alternating British and Argentinian chairmanship, asked for monthly meetings and mentioned a year-end deadline on the talks. The British delegation, Richard Luce, the junior Minister responsible for the Falklands, accepted the proposals for 'regular' meetings and for a 'review' after one year. However, this deal was struck due to its ratification by the Argentinian side. In March Costa Mendez refused to issue the New York Communiqué and put out a statement saying that 'unless Britain would cede sovereignty in the near future,

¹⁰⁴ Haig, A., *Caveat* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1984), p.296.

Argentina reserved the right to 'employ other means' to regain the islands'.¹⁰⁵ The British officials then began to seek the support of their counterparts in the United States. For instance, Foreign Office Minister Richard Luce asked Thomas Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, to assure Argentina of Britain's good faith and to urge the government to 'keep things cool' during his forthcoming visit to Buenos Aires. Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Secretary, also sent a personal message to Haig in which he expressed his concern at the Argentinian attitude and hoped that the United States would assist in obtaining a peaceful resolution of the dispute. Haig carefully gave the appropriate assurances. On 24 March 1982, the British secret intelligence service in Buenos Aires, having consulted their American counterparts, concluded that Argentina was about to invade the Falklands and correctly predicted the date. The following day the Foreign Office briefed the dangers of the situation to both the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Nicholas Henderson, and the US Chargé d'Affaires in London, Edward Streator. Henderson then delivered a formal letter from Carrington to Haig, informing him of the danger of Argentinian warships operating in the South Georgia area and requested that the United States intervene with the Argentinians to defuse a potentially serious situation. On the eve of the invasion, according to Streator, Carrington also expressed his concerns 'about the American position which had not come down in favour of the British; in fact, not supporting the British, which I relayed to Washington.'¹⁰⁶ Carrington then asked Streator to inform Haig that aggression had been perpetrated and the United States had better decide quickly which side she would be on. At the time both Thatcher and Carrington were aware

¹⁰⁵ Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.51.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Edward Streator, Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy, 28 April 1998, Eaton Square, London.

that the threat in the South Atlantic had extended beyond South Georgia to the Falklands. In the light of a potential crisis, they agreed that three nuclear submarines - HMS *Spartan*, *Splendid* and *Conqueror* - should be sent to the Falklands immediately. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary *Fort Austin* also sailed immediately on the 29th to provide support for HMS *Endurance*. On the same day Henderson went to see Walter Stoessel, Under-Secretary at the State Department, only to be informed that the United States did not wish to take sides in the dispute because both Britain and Argentina were 'good friends'. The Americans merely wished to counsel patience on both parties. Carrington was furious that the United States put Argentina and Britain on an equal footing.

On 31 March Henderson went to see Haig, explained about the indignation caused in London by the lack of American support and gave details of British intelligence reports that left little doubt about the likelihood of an Argentinian attack on Port Stanley. Haig assured Henderson that 'the British had loyally supported the USA, they must get the same help in return' and that 'the USA would do anything they could to try to head off the Argentinians.'¹⁰⁷ Within a few hours, American intelligence sources confirmed the accuracy of the British reports. A working group was set up under Thomas Enders and tried to warn Argentina through diplomatic channels of the dangers of an invasion.¹⁰⁸ However, both Costa Mendez and Galtieri refused to give the US any assurances.

¹⁰⁷ Henderson, N., *Mandarin: The Diaries of An Ambassador, 1969-1982* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994) p.448.

¹⁰⁸ Enders' responsibility was to look after the US interests in Latin America and at this time to ensure that the Falklands conflict did not damage them more than necessary.

On 1 April, Thatcher sent a message to Reagan, asking him to intervene with Galtieri. During a fifty-minute telephone conversation, Reagan argued with Galtieri (who had refused to receive the earlier calls), saying that the use of force would ensure a forceful response from Britain and endanger the friendly ties between Argentina and the United States. He offered to send Vice President George Bush to Buenos Aires to help resolve the problem but Galtieri refused to negotiate with Britain and also failed to give any assurance that Argentina would not use force. On 2 April 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland islands. Carrington and Luce, soon resigned; in the face of what Carrington described as a 'national humiliation' someone had to take the blame. He was replaced by Francis Pym. Thatcher then ordered the despatch of a task force to recover the Falkland Islands.

Up until the invasion, the United States and Britain closely co-operated on several levels: intelligence, ambassadorial, ministerial, and executive. The interests of the two allies coincided in seeing that there would not be an outbreak of hostilities in the South Atlantic. Britain wished to avoid confrontation because it could not defend the islands and did not want to try to retake them, whereas the United States did not want a military confrontation because this might endanger the stability of two friendly governments, force it to choose between them, offer an opportunity for Soviet penetration of Latin America and divert resources from the fight against communism in Central America. But once Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, the disagreement between the two countries on how to respond to the crisis began to emerge.

II. US POLICY TOWARDS THE ARGENTINIAN INVASION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Even-Handedness

Once the invasion occurred Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Argentina and asked its partners in the Commonwealth, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the United States to impose financial sanctions and a trade embargo. It also decided to respond to the invasion by sending a task force to the South Atlantic. Within a week, Australia, Canada and New Zealand all promised support - Canada and Australia had withdrawn their ambassadors from Buenos Aires and New Zealand had severed diplomatic relations with Argentina.¹⁰⁹ Japan came down on Britain's side. Even the communist states seemed little attracted to Argentina's brand of anti-colonialism. China counselled caution while Russia initially maintained a guarded neutrality.

Perhaps the most urgent need for the British was co-operation over sanctions. France and Germany immediately froze Argentinian orders of two frigates and Super Etendard Jets and Exocet missiles, while Belgium and The Netherlands agreed to halt weapons sales to Buenos Aires. Another element in the embargo was the removal of French technical assistance from Argentina. French Mirage crews exercised with British Harriers, playing both attacker and defender to enable the British pilots to get the measure of their likely opponents. Throughout the conflict, France provided a stream of technical information to

¹⁰⁹ See *The Times*, 8 April 1982.

help Britain counter the French-made systems its forces were facing.¹¹⁰ France also used its influence in the UN to swing others in Britain's favour. Over the weekend, Britain banned virtually all trade with Argentina and blocked Argentina's financial assets in London though Britain was more vulnerable because its interests in the Argentina were much bigger than Argentina's assets in London.¹¹¹ Buenos Aires was shaken by the solidarity of the European response. As regards the United States, the British government immediately requested Washington to issue a strong statement condemning the invasion, withdraw the US ambassador, take the case of Argentinian aggression to the Organization of American States (OAS), and put an embargo on arms shipments to Argentina.¹¹² However, to the surprise of the British, their closest ally decided to remain neutral for the moment because of the internal disagreement within the American government on how to deal with the crisis.

The State Department

The central debate within the State Department was whether US interests would best be served by supporting Britain or Argentina. The Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs, Lawrence Eagleburger, strongly felt that support for a NATO ally was crucial to European security: failing to do so would seriously undermine the NATO alliance. He explained,

I was driven by one very simple argument - an ally is an ally. I believed ... that one of our most serious general foreign policy problems is a growing perception - correct perception - that we are no longer as

¹¹⁰ Freedman, L & Gamba-Stonehouse, V., *Signals of War: the Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991) p.154.

¹¹¹ British direct investment in Argentina was put at 200 million pounds while Argentinian property in Britain was worth less than half of that. See *The Times*, 5 April 1982.

¹¹² Haig, *Caveat*, p.266.

reliable partners and allies as we were, [and] under those circumstances, in a case that was so important to Mrs. Thatcher ... we had no choice.¹¹³

There was another body of opinion, however. Known as the 'Latinos', they argued that 'US interests lay on the side of maintaining good relations within the hemisphere and that Britain's decision to retake the islands in battle was a foolish attempt to prolong a colonial empire otherwise being voluntarily relinquished'.¹¹⁴ In order to save Galtieri's face and American interests, the 'Latinos', including Enders and the US ambassador to the UN, Latin-American expert Jean Kirkpatrick, advocated American neutrality in this case and preferred US mediation to find a solution for both sides. Enders did not intend to side with Britain. He argued that American attempts to build regional solidarity against Cuba, Nicaragua and left-wing guerrilla movements in Central America would be seriously undermined if Washington were seen to be supporting a British attack. Kirkpatrick, unequivocally siding with Enders, thought that American interests would suffer if the United States ranged itself against Argentina. She even argued to Reagan that a policy of support for Britain would earn the US 100 years of animosity in Latin America.¹¹⁵ However, Secretary of State Haig, who had served as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe for NATO, inclined toward Eagleburger's position. Haig later explained his reason to the BBC:

We had lived through a post-World War II period, where Western democracies seemed, on occasions, less than able to stand up to blatant challenges and violations of accepted rules of international law. The

¹¹³ Quoted in Freedman & Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, pp.155-6.

¹¹⁴ Shultz, G., *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993) p.151.

¹¹⁵ Richardson, *When Allies Differ*, p.190, note.18.

alliance itself could have fragmented fundamentally on the issue of British reaction in the Falklands. ...

The Falklands was not an isolated problem. Among other things, it involved the credibility of the already strained Western alliance, the survival or failure of a British government that was a staunch friend to the United States, the future of American policy and relations in the Western Hemisphere as well as in Europe, the possibility of yet another dangerous strategic incursion by the Soviet Union into South America, and most important of all, an unambiguous test of America's belief in the rule of law.¹¹⁶

On 7 April, Reagan chaired a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) in which these conflicting views were raised. Haig, enthusiastically supported by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, argued that the United States should avoid taking sides and give the impression of complete impartiality in order to resolve the crisis through diplomatic means. If it failed to do so, it should side with Britain. The President gave his approval for a mediation effort by Haig and agreed that for the moment the United States would be neutral. Haig explained his reason to remain neutral,

... while my sympathy was with the British, I believed that the most practical expression of that sympathy would be impartial United States mediation in the dispute. The honest broker must, above all be neutral.¹¹⁷

From Washington's perspective, the prospects for a peaceful settlement looked reasonably bright. After all the islands were of no particular value, and Britain had been willing to discuss the question of sovereignty for years. The length of time the British task force required to reach the South Atlantic would also provide the opportunity for negotiation.

¹¹⁶ Haig, *Caveat*, p.266.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.266.

Moreover, Henderson had expressed the view that Britain would prefer to see the United States alone, rather than a consortium of nations, as the guarantor of the security of the Falklands. Haig thus began his shuttle diplomacy with a small team from the State Department, in which both Latin Americanists and Europeanists were represented. The three practical points which Haig focused on throughout his shuttle were: military withdrawal, an interim administration and negotiations for a long-term settlement. At first Britain, armed with UN Resolution 502 which requested that Argentina leaves the island, refused to negotiate until Argentina withdrew from the islands.¹¹⁸ For the British anything less than withdrawal would be unacceptable to the country and the House of Commons which was in outraged mood and would probably lead to the fall of the Thatcher government.¹¹⁹ The Argentinians refused to withdraw until they were assured that the outcome of negotiations would be a transfer of sovereignty.

Against this background Haig's team arrived in London on 8 April for the first round of talks and knew that the British had already declared a 200-mile exclusion zone around the islands. It seemed that Thatcher was determined to obtain an unconditional withdrawal and that the country was united behind her. During the talks with the Haig team, Thatcher vigorously invoked the memories of Chamberlain, Wellington, and Nelson and insisted that aggression would not be rewarded. Thatcher also made clear to Haig that, in this matter of principle, what she required from the United States was that it be a supporter rather than a referee. Haig reassured her that at heart 'the United States was not impartial but had to be

¹¹⁸ For details of the UN Resolution 502, see p.88-8.

¹¹⁹ For the debate of rejecting to negotiate with Argentina, see Parliamentary Debates, 3 April 1982, Vol. 94.

cautious about its 'profile'.¹²⁰ Haig's inclination towards the British also showed in his conversation with Edward Streator, the minister of the US Embassy in London. Streator said:

It was very clear to me from a conversation I had with Haig when he was arrived for the initial talks here in London, when he got into the shuttle diplomacy, that we would back the British. I put the question directly to him before he even began the discussion of Mrs. Thatcher's views. I said, 'Will we back the British?' He said, 'yes.'¹²¹

In the first week of his shuttle, Haig had vainly tried to elicit a compromise from the two sides and his neutral stance earned him the suspicion of both sides because the British thought the claims for sovereignty of the Falklands would have to meet the islanders' wish. Argentina, however, for its part, was only interested in discussing sovereignty while disregarding the islanders' right of self-determination.

This neutral posture maintained by America was difficult for the British to understand. They simply thought that the United States should not, in the words of Henderson, 'fail to stick by an ally, particularly when it had been a victim of blatant aggression.'¹²² As time went by, the Thatcher Government became increasingly irritated and impatient with the neutral stance of its closest ally because they not only had to work hard to get the American support which they believed they should have received right from the start of the crisis. Ministers were forced to defend Haig's neutrality before the House of Commons and the

¹²⁰ Thatcher, M., *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p.192.

¹²¹ Interview with Edward Streator, 28 April 1998.

¹²² Henderson, N., 'America and the Falklands', *The Economist*, 12 November 1983, pp.31-2.

public, though they privately shared the critics' sentiments. According to Sir Henry Leach, the First Sea Lord, 'the British were *disappointed* but *understanding* of the American initial sitting on the fence.'¹²³ The Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, Sir Frank Cooper, also admitted that 'yes, there was some irritation shown because the Americans were trying too hard, going on too long and they were just wasting their time. So there were irritations in that sense.'¹²⁴ Similarly with John Nott, 'Although Haig was very well disposed to the British, and I think better disposed to us [the British] than he was to the Argentina. ... The fact that he was peace-keeping and parts of that peace-keeping operation we did find it slightly irritating.'¹²⁵ These resentments began to grow as many British believed that had the United States sided unequivocally with Britain from the beginning, the Argentinians would have withdrawn.

On the other hand, the divergence of interests between Haig and the British was immediately apparent. The British wanted only a settlement that would involve an Argentinian surrender whereas Haig just wanted a settlement. For instance, on 14 April a British MP declared that the United States 'could stop this matter overnight ... they could stop the Argentinian government in their tracks in a week.'¹²⁶ Similarly, the Argentinians believed that the United States could order the British task force to return to Britain. Galtieri once said to the American ambassador: 'I do not understand why the US government, with all its resources, cannot stop Mrs. Thatcher from launching this

¹²³ Correspondence with Sir Henry Leach, Admiral of the Fleet, 28 July 1997.

¹²⁴ Interview with Sir Frank Cooper, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence, 30 July 1997, the Atheeathen Club, London.

¹²⁵ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, British Secretary of State for Defence, 9 October 1997.

¹²⁶ *Financial Times*, 15 April 1982; also see Hamilton, *Hansard*, 6, vol.21, 14 April 1982, col.1184.

attack.¹²⁷ The Argentinians also accused Haig of being a British spy and maintained that he was using the negotiations to prevent them from adequately reinforcing the islands. On 18 April, Haig told the Junta that America could not see two friends at war and Britain was not bluffing. He also said that Washington would not tolerate the fall of Thatcher's government, therefore, Argentina had to enter realistic negotiations on the basis of Resolution 502 or America would side with Britain. Admiral Anaya, aware of the differences among the Americans, simply accused Haig of lying and the Junta refused to believe either that the British would fight or the United States would support them. Under mounting pressure from home to side with Britain, increasing frustration of his plans and despairing of the Junta's ability to deliver any settlement, Haig's shuttle ground to a halt in Washington. Haig's astonishment at the method of government in Buenos Aires, according to Ronald Dick, the British Air Attaché in Washington Embassy, could be seen when he said that 'it was impossible to see how the system worked, since there appeared to be at least a thousand decision makers. He would get Galtieri or Costa Mendez to agree to something, only to have some colonel appear on the scene an hour later and say that it was unacceptable.'¹²⁸ Meanwhile at home, opposition to Haig's mission was growing.

On 27 April, Haig's final package - Haig Two - was sent to both London and Buenos Aires. The proposal provided minor variations of the familiar themes: withdrawal by both sides; a three-flag administration to last until December; restored communication with the mainland; talks in the new year on a long-term settlement; and consultation to ascertain the islanders' views. The British refused to comment on the proposal until they had heard from

¹²⁷ Haig, *Caveat*, p.284 & 296.

¹²⁸ Correspondence with Ronald Dick, Air Attaché at British Embassy in Washington, 16 April 1998.

Argentina. On 28 April, assuming that the only thing he could rely on for support was the Organization of American States (OAS) as it was backed by the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance (the Rio Treaty), under which nations in the Americas agreed to support each other against outside military threat, Mendez requested an early meeting about the Falklands amongst the OAS which groups countries in South, Central and North America as well as the Caribbean. However, Haig made clear that the 1947 treaty had no relevance to the conflict as the unlawful resort to force did not come from outside the hemisphere. Finally the OAS voted on a Falklands resolution in which no mention was made of a British withdrawal and worse, it said that both sides should honour UN Resolution 502. On 29 April, Haig's shuttle had clearly failed because the Argentina Junta still did not accept 'Haig Two'. Therefore the US government now faced three options: to side with Argentina, to continue the position of neutrality, or to side with Britain.

The Pentagon

The Argentinian invasion of the Falklands had posed a dilemma for the Pentagon. From the beginning of this episode, Secretary Weinberger felt that America could not put a NATO ally and long-standing friend on the same level as Argentina and stressed the implications of failing to support Britain - the closest NATO ally of the US. In the words of Weinberger,

It seemed to me that Britain was completely on the right side of the issue. One of their territories was invaded without any provocation or without any real warning. ... and ties between the UK and the US were close. ... So we did not believe that there was any way that America could or should support the corrupt military dictatorship in Argentina against our oldest and strongest ally. ... If the British were going to mount a counter-attack to retake the Islands, America should, without any question, help them

[the British] to the utmost of our ability.¹²⁹

He therefore ordered that all existing UK requests for military equipment, and other requests for equipment or other types of support, short of actual participation in Britain's military action, should be granted immediately. Material was transferred from inventories in 24 hours instead of the normal two weeks and some 15 'in-trays' were removed completely from the supplies authorisation process.¹³⁰ Within the US government there were voices raised objecting to the Pentagon's support for Britain, as they thought that the US government should remain neutral in this crisis instead of assisting the British. For supporting Britain would not only jeopardise Haig's mediation efforts but risk further alienating the Argentinians and Latin American allies. On this point, Weinberger held a different view and, in many NSC meetings held in April, he vigorously expressed his view as:

The rest of Latin America had no interest in and would not support an invasion perpetrated by the Argentinian military dictators, and would not react adversely if we [the United States] helped Britain. On the other hand, there would be predictable fury in Britain, and serious loss of confidence in America as a friend among our NATO and our Pacific allies ... if we supinely accepted aggression and stood by wringing our hands talking of 'negotiations' and 'settlements'.¹³¹

At the time, the American military including some senior Pentagon officials and military analysts doubted that Britain could win a war so far from home. In the words of Dick:

¹²⁹ Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, US Secretary of Defence, 5 March 1998.

¹³⁰ 'America's Falklands War', *The Economist*, 3 March 1984, p.24.

¹³¹ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1990), pp.145-6.

Several months later, my Pentagon friends told me that nearly everyone at the time thought we[the British] were insane to launch such a risky operation, and quite a number thought we were going to lose our shirts.¹³²

The worst outcome, for the Pentagon, would be for Britain to fight and lose. Many officials were aware that the defeat of the Atlanticist Thatcher government would have seriously undermined the credibility of the NATO alliance and, more seriously, the Thatcher government might not survive if Britain were defeated in this crisis. Second, the diversion of British military resources from Europe to the South Atlantic would leave the northern flank of NATO dangerously exposed and divert political attention from the central focus of the alliance, the Soviet Union. NATO relied heavily on Britain, who maintained the strongest navy in Europe, to protect the seaways across the Atlantic. Nearly 70 per cent of the NATO alliance's anti-submarine patrols in areas through which the Soviets would most likely move in the event of any action against the United States, were carried out by the Royal Navy. Under these circumstances, NATO would be very vulnerable, with the temporary British withdrawal of nearly 62 major surface warships, offering the Russians the opportunity for a pre-emptive strike.¹³³ Third, if Britain appeared in danger of losing, it seemed that the United States might be obliged to become involved in this war. After deciding to do what they could to ensure that Britain would win, the Pentagon began privately to provide their British counterparts with supplies, weapons, and intelligence. The UK request for US assistance was 'channelled through the British Defence Liaison

¹³² Correspondence with Ronald Dick, 16 April 1998.

¹³³ See *The Times*, 6 April, 1982.

Staff and the British Ambassador in Washington' and this assistance did not begin after the US 'tilt' in Britain's favour but rather was supplied throughout the conflict.¹³⁴

The American military assistance took various forms. The first and the most important requirement from the British task force was to seek a half-way supply base for ships steaming south. Among several options, Ascension Island, though still some 3,500 miles south of Britain and 4,000 miles from the Falklands, was chosen because it was near enough and could qualify as a half-way base. Other British dependencies, though nearer to the Falklands, lacked the facilities for major military operations.¹³⁵ (See *Map 3.2 Route to the Falkland Island - Ascension Island*.) Though Ascension Island is a British possession leased to the United States which operates an airfield there (Wideawake airfield), under the 1962 leasing arrangements the British have retained the right to make use of the island's facilities in an emergency, provided that the US authorities are given notice.¹³⁶ According to the British Secretary of State for Defence, Sir John Nott, if the British request to use this airfield had gone through the normal channel (in other words, if it had been a British government application to the Americans), it might have been quite difficult because of the concerns in the State Department and the White House about the American relationship with the Latin American governments. Finally, this request of using the Wideawake airfield and facilities was put forward by the British Defence Attaché to an American Admiral who

¹³⁴ Correspondence with Sir Henry Leach, 28 July 1997.

¹³⁵ Map 3.2 is reproduced from Fursdon, E., *The Falklands Aftermath: Picking Up the Pieces* (London: Leo Cooper, 1988), p.15.

¹³⁶ Adams, 'Logistic Support for the Falklands Campaign', *RUSI*, Vol. 129, No.3, September 1984, p.46.

Map 3.2

Route to the Falkland Island - Ascension Island



filled the J4 (Logistics) chair and the answer was the US would not object to this idea. These inter-service contacts proved their worth in times of an emergency. In the words of Ronald Dick:

There is nothing to equal the sight of a friendly face when you have a problem, unless it is the sound of a well-known voice on the phone. In my experience, this is particularly true at the highest levels of command, when Commanders-in-Chief who are old friends are able to talk freely and solve difficulties quickly on a trans-Atlantic link.¹³⁷

Secretary Nott also emphasised:

the truth of the matter is that the relationship between the service was very close indeed ... it's all done at the lower service level, and it was very much that service level in the initial day that the special relationship worked. ... It was at the service level that this special relationship was crucial on the occasion.¹³⁸

Another problem for the British was the lack of shipping, which would make the plan to retake the Falklands impossible to carry out. Therefore, in addition to providing the base, the United States also flew in American C-140 transport planes and tankers in order to relieve the pressure on the British transport planes and supplied most of the food needed on the Ascension island.¹³⁹ Facilities at Ascension for receiving and delivering the fuel and other supplies to the British task force ships and planes were expanded and improved for

¹³⁷ Correspondence with Ronald Dick, 16 April 1998.

¹³⁸ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October 1997.

¹³⁹ Middlebrook, M., *Operation Corporate* (London: Viking, 1985), p.91.

use.¹⁴⁰ The island was also closely guarded and the journalists travelling with the task force were not allowed to land, both to protect military secrets from Argentina and to ensure that the extent of US involvement was not revealed. The US Navy, which annually joined the Argentinians in exercises in the South Atlantic, also obliged by expeditiously sending over the technical information they had on Argentinian capabilities.

In the field of weaponry, requests included offering American tankers and transport planes which were used to airlift a backup squadron of Royal Air Force Harriers (RAF) on the requisitioned container ship, the *Atlantic Conveyor*.¹⁴¹ In addition to this, the United States provided 12.5 million gallons of aviation fuel for use by British Hercules C-130 transport aircrafts, Nimrods, Vulcans and Victor refuelers. The instance of this special assistance in aviation fuel could be seen as on one occasion, according to Dick:

It rapidly became apparent that we would be out of fuel, ... I asked him [his US counterpart] if the British could use US stocks then on the Island. The admiral agreed, but it was soon obvious that they would be used up, too. ... Under the pressure of our concern, the admiral produced a chart showing US war stocks at Ascension. The war emergency fuel supply was just enough to fill the gap until the next ship arrived. 'Hell!', he said, 'there *is* a war on, isn't there?' - and we got our fuel.¹⁴²

This certainly went far beyond releasing America's own war stockpile already on Ascension and many civilian officials outside the Pentagon were later alarmed that the military could have pre-empted them in aiding a foreign power.¹⁴³ The most successful

¹⁴⁰ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.151.

¹⁴¹ *Guardian*, 1 May 1982.

¹⁴² Correspondence with Ronald Dick, 16 April 1998.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

weapon of the war, the Sidewinder AIM 9-L air-to-air missile and the adapter plates to fit them to the GR3 RAF Harriers, were also provided from American front-line stocks at the beginning of the war which enabled British Harrier fighters to attack Argentinian bombers head-on. In all, the United States provided 200 of these missiles to Britain during the Falklands war. Considerably larger numbers of a less sophisticated version (600 of the D variant and 1,750 of the H variant) were also sold to Britain.¹⁴⁴ According to John Nott, 'The most important thing of all to us was the Sidewinder missiles. We had our own missiles but the Sidewinder missiles were very, very valuable ...our own system was not as good as Sidewinder.'¹⁴⁵

Another aspect of the US assistance was in the field of intelligence. Before the invasion, the US surveillance and general intelligence-gathering did not include the Falklands. However, the US had an essential degree of flexibility in these arrangements and were soon able to let the British know what the US could see in that area. According to Larry Speakes, the White House Spokesman, the Americans 'offered CIA information that we were gathering through eavesdropping, and surveillance we were getting from our satellites.'¹⁴⁶

This kind of information gave the British valuable advance knowledge of Argentinian movements and intentions. In the area of signals intelligence British communication with the Falklands was 'much more direct from Navy to Navy'. It would have been much more difficult had the Royal Navy not been able to use American communication channels. It was fortunate for Britain that much of the co-operation required was naval as there has

¹⁴⁴ 'America's Falklands War', *The Economist*, 3 March 1984, p.24.

¹⁴⁵ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October 1997.

¹⁴⁶ Telephone conversation with Larry Speakes, White House Spokesman, 4 March 1998.

traditionally been a closeness between the American and British navies 'due to the NATO planning between the two militaries'.¹⁴⁷ There were also many telephone calls from British fleet headquarters in Northwood direct to friends in the United States Navy. Many of these requests were kept secret from senior officials. To those deeply involved, it seemed at times as if the two navies were working as one.¹⁴⁸

Confidential communication between headquarters at Northwood and the fleet was immeasurably enhanced, and with the Americans help, Northwood was able to talk directly to submarine commanders.¹⁴⁹ A whole range of other intelligence assistance was also provided before the United States officially sided with Britain, including aerial surveillance, electronic intercepts, and reports from covert agents. All these forms of assistance were due to the close integrated operation between Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in Cheltenham, England, which specialises in signals intelligence, and the American National Security Agency, with headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland. In terms of satellite intelligence, initially the US did not appear to be very helpful though the newspapers persisted in reporting that the United States was providing satellite intelligence to Britain. US Landsat pictures were of such poor quality that Washington reportedly showed them to the Argentinians to support their claim that they were not assisting the British, though the Argentinian leadership was not convinced.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October 1997.

¹⁴⁸ 'America's Falklands War', *The Economist*, 3 March 1984, p.24.

¹⁴⁹ *Economist*, 3 March 1982, p.31. Also in *New York Times*, 15 April 1982.

¹⁵⁰ Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.58.

As the likelihood of war increased, some weapons were requested and supplied immediately. In the normal course, these requests would have been subjected to careful examination, often by several different offices with particular regard to the estimate of Britain's needs and even involve a vast number of Defense Department civilian and military offices in the Pentagon. However, due to Weinberger's decision that the normal course could not be followed in this case, the staff examination was drastically reduced. For instance, one of the British requests was that the British wanted a special airfield with mobile metal runway for aircraft on the Wideawake airbase. The answer from a junior American official was yes, the Americans could provide it, but the British would have to pay immediately and at a high price. The British therefore sought help from the Secretary of Defense. Weinberger simply overruled his subordinate official and immediately ordered the provision of 150,000 square yards of matting to create a makeshift airstrip as soon as the British task force reached the island.¹⁵¹ While the assistance was under way, most people, even in the senior ranks of both sides, were unaware of all that was being done. Admiral Sir Henry Leach admitted that 'the US military went further than politicians would have permitted had they known in time.'¹⁵² Even Thatcher did not know the extent of the US aid so she was unhappy about the treachery of her erstwhile ally.¹⁵³ On the American side, when asked by the press, Reagan stated that 'we've had no request for any help from the United Kingdom' and 'we maintained a genuine as well as an official neutrality during this period ... we provided no other military assistance to the British.'¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October 1997.

¹⁵² Quoted in Richardson, *When Allies Differ*, p.123.

¹⁵³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.200.

¹⁵⁴ Reagan, R., *An American Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), p.359.

Also on 14 April, when being asked about what kind of military aid the United States was supporting to Britain with, Haig said:

Since the outset of the crisis the United States has not acceded to requests that would go beyond the scope of customary patterns of co-operation. That would continue to be its stand while peace efforts were under way. Britain's use of US facilities on Ascension Island had been restricted accordingly.¹⁵⁵

In response to this, Weinberger explained that 'when Secretary Haig said he spent some time at his negotiating sessions with the Argentinians telling them we [the United States] had refused to fulfil British requests for arms. If he did tell them this, it was simply wrong' and 'we would supply them [the British] with everything they needed that we could spare, and that we were able to do it very quickly.'¹⁵⁶

The White House and the United Nations

Despite the split within the State Department, and the Pentagon's worry that a NATO ally might lose the war, the primary concern of the White House was to minimise the damage for American interests in Europe and Latin America. However, it seemed that Reagan and his National Security Adviser, William Clark, were not particularly interested in the dispute and even tried to avoid taking a public position, partly because they were both not particularly knowledgeable in the field of foreign policy. On 11 April in a radio interview, President Reagan upset the British by saying that:

¹⁵⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.200.

¹⁵⁶ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, pp.146-7.

It's a very difficult situation for the United States. Two of our friends, the United Kingdom and Argentina, confront each other in a complex disagreement which goes back many generations. Because they are both our friends, I offered our help in an effort to bring the two countries together. We will do all we can to help bring a peaceful resolution of this matter.¹⁵⁷

The British took this as a calculated insult because at that moment London's suspicion of American attitudes and action had already increased. The British felt that their claims on American friendship were incomparably stronger than Argentina's. However, from the start of the crisis, the casual response to Carrington's early warnings, the delayed call to Galtieri, the emphasis on 'even-handedness' and US friendship towards Argentina, the vacuous pleas from Reagan for restraint, the indecisions and conflicting views within the administration, all suggested that America, as in the Suez crisis in 1956, would prove to be an unreliable ally.¹⁵⁸ A spokesman for 10 Downing Street told American correspondents that the British government was 'appalled by the fact that the United States should claim neutrality in a dispute between its closest ally and a fascist dictatorship.'¹⁵⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed more colourfully in the House of Commons especially when Reagan referred to the Falklands as 'that little ice-cold bunch of land down there.'¹⁶⁰ Failing to side with either Argentina or Britain, the White House and the National Security Council, throughout the month of April, remained silent during contentious arguments over what the ultimate outcome of US policy should be. According to Derek Thomas:

¹⁵⁷ *The Times*, 12 April 1982.

¹⁵⁸ See Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.103-4.

¹⁵⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 1982.

¹⁶⁰ Press Conference, 30 April 1982, See Public Papers of the Presidents - Ronald W. Reagan (1982), US Government Printing Office (hereafter cited as GP.O.), Washington, 1984.

The White House was pretty 'wobbly', it would be telling one thing to Margaret Thatcher and doing another. It left me pretty ambiguous about Reagan - his clarity. I could see that he was pulled in two different directions. Once Haig had come out and that the British were going to win. ... His instincts were very clear but that did not always produce a clear answer in terms of policy.¹⁶¹

In the United Nations, Britain had launched a diplomatic offensive in response to the Argentinian invasion by summoning the UN Security Council and the main considerations were: first, to secure a UN demand for Argentinian withdrawal and therefore to legitimise Britain's military response; and second, to avert any subsequent demand that Britain stall or recall the task force. US policy in the UN was presented by Ambassador Kirkpatrick who was friendly towards Argentina. She argued that right-wing regimes were 'corrigible, preferable to communist dictatorships, and valuable to the USA in the fight against the spread of the communism in Central and South America'.¹⁶² Considering these, the United States should maintain friendly ties with authoritarian regimes in the interests of the struggle against totalitarian regimes. As a result, Kirkpatrick thought the issue of the Falklands should not be brought to the United Nations and, rather than internationalising this issue, it should be settled privately by the United States, the United Kingdom and Argentina. The reason for her policy was not because of her pro-Argentinian sympathies but just that she did not want the interests of the United States in Latin America to be damaged by siding publicly with Britain and she feared that virtually the whole of Latin America would side with Argentina if Britain took military action to reclaim the Falklands. In the words of Kirkpatrick, 'a policy of neutrality in that war made sense from the point of

¹⁶¹ Correspondence with Sir Derek Thomas, Minister of the British Embassy in Washington, 23 July 1997.

¹⁶² Kirkpatrick, J., 'My Falklands War and Theirs', *The National Interests*, 1989/90 Winter, pp.15-18.

view of US interests and would have done the British no harm'.¹⁶³ According to Kirkpatrick:

I thought the US should attempt mediation. If the mediation failed, then US interests, I thought, dictated that we should remain neutral: because the US had a continuing interest in good relations with Latin America ... For the US to support - or seem to support - a colonial power in this hemisphere would be especially resented. I therefore believed that US support of Britain would stoke latent anti-Yankee feelings throughout Latin America.¹⁶⁴

When asked whether her action could be construed as favouring armed aggression by Argentina. She replied:

No. ... The Argentinians have claimed for two hundred years that they own those islands. And the British have claimed, that they own those islands. Now if the Argentinians own the islands, then moving troops into them is not armed aggression.¹⁶⁵

British diplomatic skill, which even Kirkpatrick admired, was best represented by Sir Anthony Parsons, Britain's Ambassador to the United Nations. Parsons displayed a stunning diplomatic professionalism and obtained the nine votes he required to have the Security Council summoned on 1 April, even before the invasion had occurred. He then called for a binding UN request that Argentina leaves the island. To the amazement of the Argentinians, and, with the help of Thatcher's personal intervention with King Hussein, plus a Soviet rebuff of an Argentinian plea for a veto (because the Russians did not intend

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁶⁴ Kirkpatrick, 'My Falklands War and Theirs', p.18.

¹⁶⁵ *The Times*, 14 April 1982.

to use the veto except on resolutions directed specifically at their interests), Parsons secured the passing of UN Resolution 502. The work by Parsons and the passage of UN Resolution 502 was, in the words of Sir Derek Thomas, 'immensely valuable to prevent the undermining of international support and for the moral strength that we too, at the end of the day were going to resort to force.'¹⁶⁶ It also gave Britain, under Article 51, 'the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence if armed attack occurs ... until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain peace and security'. Second, it ensured the continued support of the opposition Labour Party at home. Kirkpatrick later described the American diplomacy as 'amateurism' when compared with the British in this incident. She said:

Parsons worked the UN as a ward healer, very effectively. ... He tried and succeeded in getting support on different organising principles than the usual ones.¹⁶⁷

This difference between the policies implemented in the Department of State and the UN Ambassador finally resulted in Argentina's feeling of being betrayed by US support for Resolution 502. At the same time, though the United States supported Britain in the United Nations and was concentrating on seeking an acceptable settlement, the US policy of even-handedness and its reluctance to take sides with Britain, in order to preserve its friendship with Argentina, affronted London.

¹⁶⁶ Correspondence with Sir Derek Thomas, 23 July 1997.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Richardson, *When Allies Differ*, pp.121-2.

Public Opinion on Both Sides

From the start of the invasion, pressure was increasing from public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic for the United States to side with Britain. On the British side, the British government confined its irritation at the United States even-handedness to private displays of anger and officially maintained the position that US neutrality was required for successful mediation. In public, *The Times* persistently called for US support. For instance, on 10 April, it asked 'If the US does not support her oldest and closest ally when that ally is in the right, how can she expect wholehearted British support in the future?' On 12 April, a *Times* editorial called for, 'An ally. Not an umpire,' while on 26 April, an editorial insisted that it was 'Time to take sides.'

After hearing that British territory had been occupied, the House of Commons met in a mood of outrage. Edward du Cann said that 'Britain's right to the Falkland Islands was undoubted and its sovereignty unimpeachable. We must explore every diplomatic and legal means to recover what is legitimately ours'.¹⁶⁸ Julian Amery demanded that the Government must 'make the Argentinian dictator disgorge what he had taken, by diplomacy if possible, by force if necessary, because nothing less will restore the credibility of the Government or wipe the stain from Britain's honour'.¹⁶⁹ The Labour Party was almost as militant as the Conservative Party. Michael Foot, the leader of the Party, spoke of Britain's 'moral duty and political duty and every other kind of duty' to expel the Argentinians from the Falkland Islands.¹⁷⁰ In addition to this, there was repeated criticism

¹⁶⁸ See *The Times*, 5 April 1982.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Freedman, L. & Bamba-Stonehouse, V., *Signals of War*, pp.121-2.

of the Reagan Administration's 'even-handedness' in this dispute. Denis Healey said, 'The time had come to say to the United States that the attitude of an even-handed honest broker was not quite enough. If the US was prepared to follow the example set by Britain's European allies, at least to warn the Argentinians that it too might cut off its imports and stop supplying arms, it might sufficiently tip the balance.'¹⁷¹ David Owen declared, 'The United States was in a crucial position, but it could not be neutral on the issue of our territory as well as our people.'¹⁷² Some MPs were also worried that Kirkpatrick's comments indicated that finally the United States might not side with Britain. Criticism of the United States came primarily from the Conservative Party. The sentiment in favour of the abandonment of American neutrality in the British press, public and parliament was matched by the public in the United States, where the contest was closely followed. Denis Healey declared that the American people felt that, 'America should not behave as neutral between the aggressor and his victim or between a democratic ally and a dictatorship.'¹⁷³ According to *The Times* on 28 April 1982, 'This [popular, pro-British] sentiment which is spontaneous is also unled, especially unled by Reagan who still cannot bring himself to talk of the islands because he would have to call them Falklands or Malvinas. One hint of a reversal of the pro-British mood and he might well take the lead in the opposite direction.'

American public support for Britain was in part a result of an extraordinarily skillful and successful public relations campaign led by the British embassy in Washington. Throughout the crisis, British diplomats in Washington displayed a careful appreciation of

¹⁷¹ See *The Times*, 15 April 1982.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

the complex nature of American decision-making. The British efforts were at several different levels: at the top was the ambassador. Henderson had made clear that he and his staff did not take US support for granted. He worked tirelessly and met every single senator and countless Congressmen. Henderson told the Foreign Affairs Committee, 'I met with him [Haig] every day for 74 days or spoke to him on the telephone several times.'¹⁷⁴ He was on television programmes 73 times, and he went to the Congress every day and was aware of the mood and the changing surge of US opinion. About 500 British embassy staff were divided into groups responsible for wooing respectively the administration and Capitol Hill. At the same time, there was a great deal of lobbying at ministerial level and other people on the foreign policy side of the Embassy.

The Defence Attache also kept daily contact with the Pentagon officials at a high level, such as Weinberger, General Bill Richardson, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).¹⁷⁵ According to Thomas:

I must have had two or three times a week meetings or telephone conversations with Larry Eagleburger, who was the Under-Secretary at the time and with people on the European side. ... At the same time, maybe once a week, I would go and talk to Tom Enders. ... I used to have a general battle with him over the pro's and con's of what he was trying to do and trying to feed into his mind ways in which the American interest in Latin American could be preserved without doing important damage to Britain's position.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ See Fifth Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1983-84. 'Falkland Islands'. Evidence 4 April 1984, HC 268-II, vol. 2, London: HMSO, 1984, p.53.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Major-General Anthony Boam, Head of Defence Staff, British Embassy in Washington, 25 September 1997.

¹⁷⁶ Correspondence with Sir Derek Thomas, 23 July 1997.

The members of the Embassy were using their knowledge of the Washington bureaucracy to get things done. Eagleburger admired them:

The British Embassy here was very well informed, they were very effective especially in the PR aspect. They knew what to do and coddled up to the right newsmen. I met with Thomas every day. The military attaches were everywhere. ... They knew where to push the buttons to get decisions made, when we slowed down on something, they caught it right away and someone would be zapped in to my office, rattling my desk.¹⁷⁷

The British Embassy also received a lot of letters from all over the United States in support of the fact that a Western country was finally standing up to the Third World dictatorships that had been pushing the United States around. In terms of media, the American press had been much more forthright than the Government in its support for Britain and its condemnation of the Argentinian attack. They gave the British position extensive sympathetic coverage, For instance, in *The New York Times*, in a leading article entitled 'Brute force in the Falklands', said America had no choice but to denounce Argentina's aggression.¹⁷⁸ Another leading article in *The New York Times* criticised the shuttle diplomacy which Haig had carried out. Under the headline: 'Stay home, Al Haig,' the newspaper said, 'The Falklands are not important, helping an ally is. ... He [Haig] ought to send emissaries to London and Buenos Aires and remain in Washington to concentrate on more weighty matters such as nuclear arms control, the Middle East and Central

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Smith, G., *Reagan and Thatcher* (London: Bodley Head Ltd, 1990) p.90.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in *The Times*, 5 April 1982.

America.’¹⁷⁹ While the *Washington Post*, in a leading article headed ‘Argentina’s Aggression’, said that ‘Thatcher spoke the simple truth when she labelled the Argentinian act ‘unprovoked aggression’’.¹⁸⁰ Some Television network, such as CNN, even relayed unedited news coverage and commentaries from the British networks ITN.¹⁸¹

Public sentiment found expression in Congress as well. For instance, after meeting with Francis Pym and Peter Blaker, the British Armed Forces minister, Senators Joseph Biden and Paul Tsongas promised to introduce a pro-British resolution in the Senate, while Senator Daniel Moynihan called on the United States to stand by its NATO ally and five liberal members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to President Reagan saying that if efforts to achieve a settlement failed the United States should take Britain’s side diplomatically.¹⁸² On occasion even the British were surprised by the warmth of the response. According to Henderson:

I was talking to Senator Byran, who was a permanent member of the US Foreign Relations Committee, about the right people in the principle of self-determination to be governed by what they want and the Falklanders have wanted to stay British... Byran swept this aside and said, ‘Forget all that nonsense about the self-determination, the truth is we’re doing this because you’re British, and we had links with you.’¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ See *The Times*, 16 April 1982.

¹⁸⁰ See *The Times*, 5 April 1982.

¹⁸¹ Richardson, L., *When Allies Differ*, p.137-8.

¹⁸² See *The Times*, 16 April 1982.

¹⁸³ Interview with Sir Nicholas Henderson, British Ambassador to US, 30 July 1997, Southeby’s, London.

Finally on 29 April, the Senate debated the Biden-Moynihan Resolution 382. Senator Jesse Helms, backed by Senators John Warner and Paula Hawkins, succeeded in diluting the motion, which remained unequivocally pro-British and this resolution was carried by 79 to 1.¹⁸⁴ The House quickly followed suit; only six Congressmen voted against Congressman Stephen Solarz's pro-British motion on 4 May, which expressed 'full diplomatic support for Great Britain in its efforts to uphold the rule of law.'¹⁸⁵

The US Takes Sides with the UK

After the Argentinian Junta rejected the 'Haig Two' proposal - which meant that Haig's shuttle diplomacy had clearly failed - the argument that neutrality was required for the US to be a successful mediator became increasingly difficult to defend. The US press, the public, and Congress were persistently calling for the United States to help Britain. The US government still faced three options: to side with Argentina, to continue the position of neutrality, or to side with Britain. The first option was clearly not a strong case while the second option, strongly supported by Kirkpatrick, was becoming increasingly untenable. Considering the question of whether to side with Britain or not, according to the Harris survey, 60 per cent of the Americans sympathised with the British compared with 19 per cent with the Argentinians.¹⁸⁶ Under these circumstances, to stand alongside Britain would not only put the United States on the same side as the European Community (EC) on the

¹⁸⁴ Renwick, R., *Fighting with Allies* (London: Macmillan, 1996) p.233. Also see *Congressional Record*, 29 April 1982, S4316.

¹⁸⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 5 May 1982.

¹⁸⁶ *The Times*, 29 April 1982.

eve of an economic summit and reap the public relations awards, but it was also good for Anglo-American relations, which would have suffered if it had seemed that the United States was clinging to the role of mediator well beyond the point at which there was any reasonable chance of Haig's shuttle diplomacy. Furthermore, Reagan was soon to make a state visit to Britain while there was growing anti-Americanism in Britain because of the even-handedness of US officials' attitudes towards the crisis. It was very obvious to the President which option would enhance his popularity with the electorate. Finally, there was the question of the position of the Pentagon and Weinberger, who was unequivocally in favour of support for Britain. Since the beginning of the crisis Weinberger had been supplying Britain with war material. However, this was proceeding secretly because once it became public, it would undermine the benefits of neutrality in terms of relations with Latin America. As war was approaching, to continue the position of neutrality would have been even harder for the Pentagon. It was under these circumstances that Reagan decided that there was no further purposes to refusing support for Britain.

On 30 April Reagan told television correspondents that the Argentinians had resorted to armed aggression and that such aggression must not be allowed to succeed. He directed that the United States would respond positively to Britain's requests for military material. Later that day, Haig announced that, in view of Argentina's refusal to compromise, the US government had to take effective opposition to the use of unlawful force to resolve disputes. He promised US support for Britain at the United Nations and the Organization of American States and referred to Britain as 'the United States' closest ally'.¹⁸⁷ He also

¹⁸⁷ See *Guardian*, 1 May 1982.

announced various sanctions against Argentina which would put the United States in step with its Western allies in supporting Britain. These sanctions included withholding the certification of Argentinian eligibility for military sales, and the suspension of all military exports, new Export-Import bank credits, and commodity credit corporation guarantees.¹⁸⁸ He added that the President had directed that the United States would henceforth respond positively to British requests for material support but emphasised that there would be no direct military involvement. The most important thing was that the military assistance to Britain was kept secret, now it could be provided openly.

On the British side, the Thatcher government publicly and repeatedly welcomed American mediation. Downing Street greeted with relief that 'at last the United States had come to its senses.'¹⁸⁹ Nott said that 'the American support was extremely important to us' both politically and psychologically, especially when it was connected with the memory of Suez when the British had not had international support.¹⁹⁰ On 30 April, when Pym met with Haig in Washington, he declared, 'Last week I came here to see Mr. Haig in his role as a mediator. Today I have come back to consult with him as an ally.'¹⁹¹ The British press was ecstatic. 'Yanks a Million.' declared *The Sun* on 1 May. *The Times* also contented itself with a more restrained comment on the same day, 'A friend indeed' and hoped that the tilt would strengthen the British resolve to persist in the strategy of steadily increasing the pressure on Argentina. In Argentina, Galtieri was surprised by the American tilt. He was reported to have told visitors, 'I feel much bitterness towards Reagan, who I thought was

¹⁸⁸ *Guardian*, 1 May 1982.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Richardson, *When Allies Differ*, p.142.

¹⁹⁰ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October, 1997.

¹⁹¹ Henderson, *Mandarin*, p.456.

my friend.’¹⁹² After the American Ambassador, Harry Schlaudemann, broke the news to Galtieri at midnight, Galtieri immediately summoned the Junta and tried to persuade them that the US was going to support Britain and that Argentina should therefore accept Resolution 502. However, Anaya remained unmoved. Costa Mendez wrote to Haig on 2 May and condemned the US mediation effort as part of an Anglo plot which was to undermine the Argentinian position and gain time for the task force to consolidate its forces.¹⁹³ On the same day, the British government declared the existence of a blockade of all ships and aircraft within 200 miles of the Falkland Islands, the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ). The British also began to launch bombing raids on the Falklands.

On 2 May the British submarine *Conqueror* sank the Argentinian cruiser *Belgrano* 40 miles outside the TEZ, as it was steaming away from the task force. It took the British War cabinet less than twenty minutes to make the decision to attack it on the grounds that it still presented a threat to British ships. A total of 368 lives were lost. The shocking loss of life caused the British government many problems. Not only was European support for Britain seriously shaken, it also increased pressure on Britain at the United Nations. Italy and Ireland moved to have the EEC sanctions against Argentina lifted on their expiration on 17 May. At the UN, this massive escalation and demonstration of British power caused a shift in support away from Britain. World reaction hardened against Britain because *Conqueror* had sunk the ship outside the TEZ. However in the United States, support for Britain remained firm. On 4 May, Argentina retaliated with the sinking of HMS *Sheffield* and 21 men were killed. The loss of life had a marked impact on the British government. The

¹⁹² Hastings & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, p.142.

¹⁹³ *Financial Times*, 6 May 1982.

British landing on the Falklands began on 21 May, and British forces began a steady march on the capital, Port Stanley. A meeting of the Rio Treaty group in Washington on 27 May had produced invective against the US by Latin American countries; however, no sanctions were imposed, no diplomats were recalled and no volunteers were offered.

By the end of May the Americans were increasingly worried about the prospect of a massacre of Argentinians in Port Stanley. Kirkpatrick met with Reagan on 31 May to plead with him to prevent Britain from causing a bloodbath on the Falklands. Reagan, therefore, telephoned Thatcher to express the growing American concern and to suggest another American mediation effort. However, Thatcher remained unmoved. She declared in a television interview, 'Magnanimity is not a word I use in connection with the battle on the Falklands.'¹⁹⁴ At the Versailles summit the European leaders, together with Reagan, tried to pressure Thatcher to avert bloodshed but there was still no result. In June, though publicly expressing support for Britain during his state visit, Reagan privately urged compromise. On 3 June Reagan presented to Thatcher the five-point plan to internationalize the dispute which had been worked out quietly by the Foreign Office in collaboration with the State Department. The response was best captured in Thatcher's own words:

Our men did not risk their lives for a UN trusteeship. They risked their lives for the British way of life, to defend British sovereignty. I do not intend to negotiate on the sovereignty of the islands in any way except with the people who live there. That is my firm belief. Those islands belong to us.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 1986.

¹⁹⁵ See *New York Times*, 16 June 1982.

On 14 June the Argentinian forces surrendered at Port Stanley which prevented the bloodshed the United States had failed to avert. Galtieri resigned on 17 June, and after the war was over, he was arrested and placed in custody. In this war Britain had lost 255 men in total and 777 were wounded. The Argentinian losses were much higher, with about 764 dead and 1105 wounded. After the war the United States and the United Nations called on Britain to negotiate with the new civilian government in Buenos Aires. Thatcher, however, restated her claim that sovereignty over the Falklands was not negotiable and her position prevailed.

US Special Military Assistance to Britain during the Falklands War

Throughout the Falklands war, the United States military supplied the British with weapons, intelligence, and supplies. For the weaponry in the Falklands war, the United States supplied the Vulcan Phalanx anti-missile gun system, at a price of \$16m, which was designed to protect surface ships against such sea-skimming missiles as Exocets. These were introduced onto HMS *Illustrious* and *Invincible* for point defence.¹⁹⁶ As to the carrier *Hermes*, the most critical and vulnerable ship in the task force, the Americans provided a top secret laser gun, which was mounted near the bow and passed off as a machine gun. The weapon was designed to blind pilots of attacking aircraft. Its beam could also be used to confuse an approaching heat-seeking missile. Other weapons supplied included torpedo exhaust valves, flare cartridges and dispensing systems, illuminating mortar rounds, and various types of ammunition. There were also M70 grenade launchers, high-explosive ammunition, and highly sophisticated US electronic warfare equipment.

¹⁹⁶ *The Economist*, 3 March 1984, p.24.

As regard missiles, numerous types were supplied, including Hawk surface-to-air missiles; eight new shoulder-held Stinger anti-aircraft systems (at a cost of \$4.7m) for the SAS; the Harpoon anti-shipping missiles; and most importantly, the Sidewinders mentioned earlier.¹⁹⁷ The US also provided Shrike radar-seeker missiles that came complete with information on Argentinian radar frequencies. By reason of the limitation on US military assistance that US servicemen could not become involved, the Pentagon also arranged to supply Hawk missiles along with the tankers, for deployment in Europe, so that the United Kingdom could transfer flight refuelling and surface-to-air missiles to the task force. One of the most effective weapons turned out to be the United States' Pavestrike smart bomb, guided by a Ferranti laser target-marking system. Estimates vary on the value of the military assistance given, but it was probably in the region of \$60 million, excluding the Sidewinders and the fuel.¹⁹⁸

The only limitation on US military assistance was that the US servicemen could not become involved. This restriction was at times difficult to maintain, as when the British requested help with aerial refuelling, a big problem for Britain, given the distance between Ascension island and the fleet. The final solution was to assign American KC-135 tanker aircraft and their American pilots to NATO, in order to free the British fleet of Victor tankers for the task force. This permitted Weinberger to declare publicly that no US aircraft would be used for refuelling. As to non-lethal assistance the US kept the fuel tanks and food stores on Ascension Island. The US Navy yard in Charlestown, South Carolina,

¹⁹⁷ See *The Economist*, 3 March 1984, p.24.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.24.

contributed by converting an oil rig support ship, bought by the Royal Navy, into a floating repair ship. The United States also provided construction supplies, runway coating materials, air drop containers, a helicopter engine, night vision goggles, mess heaters, and ration packs. The lengths to which the Pentagon was willing to go to ensure the success of Britain can be appreciated by the most generous offer of the war. On 3 May Weinberger even proposed to Henderson in a conversation that he would offer the USS *Eisenhower* to Britain to replace any British carrier sunk by Argentina. The two British carriers, *Hermes* and *Invincible*, were extremely vulnerable to Argentinian air attack. Had either been sunk Britain might well have lost the war. It was decided that the USS *Eisenhower* or the USS *Guam*, which had similar capabilities to the two British ships, would be handed over to the Royal Navy.¹⁹⁹

As to intelligence, according to John Nott, 'Probably 80 per cent of the intelligence came from the United States.'²⁰⁰ In fact, it is virtually impossible to measure precisely the American intelligence contribution because of the extent to which the National Security Agency and the British intelligence operate together at GCHQ in Cheltenham, where American and British sources are rarely distinguished. The signals intelligence provided to GCHQ by NSA listening stations around the South Atlantic proved highly valuable during the war. The Americans did succeed in breaking the Argentinian military codes though because, since GCHQ was targeted against the Soviet Union and it was full of Russian linguists, only a few Spanish linguists were available. By the time signals were intercepted,

¹⁹⁹ Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, 5 March 1998.

²⁰⁰ Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October 1997.

decoded, and interpreted, however, they were for the most part of little interest and often too late to be of much assistance according to those who received them.

One thing which had been exaggerated by the press was the satellite photographs. The truth was that actually there were no satellite photographs until the last few days of the war because when the crisis happened, high-definition military satellites were not in the appropriate orbit because they were focused on Soviet activities. According to Raymond Seitz, the US decided to 'redirect our military satellite from its Soviet-watching orbit to cover the Falklands area so that we could take pictures of the South Atlantic for the British. But that was all done more informally.'²⁰¹ The satellite's life was shortened by the move but it was able to supply Britain with the intelligence it had been requesting, although the results were disappointing. For the most part, however, Pentagon assistance was extremely helpful. According to Nott, 'the Pentagon could not have been more helpful.'²⁰² Many British political and military leaders agreed that 'without the support of the United States, Britain might not have won the war, at least, the war would have been much longer and much more costly without American help'.²⁰³ Leach has also pointed out the importance of the US assistance by saying that 'if the US had not co-operated readily, it would have been more difficult and probably much longer.'²⁰⁴ Perhaps the British gratitude could best be shown in the words of Dick,

²⁰¹ Interview with Raymond Seitz, former US Ambassador to UK, 7 April 1998, Lehman Brothers, London.

²⁰² Telephone conversation with Sir John Nott, 9 October 1997.

²⁰³ Correspondence with Sir Henry Leach, Admiral of the Fleet, 28 July 1997. Also, interview with Sir Frank Cooper, Permanent Under-Secretary of State at Ministry of Defence, 30 July 1997.

²⁰⁴ Correspondence with Sir Henry Leach, 28 July 1998.

It may seem from all this that the word co-operation does not accurately describe what was happening between the US and the UK ... after all, the US provided invaluable help to the UK ... Right from the outset, even during the period of public fence-sitting at the White House, I was given nothing but encouragement and help in the Pentagon. I was welcomed as a friend and, almost invariably, my request was dealt with in front of me on the telephone. I was never asked to sign for anything, nor was I ever asked to put anything in writing. They listened to my story, took my word for it and acted - immediately. ... It was all very heart-warming, and a very good time to be an ally of the US.²⁰⁵

III. ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT DURING THE FALKLANDS WAR.

Nature of the Crisis

Having explored this crisis in depth, it is now necessary to consider its nature, to determine the crisis behaviour between the two allies, thereby comprehending the hazards in their relationship and the conditions for maintaining such friendly relations. The initial Anglo-American discord in the Falklands War of 1982 resulted from the United States maintaining its neutral posture between the two belligerents was a crisis involving a core security issue on the territory of the weaker ally, Britain. Britain perceived the Argentinian invasion to be an assault on its national interest, thus decided to act and requested both military assistance and political support from the US, the stronger ally. The United States did not view the crisis in the same way and initially did not take the matter as seriously as the British did. To the surprise of the British, the US, decided not to take sides with Britain but pursued a policy of even-handedness by sending Secretary of State Haig to act as a

²⁰⁵ Correspondence with Ronald Dick, 16 April 1998.

mediator between the two parties. This feeling of being treated as one among a number of allies caused private irritation in Britain. The situation changed later when Argentina refused to accept the 'Haig Two' proposal, and the US risked losing potential broader foreign policy interests and friendship in Latin America. The US then decided to side with Britain formally. Fortunately for the two countries, the effects of the crisis were short-lived and did no harm to the Special Relationship.

Though the survival of the two countries was not under threat, the Falklands crisis was considered to be a high level crisis by reason of its long duration, large-scale war and high casualties. Despite there being misunderstandings at the beginning of the episode, it proved to be an unprecedented example of the value of informal allied co-operation between the two countries outside of Europe. The crisis was exceptional because the functioning of the long-standing Special Relationship between the two states was in jeopardy by the American policy of being neutral at the start of the incident and would have been more severely damaged than at Suez, had Britain been forced by American pressure to give up its attempt. It is remarkable because of the form and extent of American military assistance during the crisis which proved to be unique and without parallel.

Sources of Crisis and Pattern of Crisis Behaviour

The Anglo-American discord over the Falklands crisis had raised questions about the special relationship between Britain and her most important ally. Although Britain has

preserved a special relationship with the US, it does not imply that they should always agree with each other either in theory or in practice. What the special relationship provided them with was the channels and the goodwill to reconcile their differences in times of crisis. However, the two countries clearly failed to do so in the case of Falklands War. Why did the two allies initially fail to manage this crisis to their mutual advantage? What made them so reluctant to resolve their differences in the Falklands War? According to Model - the Patterns of Allies' Crisis Behaviour - the discord between the two allies came from *divergences of interest* which caused them to have *different perceptions* of the crisis. These different perceptions then led them to have *wrong expectations* towards each other, developed *irritation or indignant feelings*, and finally resulted into four outcomes - '*nature of relationship transformed*', '*dispute and discord*', '*compromise*' and '*settlement*'. In order to find out that whether what had happened in this case is consistent or inconsistent with the model, one must first look at the differences in the interests and stakes, both explicit and implicit.

In terms of the Anglo-American relationship, Britain considered the US to be her most important and powerful ally. From the British view, though there were rises and falls, Britain's relationship with the US was obviously much more important and closer compared with this newly established Argentinian-American relationship, and it was even closer with Thatcher as Prime Minister. In contrast with Britain's cultural bonds and longstanding close political alliance with the US, the Argentinian regime was best known as an abuser of human rights and a military dictatorship. It was also very clear that the Argentinian action of invading the Falkland Islands was a violation of the principles of the

rule of law. Under these circumstances, in the event of conflict - in which aggressor and victim were clearly defined - the British naturally felt that they had every right to have America on their side. Once the invasion took place, they left the Americans in no doubt that Britain expected the same sort of backing as Britain gave the United States during the Iranian hostage crisis and in matters relating to the Western alliance. For instance, in the beginning of the crisis, Carrington told Haig that aggression had been perpetrated and expressed his concern at the American position which had not come down in favour of the British; Thatcher made British expectations very clear by emphasising that Haig would be received in London not '...as a mediator but as a friend and ally', here to explore how the US might best support Britain's efforts to get Argentina to leave the Falklands.²⁰⁶ Henderson also told Stoessel, Deputy Under-Secretary at the State Department, that:

I expostulated to Stoessel that he could not tell me that the USA were going to be neutral when a country in the American hemisphere was threatening to occupy the territory of a foreign power. How could America react in the event of the occupation of part of the USA, say Puerto Rico, if the British government took the line that it was neutral?²⁰⁷

However, the invasion presented the US with a difficult problem, a conflict between two of America's allies, each demanding support. The thought that the British naturally felt that they had loyally supported the USA and now it was time that they got the same help in return, raised the question of what the costs and benefits of the American policy to support Britain in this crisis would be within the Reagan Administration.

²⁰⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, pp.191-2.

²⁰⁷ Henderson, *Mandarin*, pp.447-8.

Considering America's interests vis-a-vis Argentina as an ally and the costs of supporting Britain, the United States was in a delicate position. The Reagan Administration had looked upon Argentina as a potential partner in Latin America and, therefore, was afraid that the dispute over the Falklands would have further undermined stability in Central America. The fears of Soviet and Communist expansionism in Central and South America clearly played a more important role in US policies than in those of Britain. The containment of Soviet expansionism has been the most important policy of the United States throughout the post-war period. At the time when the crisis happened, there were great tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. In order to contain Soviet and Cuban influence and secure US interests in America's back yard, the Reagan Administration held out the vision of a new anti-Communist alliance in the South Atlantic and pursued a more traditional policy of full support for any anti-Communist regime: notable among them was Argentina. Argentina had recently shifted towards the United States and was now a valuable supporter in critical areas, most prominently in the attempt to undermine Marxist strength in Central America.

During the crisis the US learned that Soviet ships trailed British vessels and provided intelligence information about the fleet to Argentina via Cuba. The Soviets also offered to supply low-cost arms to Argentina if war broke out - an offer which the Junta refused. The Americans therefore were worried that the Soviet would intervene in this crisis. If the US appeared not to be neutral, Argentina might be forced to lean towards the Soviets and this would be an advantage exploited by the Soviets. American attempts to build regional

solidarity against Cuba, Nicaragua, and left-wing guerrilla movements in Central America would thus be seriously undermined if Washington was seen to be supporting a British attack. On this point, the British had not shared the American's fear about the Soviet involvement in this crisis. The British did not believe that the Soviets would involve themselves. Thatcher explained, 'I suspected that the Russians feared American involvement as much as the Americans feared the reverse. Therefore... I would be surprised if the Soviets intervened actively.'²⁰⁸ The British also believed that the rest of Latin America had no interest in, and would not support, an invasion provoked by the Argentinian dictators. Furthermore, the Latin America countries would not react adversely if the United States helped Britain, because Argentina had made itself unpopular by its arrogance towards the rest of Latin America. Some Latin American countries were also on the British side while a number of others were quietly sympathetic towards the British.

In terms of *realpolitik*, the problem for the US was that if Britain was to be driven into a military stalemate with Argentina, the United States might be called on for overt help. This would be bad for America's regional position and cause anti-American feeling in Latin America, thus risk the US strategic interests in Latin America. For instance, in the letter to Reagan from President Royo of Panama, Royo stated his view on US policy in the crisis as:

We Latin Americans have had to lament that our friends in the United States ... [support] the violence which the British are carrying out against Argentina. ... If [American] decisive support had not been given, it would have been more feasible [for Britain] to achieve a negotiated agreement for the peaceful

²⁰⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.192.

solution of that dispute.²⁰⁹

In terms of the impact of the US policy to support Britain, Kirkpatrick points out:

I dreaded the impact of war on US-Latin American relations. Latin Americans tend to reproach the US for indifference to the hemisphere, for caring only about Europe. Any situation which forced the US to choose Britain over a Latin American nation would exacerbate these feelings. ... Britain is the historic adversary for Spanish America, ... Latin leaders - democratic and nondemocratic - saw the Falklands issue as colonialism with Britain as the colonial power. Hemispheric solidarity was the expected and, in their view, the only appropriate response.²¹⁰

Enders also emphasised:

When the [war] did occur, it would be hard to say that British interests throughout Latin America, which were not large, were damaged. It was *American* interests that were damaged. ... our bilateral relationships with certain countries have unquestionably been affected adversely. The most severe impact is obviously on relations with Argentina. But Venezuela, Panama, and Peru were also highly critical of our support for the United Kingdom's military response ...²¹¹

In these circumstances, to side with Britain not only risked American strategic interests - alienating an important Western hemisphere ally but, in a broad sense, would possibly offend the rest of non-Communist Latin America because supporting Britain would confirm the often expressed South American view that the US cared far more for Europe

²⁰⁹ *The Sunday Times*, 17 December 1989, The Falklands - A War the Americans Lost.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Quoted in the statements of Enders, T., Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, in *Congressional Record*, H381-66, p.121. Also see Kirkpatrick, 'My Falklands War and Theirs', p.19.

than it did for the rest of the Americas.

However, in terms of the interests of the United States vis-à-vis British as a long-standing ally, the relations between the US and Britain had been revived during the Reagan-Thatcher period. The British government had long been a reliable ally in the war against communism in the West and Britain's sincerity of commitment to the alliance were shown in Thatcher's invaluable political and ideological support over the Iranian hostage crisis and the backing for the creation of a US 'Rapid Deployment Force'(RDF). The US role as leader of the global anti-Communist crusade needed the support of both British and Argentinian governments. Considering all these factors, the US could not refuse to involve itself in this conflict and deny standing by its most loyal ally in its hour of need. Knowing the fact that it was almost impossible for the British to win such a war, to support the British or remain neutral during the crisis period thus posed important questions for the 'special relationship'. On the other hand, in the light of the issue of the Western alliance, though the NATO link could not be invoked because the Falkland islands were well outside NATO bounds and the US was under no legal obligation to assist Britain, British defeat would not only seriously damage trans-Atlantic relations but undermine the credibility of the NATO alliance. The US was thus forced to choose between the conflicting demands of different alliance interests.

On the point of international law, while both Britain and the US were aware that if Argentina had succeeded this time it might encourage other uses of force to solve disputes, the British obviously held a much stronger view than the US. In response to Argentinian

aggression, Britain decided to send a large task force to cause the withdrawal of the Argentinian forces, and to restore the British administration on the Falkland Islands. Contrasting with America's indecisiveness, Britain took the Argentinian invasion as a challenge to the West and a violation to international law. During their talks, Haig recalled that '[Thatcher] rapped sharply on the tabletop and recalled that this was the table at which Neville Chamberlain sat in 1938 and spoke of the Czechs as a faraway people about whom we know so little'.²¹² Thatcher also reminded Haig of the danger of appeasing dictators and that 'this omission had lead to the death of over 45 million people'.²¹³ She insisted that this issue was far wider than a dispute between the UK and Argentina. The use of force to seize disputed territory set a dangerous precedent. If the Argentinians got away with taking the Falklands by force, this would 'send a signal round the world with devastating consequences'.²¹⁴ Although the United States felt that 'naked aggression, as practiced by the Argentinian military dictatorship, should not be encouraged, nor indirectly supported by indifference or neutrality', the British viewed the Reagan Administration to be subordinating the importance of maintaining international law to their regional interests by trying to institute negotiations to see if this dispute could be settled.²¹⁵

The Falkland Islands involved issues of the highest national importance for the British. It was Britain's world reputation that was at stake. If the Thatcher government failed in its attempt to recover the Islands, or, worse, did not respond to the invasion at all, it would have undermined Britain's standing as a great power in the world. In a situation like this,

²¹² Haig, *Caveat*, p.272.

²¹³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.192.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.192.

²¹⁵ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.144.

the loss of the Islands not only would have represented a national humiliation for the British, but also as a threat to Thatcher's personal political life. Throughout the crisis the Labour Opposition took this opportunity to embarrass Thatcher's government on what was normally its strongest area - defence and security and attacked the Government for failing to defend British people from foreign domination. They even invoked the issue that in the absence of a serious response to the seizure of British territory the Government could have been forced to resign.²¹⁶ During the entire episode, every Conservative MP was aware that Thatcher might not survive because it presented Thatcher with great and inescapable risks.²¹⁷ Surprisingly, according to what was gleaned from the series of interviews conducted for this study, the Americans apparently lacked understanding of the essence of the British position and seemed to overlook the importance of the Falkland islands to Thatcher and Britain. This could be proved in Reagan's surprise when he finally found that such a serious conflict could break out on the rocky islands in the South Atlantic. Also, when being asked that if they realised at that time that the Thatcher government might have fallen if she failed to recover the Islands, almost every American interviewee said that they were not aware that Thatcher's political fate was tied to the resolution of the crisis.²¹⁸ As one senior official in the Reagan Administration put it:

I don't recall that. I never got a feeling that there was any real danger in Mrs. Thatcher's government falling. ... Obviously there would be some debate and opposition, but in this case she handled it brilliantly.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Hasting & Jenkins, *Battle for the Falklands*, pp.68-71.

²¹⁷ Quoted in Young, H., *One of Us* (London: Macmillan, 1991) p.268.

²¹⁸ These American officials are Weinberger, Streater, Seitz, Speakes, and Sims.

²¹⁹ Telephone conversation with Larry Speakes, 5 March 1998.

To sum up, the interests and stakes of each side could be described thus: the British were prepared to act whether they had American support or not and the highest priority for the British was to solve this dispute, by force if necessary, because anything less than this would mean the fall of Thatcher's government; the Americans were in a dilemma as their interests in Argentina and Central and South America conflicted with their interests in relation to Britain and NATO.

Now, having explored the interests and stakes of both sides, it is found that what happened in this case supports the model of the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour. The pattern of crisis behaviour through the crisis (See *Table 3.1 – Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Falklands War*) is as follows: the divergence of interests and stakes which reflected different priorities of the US and Britain's interests in the Falkland War built up different perceptions between the two allies and therefore made them overlook the other side's stake in the crisis. This led them to have wrong expectations on the way which the other was prepared to act. When events were contrary to their expectations, they became indignant with each other.

As shown in the course of this research, the British expected the US would support them since the start of the crisis. The Americans, on the one hand, feared entrapment in this dispute as the interests of the two allies were conflicting. On the other hand, they knew that failure to support their ally in this dispute would 'devalue the alliance and the alliance might as a result become an empty shell since the expectations of support that underlay it

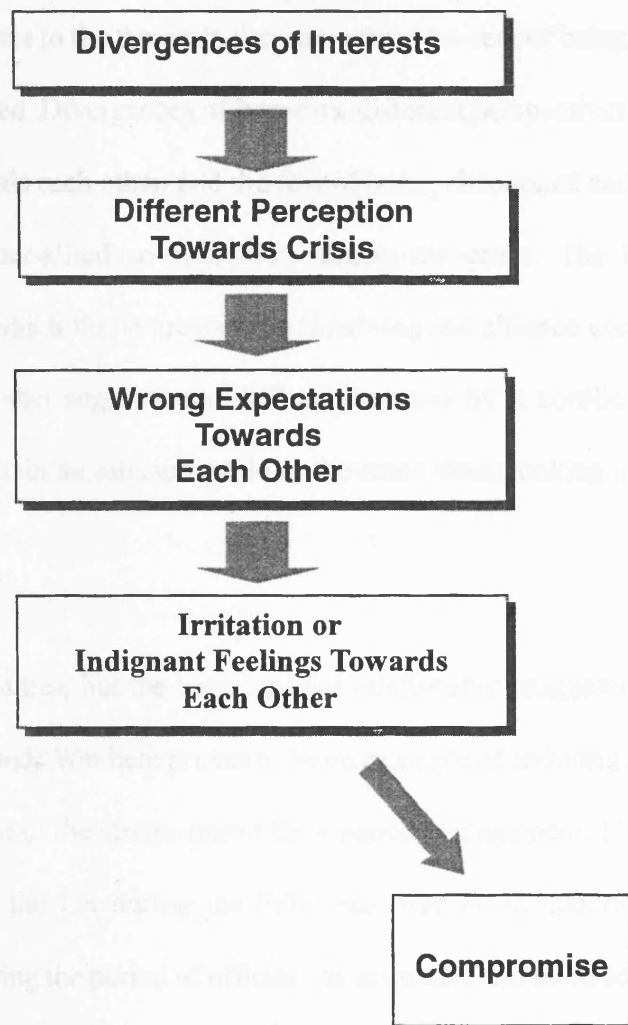
have been dashed'.²²⁰ What made the British angry and surprised was the indecisive response from their most intimate ally. This anger at the lack of US support was because that support was fully expected but in its hour of need Britain was being abandoned. Being considered simply as one of several allies caused ill-concealed irritation in Britain and led to feelings of impatience with the progress of the American mediation. Those expectations - with differences between them - seem to explain much of the discord and private irritation between the two allies over the Falkland Islands.

The process of the whole crisis then came to a turning point as no settlement could be found and Britain prepared to act no matter whether the US formally supported them or not. The crisis eventually came to a final phase which led to four possible outcomes - '*nature of relationship transformed*', '*dispute and discord*', '*compromise*' and '*settlement*'. Fortunately, Britain's value as an ally finally outweighed any possible injury to American interests in Latin America and the US compromised and sided with Britain. The transformation of the Anglo-American alliance - from alliance to rupture - was therefore avoided.

²²⁰ See Snyder, G., *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.180.

Table 3.1

Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Falklands War



Conclusion

What then are the lessons of this case for alliance management? What does this case tell us about how allies manage situations in which their interests diverge? Alliance discord and frictions arose in part over disagreements about interests and the stakes of each other and appropriate policy responses to the threat. It also came from the fear of being entrapped and the fear of being abandoned. Divergences of interests, different perspectives on the threats, wrong expectations towards each other, and the fear of being abandoned and entrapped, all caused the failure of inter-allied co-ordination during the crisis. The Falklands War illustrates a situation in which the interests of maintaining the alliance contradicted each other's own interests. It also suggests the difficulty caused by a conflict between two friends over how to maintain an alliance while at the same time, looking after one's own interests.

Britain and America are allies, but the term 'special relationship' suggests they are more than allies are. The Falklands War here proves to be an example of enduring significance. It presents a fascinating case of the strains raised for alliance management. The co-operation between the British and the US during the Falklands War made maximum use of the 'customary channels' during the period of official US neutrality and these services were far more extensive than most people were aware. This assistance was partly the result of close liaison between British and American military missions and largely due to the long tradition of service and intelligence co-operation between the two countries. Obviously active collaboration was essential to the British success in the Falklands War. Without the

scale and the speed of America's support the operation would have taken longer and been more difficult, or even impossible for the British to win. No other American ally – not even Israel – could imaginably have obtained support to such an extent. Because of these special links, it is easier for Britain, more than any other country, to gain this special access.

However, it should also be noted that this does not imply that the 'special relationship' operated to ensure American support and single-minded commitment to the British cause. Instead, it should be seen as a means, a stratagem, persistently pursued by British diplomatic policy, of exercising great power status through the US. Even allies as close as Britain and the United States should not exaggerate their influence over each other and assume that their co-operation can be extended to areas outside the area specified by the alliance. The Americans will not always be on the British side, the answer to whether the American are willing to help always depends on what their interests and alternatives are, and how realistic it is. Indeed, it is the ambivalence of the American position that made it such a central focus of British attention; to achieve influence, the British had to penetrate the Reagan Administration, to understand its internal workings and to exert pressure on the strategic points in the American foreign-policy process.²²¹

To summarise, there is no doubt that the form and extent of American support and the specialness of the Anglo-American collaboration proved to be exemplified in the Falklands War and in a serious crisis as this, Britain had been able to count on American support. In terms of the lessons of this case for alliance management, the way the two allies managed

²²¹ See Byrd, P., *British Foreign Policy under Thatcher* (London: Philip Allan Ltd., 1988), p.22-3.

such a situation in which the interests of maintaining the alliance contradicted each other's own interests, was obviously a success for alliance management in general. However, the US should have decided where its orders of priority lay at the beginning of the crisis. Though relations with Latin America would certainly have been damaged, to take a firm stand would have greatly strengthened the Western alliance and enhanced America's reputation as a reliable ally.

Chapter 4

THE US INVASION OF GRENADA, 1983.

I. INTRODUCTION

The extraordinary relationship between the Government of Margaret Thatcher and the Reagan Administration was proven on such occasions as the Falklands War. However, there did exist some humiliating events which demonstrated the limits of British influence in Washington, notably the Grenada affair. In October 1983, in order to supplant an incumbent government deemed hostile to US interests, the United States and its Caribbean allies mounted a large amphibious operation, codenamed 'Urgent Fury', to invade the island of Grenada, a member of the British Commonwealth, and replaced its extreme left-wing government by leaders more acceptable to the US.

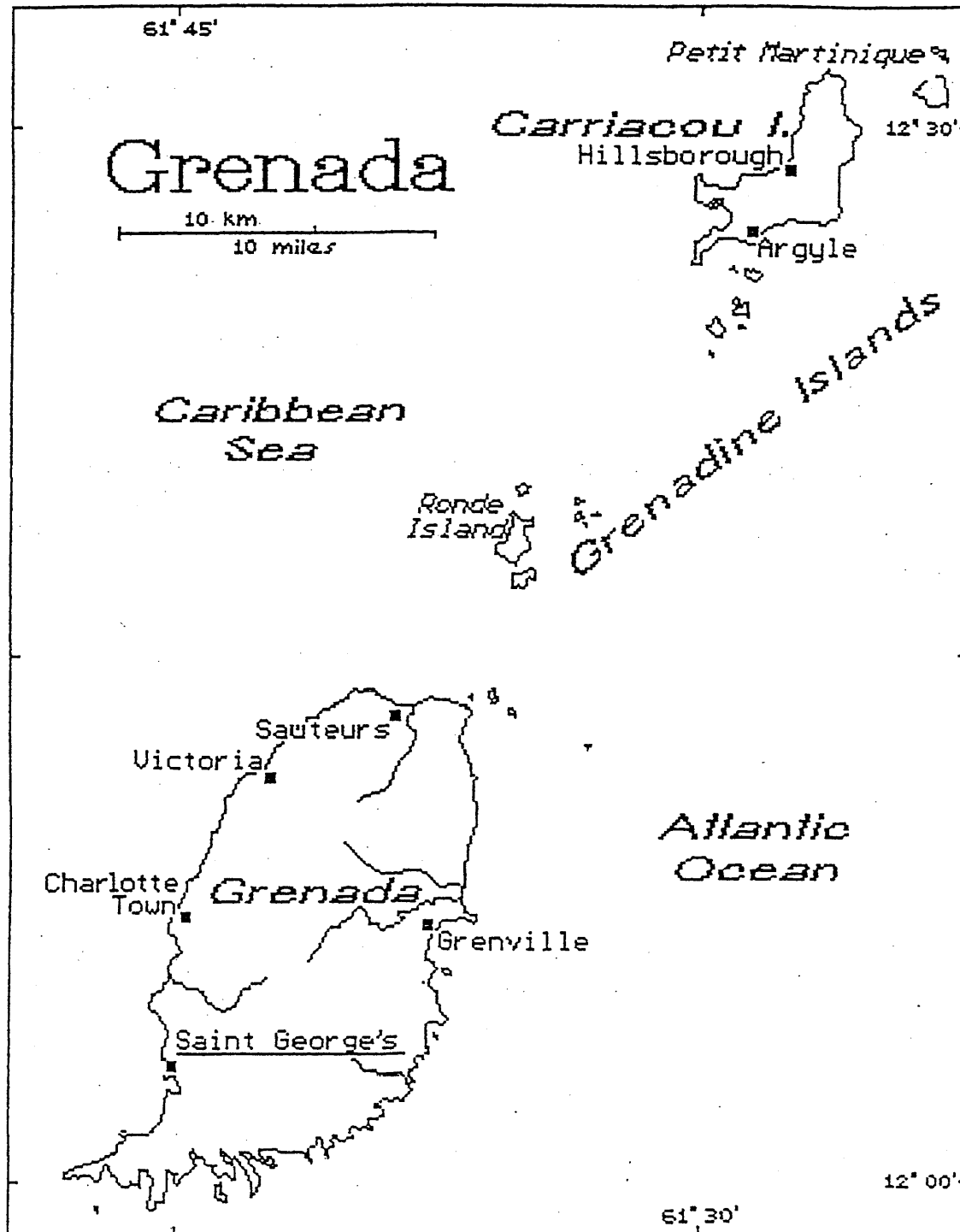
Though the objective was quickly achieved, this operation not only provoked surprise in the world but, most fundamentally, it raised serious questions about the lack of consultation between the two allies and their discordant perceptions of security interests. This resulted in major disagreement between the US and UK which brought the Anglo-American special relationship to its lowest point during the Reagan-Thatcher period. This chapter aims to elucidate the Anglo-American relationship in this crisis, to find out what the Americans' considerations were, the reason why the British felt so offended and the arguments between the two states. By doing so, it will be possible to understand how the event impacted upon the attitude of the two powers towards their special relationship.

Background of Grenada and Its Relations with the US and UK

Grenada, located in the Caribbean Sea, is the southernmost island country of the Windward Islands, which constitute part of the Lesser Antilles. (*See Map 4.1 – Grenada*) It was colonised by France in 1650, ceded to Britain in 1783 and remained a British colony until 1958 when it joined the Federation of the West Indies until its dissolution in 1962. Its population is just over 100,000 citizens, and total land area is only 344sq km that includes a number of islets. Since independence in 1974, Grenada had been ruled by a pro-western government under Eric Gairy. In March 1979, Gairy's regime was overthrown in a bloodless coup in the favour of the New Jewel Movement (NJW), led by a Marxist named Maurice Bishop, and established the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). Although neighbouring Commonwealth Caribbean governments were concerned by the course of events in Grenada, the question of recognition did not arise either in countries such as Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica or for the United Kingdom because Grenada was still a Commonwealth member, the Queen was Head of State and the role of the Governor-General, Sir Paul Scoon, (the Queen's representative on the island), was still retained.²²²

²²² As on 25 March, 1979 People's Law No. 3 provided: 'The Head of State shall remain Her Majesty the Queen and her representative in this country shall continue to be the Governor-General who shall perform such functions as the People's Revolutionary Government may from time to time advise.'

Map 4.1 - Grenada



Under the PRG, Grenada's relations with Britain and the United States deteriorated while links with Cuba and the USSR grew stronger because of the socialist goals of its foreign policy. However, this radical foreign policy did not prevent Grenada from continuing to play a full part in the Commonwealth's Caribbean economic and political integration movement, as seen in the PRG's active participation in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). On 18 June 1981 Prime Minister Bishop signed the Treaty establishing the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). This provided for greater co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy and co-ordination of collective defence and security arrangements, as well as promoting deeper economic integration.

After taking office, Thatcher made no immediate statement of policy on Grenada, but of course she declared firm support for US policy in general. British displeasure at Grenada soon became obvious and could be seen in its reduction in development aid to Grenada and the block of export licences for Grenada's purchase of military equipment. On the other hand, by rapidly extending its diplomatic network to left-wing states, such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, the countries of Eastern Europe and Third World socialist states, Grenada was seen by the US as part of a triangular communist presence, together with Cuba and Nicaragua, to the south of the US. Assistance from Iraq, Algeria, the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba developed swiftly 'covering arms supplies, health, fisheries, airport construction, education and cultural exchange'.²²³

In 1981 Reagan came to power with an electoral mandate to reverse the domestic and

²²³ Thorndike, T., *The Grenada Revolution: its Effects and British Policy*, pp.164-7.

international decline of the United States. The administration believed that the American way of life was under threat from the menace of international communism and by nationalist movements in the Third World which Reagan identified as elements in the communist conspiracy. The administration believed that, in the words of Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, '... the Soviet threat is global. It's not just central Europe.'²²⁴ Therefore, it was necessary for the US to control the Third World as the supplies of resources and raw materials from various developing areas, on which America's economy depended, had to be guaranteed. In order to pursue American hegemony in the Third World, there was a need to support 'friendly' regimes and turn out 'unfriendly' ones.

As regards the Caribbean, it was of major strategic interest to the United States, revolving principally around the role of Cuba and its link with the Soviet Union. US national interests here were three-fold: political-ideological, economic and strategic. First, on the political and ideological front, the Reagan Administration viewed the Caribbean, usually thought of as America's 'own backyard', as a zone of conflict and attached the highest priority to avoiding the emergence of hostile regimes tied to the Soviet Union, and the enhancement of the security of the region. The Caribbean was also important from an economic aspect as the direct US private investment and trade in the region was substantial. (Direct US investment in the Caribbean countries in 1979 came to 'about \$4.7 billion, or 2.5 percent of the book value of all direct US investment in foreign countries.')²²⁵ Furthermore, a very substantial portion of the world's seaborne commerce travelled through the Caribbean.

²²⁴ Quoted in *Washington Post*, 14 December 1981.

²²⁵ Quoted in Dominguez, J., *US Interests and Policies in the Caribbean and Central America* (Washington, D. C.: American Enterprise Institute Special Analyses, 1982), p.11.

Among these cargoes, the most prominent was petroleum which came from Venezuela. For instance, 'nearly one-half of United States trade and two-thirds of its oil imports pass through the Gulf of Mexico or the Panama Canal.'²²⁶ It was feared that the Soviets and Cubans would be able to place a strangle hold over this vital communications route in an extreme situation. The US therefore needed to keep the Caribbean sea lanes and the Panama Canal open to commerce. Thirdly and strategically, the US's Caribbean coastline was almost equal to the Pacific or Atlantic borderline. Among the US borders, the southern was perceived as the most vulnerable because each island in the Caribbean could offer a potential beachhead for a hostile power, such as Cuba. Cuba itself was regarded by the US as a potentially great threat for use as a point of departure for Soviet forces after the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

In December 1979, with the assistance of Cuba, Grenada began to construct a new international airport with a 10,000-foot runway in Point Salines. By May 1980 Grenada even signed a treaty with the Soviet Union which granted Soviet landing rights at Salines

while the Cubans received formal landing rights in January 1981.²²⁷ Under these circumstances, the attitude of the Reagan Administration towards the PRG became extremely hostile not only because of its 'paranoid antagonism towards any government in the area which may be remotely described as left wing let alone Marxist,'²²⁸ but because it

²²⁶ Glimmer, W., *The Grenada Intervention: Analysis and Documentation* (London: Mangles, 1984), p.25.

²²⁷ Bolger, D. P., *Americans at War: 1975-1986, An Era of Violent Peace* (Novato California: Presidio Press, 1988), p.269.

²²⁸ British House of Commons report in *Supra.*, note 15, at para. 190.

viewed the Grenadian airport construction effort as evidence of a much bigger Communist conspiracy. According to Weinberger,

... more worrying was the course of events occurring in Grenada itself. It became increasingly apparent that this small island was being used as a laboratory for the imposition of a far leftist regime, with what appeared to be active and growing Cuban and probably Soviet support.²²⁹

From the American view, Grenada's new airport would allow the Cubans and Soviets to threaten the Caribbean sealanes while Cuba could use the island both as a military bridge to Africa and as an ideological bridge to the eastern Caribbean. Nestor D. Sanchez, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, emphasised in February 1983 that Grenada's new military facilities,

'would provide air and naval bases ... for the recovery of Soviet aircraft after strategic missions. It might also furnish missile sites for launching attacks against the United States with short and intermediate range missiles.'²³⁰

Similarly, Tom Enders, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, claimed before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the airport was a potential Soviet base from which the United States' strategic shipping routes could be attacked and from which the Trinidad and Venezuela oil fields could be threatened.²³¹ In a speech on 10 March 1983, Reagan also warned the Americans:

²²⁹ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.73.

²³⁰ See *Washington Post*, 27 February 1983.

²³¹ Payne, A., Sutton, P. & Thorndike, T., *Grenada: Revolution and Invasion* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p.67.

Grenada, that tiny little island - with Cuba at the west end of the Caribbean, Grenada at the east end - that tiny little island is building now, or having built for it, on its soil and shores, a naval base, a superior air base, storage bases and facilities for the storage of munitions, barracks, and training grounds for the military. I'm sure all of that is not simply to encourage the export of nutmeg.²³²

More spectacularly, in a national televised speech on 23 March 1983, Reagan explained the threat from the 'Spice Island' and the construction of the airfield by showing a declassified aerial reconnaissance photo of the runway, fuel storage, and new Cuban housing. He said:

On the small island of Grenada, ... the Cubans with Soviet financing and backing, are in the process of building an airfield with a 10,000 feet runway. Grenada doesn't even have an air force. Who is it intended for? The Caribbean is a very important passageway for our international commerce and military lines of communication. More than half of all American oil imports now pass through the Caribbean. The rapid buildup of Grenada's military potential is unrelated to any conceivable threat to this island country of under 110,000 people and totally at odds with the pattern of other eastern Caribbean states, most of which are unarmed. ...²³³

The US therefore began to isolate Grenada through international institutions and put pressure on America's allies to do the same.²³⁴ On the other hand, it continued to increase military exercises in this region in order to deter further communist expansion which caused further strain in relations between Grenada and the US. For instance, in August

²³² 'Central America and El Salvador, 10 March 1983', *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 19, No.10 (14 March 1983), p.377.

²³³ Correspondence with Robert Sims, former Pentagon Spokesman, 15 May 1998. Also see Reagan, 'Address to the Nation of Defense and National Security, 23 March 1983', in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Ronald W. Reagan, 1983*, Book I, p.440.

²³⁴ Quoted in Gilmore, *The Grenada Intervention: Analysis and Documentation*, p.29.

1981, the Reagan Administration held a military exercise - code-named, 'Ocean venture 81' - with fourteen different nations (including NATO states) in the Caribbean off Puerto Rico which lasted two weeks. One exercise within Ocean Venture 81 called 'Operation Amber' had caused great concerns in Grenada because the scenario for this exercise was that the government of the island of Amber and the Amberines, which was hostile to the US, had seized US citizens as hostages. The US forces therefore were to invade the island, rescue the hostages and 'install a regime favourable to the way of life we espouse'.²³⁵ Although Bishop pointed out that 'Amber and the Amberines' was a reference to Grenada and the Grenadians and denounced the exercise as a rehearsal for an invasion of Grenada, the US government insisted that 'Operation Amber' was not intended to be a preparatory exercise for a landing on Grenada by US forces. In March 1983 the US held another military exercise which involved over 70 US and allied warships, assembled off Grenada and sailed within six miles of Point Salines.

Despite the PRG's claim that this airport was designed to accommodate long-haul jet aircraft and was solely for use in the tourist trade, the US remained convinced that this airport possessed military potential and was built to 'serve as a staging area and refuelling stop for Cuban troops on the way to Africa or South America, and another Soviet base in the Western Hemisphere capable of servicing Soviet bombers, including the new supersonic Backfire'.²³⁶ For the Reagan Administration, it was clear that Grenada was being overarmed and prepared as a naval and military airbase for the Soviet Union and

²³⁵ See Ecumenical Program for Inter-American Communication and Action (EPICA), 'Grenada: The Peaceful Revolution', *EPICA Task Force*, Washington D.C., 1982, pp.122-3.

²³⁶ Quoted in EPICA, 'Grenada: The Peaceful Revolution', p.70.

Cuba to extend their influence within the Caribbean which might further threaten US traditional hegemony in the region.

II. THE ANGLO-AMERICAN ARGUMENTS OVER THE US INVASION OF GRENADA

The US Invasion of Grenada

By 1983, a power struggle had developed in Grenada between Bishop and the Deputy Prime Minister, Bernard Coard, who was a hard-line Marxist ideologue and the leader of the radical faction of the NJM, but lacked popularity with the Grenadians. Bishop was accused of not moving fast enough to 'socialise' the economy and not consolidating the revolution.²³⁷ On 12 October, Bishop and Coard had an argument in the Cabinet over a long-standing dispute about the Grenada Government's attitude towards private enterprise. Then, Coard resigned. On the night of 13 October, Bishop was placed under house arrest, in a move which was planned by Coard, and then expelled from the Party. At that moment, a review of the standard evacuation plan for Grenada was held by the US State Department. The prime concern was stated to be the safety of nearly 1,000 US citizens living on Grenada. Most of them were students at St. George's University Medical School. The US made an effort to evacuate the students through a Pan Am charter, but the plane was refused the right to land. Another effort was made by chartering a cruise ship; it was denied

²³⁷ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.71.

permission to dock. On 15 October, the situation deteriorated further as Radio Free Grenada announced the arrest of three Cabinet ministers and Bishop was replaced by Coard as Prime Minister. By 18 October five Cabinet members had resigned including the Foreign Minister, Unison Whiteman. On 19 October a crowd of about a thousand, led by Whiteman, went to Bishop's residence, freed him and proceeded to the downtown area. The troops loyal to Coard surrounded Bishop and other cabinet members in order to separate them from the crowd, then started to shoot Bishop's supporters. Bishop and his Cabinet members were all arrested and shot dead immediately. On the same day General Hudson Austin, Commander of the Grenadian Armed Forces, issued a four-day, twenty-four hour curfew with a warning that anyone seen in public would be shot.

Once the revolution had taken place, the Americans consulted the British Foreign Office as to what should be done and were told that, since the coup had taken place, there was nothing that could be done about it.²³⁸ However, this was not the view taken by the US and the other Caribbean leaders. On 18 October, US Secretary of State Shultz authorised the establishment of a special task force on Grenada in the State Department. The US Embassy in Barbados then issued a formal request for assurances about the safety of the US citizens and such assurances came from the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) in Grenada. But the US Embassy plane was not permitted to land in Grenada and then, the airport was closed. At the time other Caribbean countries, such as Barbados and Dominica, feared that the situation of disorder and Marxism in Grenada might spread through the region and decided to seek outside assistance to restore normality to Grenada. According to its Charter,

²³⁸ Renwick, R., *Fighting with Allies* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p.242.

which provided its members with the right to appeal for outside help in the event of external intervention, the OECS decided unanimously - without the presence of Grenada - to put together a force and called on 'friendly states' to help in restoring peace and order on the island after a series of urgent consultations on 19 October. Among the 'friendly states' who received the request were the United States and Britain.

After receiving a formal unanimous request from OECS for help, the US administration began to prepare options as to how to evacuate American citizens from Grenada in a hostile environment. The major considerations were that the Americans on the island might have been in serious danger of being killed or taken hostage. As Weinberger claimed:

We could not ignore this as a mere aberration of a small irrational group of people in an unimportant island. ... there was a medical school in Grenada which had some 800 American medical students. Once the announcement of the 24-hour curfew, with its open licence to kill, was made by the most fanatical and irresponsible of the leftist elements in Grenada who had already murdered Bishop and his colleagues, we naturally had to think about how we could either extricate the Americans, or prevent their being seized as hostages in a reprise of the frustrating and very dangerous Iranian seizure of our citizens and capture of our Embassy in Tehran in 1979.²³⁹

Reagan soon decided to act strongly and decisively. 'What kind of a country would we be,' he asked, 'if we refused to help small but steadfast democratic countries in our neighbourhood to defend themselves against the threat of this kind of tyranny and lawlessness?'²⁴⁰ The Reagan Administration then, dispatched an emissary to meet with Mrs.

²³⁹ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.74.

²⁴⁰ Shultz, G. P., *Turmoil or Triumph. My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), p.329.

Eugene Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica and chairman of the OECS, basically to try to 'build a coalition with them' and explain that the US would not intervene 'without a proper invitation with her and the Organization acting on behalf of Grenada' because the US 'could not do so legally'.²⁴¹ The emissary came back and reported that indeed she wished us [the US] to do this and the invitation indeed was issued'.²⁴² Reagan thus ordered the State Department and the Defense Department to move beyond 'warning order' status and prepare for a non-combatant evacuation order, including an invasion plan which was to be launched on 24 or 25 October. At the same time, according to the White House Spokesman, Larry Speakes:

The USS *Independence* with the Marines Amphibious Unit (the MAU) replacement force for Lebanon which had just left Norfolk, Virginia, heading for the Mediterranean had been told to divert south to Grenada.²⁴³

However, there was one other thing the Administration had to consider. As Shultz said, 'with as many as 1,000 students...much blood would be shed if the US forces had to go in to rescue students or other American citizens taken hostage...We had to avoid a repetition of the Iranian hostage crisis.'²⁴⁴ It is for this reason that the operation would have to be

²⁴¹ Interview with Raymond Seitz, former US Ambassador to London, 7 April 1998, Lehman Brothers, London.

²⁴² *Ibid.* It was later revealed that the suggestion that the invasion was conceived by the OECS was not correct as an emissary, Ambassador Frank McNeil, accompany with General Crist from the State Department was sent to Barbados prior to the meeting of the OECS with a memorandum suggesting that a US invasion was a possibility. See US Military Actions in Grenada: Implications for US Policy in the Eastern Caribbean, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs and on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 1st session, November 2, 3 and 16, 1983, U.S. G.P.O., 1984, p.3.

²⁴³ Telephone conversation with Larry Speakes, former White House Spokesman, 5 March 1998.

²⁴⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, pp.450-1.

mounted under conditions of the strictest secrecy so that the Grenadian forces and Cubans on Grenada would not have time to bring in reinforcements or to attack American students at St. George's University Medical School. If there were any leaks it would spoil the advantage of surprise and the result could be the taking of hundreds of Americans as hostage or the war between the US and Cuba which the US did not want.²⁴⁵ It was under these circumstances that the US decided not to inform anyone in advance, even the British, their closest ally, about the rescue mission despite the fact that Grenada had been a British colony and was still a member of the British Commonwealth. By doing so, the Reagan Administration thought, it could reduce the possibilities of a leak which would elevate the risk to the US students.

On the British side, the request from the OECS was understood only as an 'informal probing of British opinion'.²⁴⁶ Though there were also about 200 British nationals on the island, the Thatcher government approached the crisis more from a diplomatic and political angle, and hoped to localise it within the Caribbean and the Commonwealth. Thatcher's initial reaction was that 'it would be most unwise of the Americans to accede to this suggestion' for intervention because 'it would put foreign communities (there were some 200 British civilians there) in Grenada at a severe risk'.²⁴⁷ On 22 October, HMS *Antrim* had sailed from Colombia to the area of Grenada, remaining beyond the horizon and the British Government announced that this was a 'precautionary move designed to help with the evacuation of British subjects from Grenada should it be required'.²⁴⁸ On the same day, the

²⁴⁵ Quoted in Reagan, *An American Life*, p.451.

²⁴⁶ Young, H., *One of Us* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.346.

²⁴⁷ Thatcher, M., *The Downing Street Years*, p.328.

²⁴⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.330.

Foreign Office asked the British Embassy in Washington to find out about American's intentions. Robin Renwick therefore went to see the Director for Politico-Military Affairs, Admiral Jonathan Howe, at the State Department and was told that at a meeting of the NSC it had been agreed to proceed cautiously. Britain would be forewarned if the US decided to take more active steps. On 23 October, both Renwick and Derek Thomas, the Minister at the Embassy, saw Admiral Howe and again were assured that Britain would be consulted before the Americans took action. In their almost hour-by-hour contacts with Lawrence Eagleburger, Assistant Secretary at the State Department, both the British Ambassador, Sir Oliver Wright, and Thomas were further assured that 'the President has not finally decided' and that 'the US was proceeding cautiously and nothing would happen without consultation with Britain.'²⁴⁹ In fact, the British, in their efforts to discover American intentions, had been deliberately misled, as Reagan had already agreed in principle on the morning of 22 October that the US should respond and that planning should be carried forward.²⁵⁰

The next day Reagan was told that the US Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, had been attacked by a terrorist suicide bomber and 241 Marines were killed. In a National Security Council meeting, when the meeting turned to Grenada, Reagan again confirmed that he was in favour of intervention. On the same day, a British official David Montgomery, Deputy High Commissioner to Barbados, visited the island and radioed to the Commission saying that the situation on the island was 'calm but tense and volatile' and that Scoon was well and did not request for military intervention, either directly or

²⁴⁹ Interview with Sir Oliver Wright, 27 April 1998.

²⁵⁰ Reagan, *An American Life*, pp.450-2.

indirectly.²⁵¹ However, there were still worries in the US that the safety of Americans on the island might have been jeopardised because the Junta had threatened to shoot any curfew-breakers.

On 24 October, Wright informed the State Department that 'Britain was opposed to any military action' and that Thatcher 'preferred economic and political pressure.'²⁵² On the same day, when being asked by MPs in the House of Commons about the threat of US intervention in Grenada, Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, said that 'I know of no such intention' and that the British government were 'in the closest possible touch with the US and Caribbean governments' and he had 'no reason to think that American intervention is likely'.²⁵³ However, that evening, the UK was sent a written invitation in the form of a letter from the OECS, which was delivered to the British High Commission in Bridgetown, Barbados on the night of 23 October, in which Britain was asked to join the invasion. The High Commission transmitted it to London in a telegram informing the British Government of the Organization's intention of taking action under Article 8 of the 1981 Treaty of OECS for the collective defence and preservation for peace and security against external aggression and requesting assistance from friendly governments. Robert McFarlane, Reagan's newly appointed National Security Adviser, suggested that Reagan needed to consult the British on this matter, he said:

²⁵¹ See Howe, G., *Conflict of Loyalty* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p.327 and Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.330. Also in *The Times*, 23 October 1983.

²⁵² Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.331.

²⁵³ Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, p.328.

This is going to be something which may create some misgivings among allies who never want you to do anything but support NATO, and any time you get very far off that course they begin to worry. So you ought to consult.²⁵⁴

Thus began a sequence of high-level consultations involving Reagan and Thatcher. Reagan undertook to inform Thatcher in advance of any decision taken by the United States, said that he was giving serious consideration to the request from OECS and would welcome Thatcher's thoughts. A second message arrived within four hours from the President saying that he had decided to respond positively to the request made to him. Thatcher felt let down and betrayed. She called Reagan while he was briefing the Congressional leaders, strongly expressed her opposition to US intervention in a territory which was part of the British Commonwealth and urged Reagan to call off the operation. But it was too late because the President told her that the troops were already on their way. After receiving this information, both Thatcher and Howe were dumbfounded because it seemed that the British government had been deceived by the US and now they would have to explain how it happened that a member of the Commonwealth had been invaded by its closest ally. Thatcher said, 'I felt dismayed and let down by what had happened. At best the British Government had been made to look impotent; at worst we looked deceitful. ...It was an unhappy time.'²⁵⁵ Reagan was also disappointed at Thatcher's reaction. As McFarlane said:

²⁵⁴ Quoted in Smith, G., *Reagan and Thatcher* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), p.126.

²⁵⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.331.

I was present when he talked to her on the phone hours before Grenada, and it was not a happy conversation. The President was very disappointed, not angry. His respect for her was too deep for him ever to become angry with her. But he was disappointed.²⁵⁶

On 25 October, an assault force, made up of 1,500 troops of the US 82nd Airborne Division - 400 Marines and 300 soldiers from six Caribbean nations, landed on Grenada before dawn and soon seized both of the island's airfields. Thatcher emphasised that no British troops were involved and HMS *Antrim* was ordered to stay clear of the area of operations.²⁵⁷ News of the invasion was formally announced by Reagan, accompanied by Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica. The principal justifications for the intervention given by Reagan were as follows:

- (a) To protect innocent lives of up to a thousand American citizens. The action to secure and evacuate endangered US citizens on the island was undertaken in accordance with well-established principles of international law regarding the protection of one's citizens.
- (b) To forestall further chaos.
- (c) To assist in the restoration of conditions of law and order and of governmental institutions to the island of Grenada.²⁵⁸

Charles had added:

I think we were all very horrified at events which took place recently in Grenada. ...We're very concerned that this event should not take place again. It is even more important in a small state...to

²⁵⁶ Quoted in Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher*, p.126.

²⁵⁷ *The New York Times*, 25 October 1983.

²⁵⁸ See *The Times*, 26 October 1983.

have the democratic institutions. And this we've had for a long time and we've continued it and we wish to continue. Grenada was an aberration in this respect.²⁵⁹

On 26 October Charles told the Security Council that Scoon, the Governor-General, made the request for intervention in direct messages to her on both 21 and 22 October. She said, 'He had invited us to come and do what we could to bring back normalcy to Grenada.'²⁶⁰ Scoon confirmed this by saying:

People were scared. I had several calls from responsible people saying: Something must be done, Governor-General. We are depending on you. People in Grenada cannot do it. You must get help from outside. ... what I asked for was not an invasion but help from the OECS and asked the OECS to ask America for help - and I confirmed this in writing myself to the President. ... We are very, very grateful that those other countries came to our rescue. They came just in time.²⁶¹

While he explained the reason why he did not invite Britain to participate as 'I thought the Americans would do it much faster and more decisively'. The request made by Scoon and the chairman of the OECS, Charles, had greatly strengthened the US legal case for intervening. Officials in the Reagan Administration, such as Kenneth Dam, Deputy Secretary of State, also stressed that if there had been no Americans on the island or if in the judgment that American lives had not been endangered and there had been no request from the OECS, there would have been 'no US move in that direction'.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ See *The Times*, 26 October 1983.

²⁶⁰ See *The Times*, 1 November 1983.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² See US Military Actions in Grenada: Implications for US Policy in the Eastern Caribbean, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs and on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 1st session, November 2, 3 and 16, 1983, U.S. G.P.O., 1984, pp.19-20.

On 27 October Reagan, in a televised address, accused Cuba of planning a permanent occupation of Grenada. He based his claim on the large numbers of Cuban military and paramilitary forces who had been taken prisoner and the discovery by US troops of a complete Cuban military base filled with weapons and communications equipment. 'I believe our Government has a responsibility to go to the aid of its citizens if their right to life and liberty is threatened. The nightmare of our hostages in Iran must never be repeated,' he declared.²⁶³ The speech turned the tide of public opinion strongly in the Administration's favour.

To defend the point that there was a real danger to the American students, Secretary of Defense Weinberger had explained 'when you're in a twenty-four-hour curfew and you're told that if you're found on the street you will be shot without any questions asked, I would classify that as at least a pretty uncomfortable condition. Also in those circumstances you always have to be worried about hostages being taken and we have had a pretty recent experience when hostages were taken and it took 400 ...days to get them back. So it seems to me it was entirely proper to consider those 1,000 American citizens in danger.'²⁶⁴

On 28 October all the American students at the campus of St. George's University Medical School had been rescued by US forces and the major military objectives of the intervening multinational force had been secured. The Americans then cut their forces in Grenada by nearly half, leaving 2,500 men in the island and Scoon was invited to form an interim-

²⁶³ Quoted in *The Times*, 28 October 1983.

²⁶⁴ On 26 October 1983 in *NBC-TV Today*.

administration to pave the way for a return to democracy, expected to take place in late 1984. In order to repair the situation in the Western alliance caused by the US-led invasion, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Kenneth Dam, was sent to the European capitals to emphasise that the attack was a 'rescue operation' which had been welcomed both by the Americans and other foreign nations who were evacuated from the island as well as by the Grenadians themselves. In a similar attempt, in their first face-to-face talks since the American-led invasion in Grenada, Shultz assured Howe that they would maintain much closer consultation with the British in future similar situations.²⁶⁵ By 15 December 1983 the majority of the American armed forces had been withdrawn, leaving the maintenance of internal security to the Caribbean police forces. The final toll of the US forces was eighteen killed, ninety-three wounded and sixteen missing. The stage was set for the free election on 19 December 1983, followed by the full withdrawal of all American forces.

Public Opinion on the Invasion

US Public Opinion

Domestically in the US, the invasion aroused mixed views. Despite deep concern about the President's display of force and the long-term implications this may have for future foreign policy, the US public supported the action because of its low casualties, and short duration. According to the *ABC-Washington Post* survey in November 1983, 71 per cent were in

²⁶⁵ See *The Times*, 28 October 1983.

favour and only 22 per cent were opposed to the Grenada landing.²⁶⁶ In the American press, *The New York Times* said that the President acted on a flimsy warrant for invasion and claimed that the whole incident was a frustrated Administration invaded to overthrow a distasteful regime because this was desirable and could be done, rather than because it was right or necessary. It urged the Administration, '... The enduring test for Americans is not whether we have the will to use that power but the skill to avoid having to.'²⁶⁷ Again, on 10 November, a New York Times editorial noted that 'most Americans not only approve, but feel positively invigorated ... Years of frustration were vented by the Grenada invasion. So the invasion is finally justified because Americans needed a win, needed to invade someone.'²⁶⁸ *The Washington Post* deplored the invasion and called it illegal and unnecessary.²⁶⁹ *The Washington Globe* published a leading article headed 'Difficult to Justify.' A reporter said, 'People are confused by such an unlikely event. I have heard some say it is right to nip the Soviet threat in the bud. But the majority feeling is concern about what we are doing. People are startled and chagrined that we have invaded such a tiny place.'²⁷⁰

In support of the President, the *Wall Street Journal* said, 'The question is not whether America has the power to protect its friends, but whether it has the will. This demonstration that it does indeed, will be encouraging to other nations under attack. Unless we fritter away the advantages in an orgy of self-doubt and indecision, the Grenadian action is bound

²⁶⁶ Quoted in Schoenhals, K.P. and Melanson, R.A., *Revolution and Intervention in Grenada. The New Jewel Movement, the United States, and the Caribbean* (London: Westview Press, 1985), p.153.

²⁶⁷ Goliath in Grenada, *The New York Times*, 30 October 1983, E18.

²⁶⁸ *The New York Times*, 10 November 1983.

²⁶⁹ 'Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Police', *Newsletter*, Fall 1983, pp.8-9.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in *The Times*, 26 October 1983.

to result in an overnight improvement in the US geopolitical position. If no one will say that what happened in Grenada is wrong, why should a different morality apply in the rest of Latin America and in the rest of the world?’²⁷¹

In Congress, whilst most Republicans had leaped to the President’s defence, most of the reaction of the Democrats was negative. For example, Bob Edgar argued that US lives were not endangered in Grenada, that the people of Grenada had not been consulted and that the Congress had been circumvented. He asked, ‘are we to send in our marines and rangers every time there is an international disturbance?’²⁷² Similarly, Senator Ronald Dellums said he ‘opposed in the strongest of terms this military intervention on the grounds that it was an effort to use the students and tiny Caribbean countries in a thinly veiled effort to mask further militarisation of American foreign policy’.²⁷³ Furthermore, he asserted that ‘because the administration wanted to strike out against the government of Grenada and its Cuban advisers, the presence of the students was used as an excuse to launch the invasion’.²⁷⁴ Jim Leach reminded the Administration that ‘our most loyal ally, Great Britain, strongly objects to our decision.’²⁷⁵ Howard Wolpe called the action an example of ‘gunboat diplomacy in direct contradiction to American ideals, traditions, and interests.’²⁷⁶ Speaker Thomas P. O’Neill’s first reaction was ‘to be perfectly truthful, his [President Reagan] policy scares me’, but he then urged national unity while the fighting was in progress,

²⁷¹ *Wall Street Journal*, 26 October 1983.

²⁷² *Congressional Record*, 26 October 1983, H8640.

²⁷³ Quoted in: Full Committee Consideration of Reports from the Honorable Samuel S. Stratton, the Honorable Elwood H.(Bud) Hillis, and the Honorable Ronald V. Dullems, on Their November 5-6, 1983, Visit to Grenada with Speaker’s Fact-Finding Mission, Hearing before the Committee Armed Services, House of Representatives, 98th Congress, 1st session, November 15, 1983, U.S. G.P.O., 1984, p.7.

²⁷⁴ See *Washington Post*, 15 November 1983.

²⁷⁵ *Congressional Record*, 26 October 1983, H8691.

²⁷⁶ *Congressional Record*, 25 October 1983, H8582.

though soon he suggested that unless US citizens had been in actual danger, the invasion would represent gunboat diplomacy.²⁷⁷ He then appointed a fourteen-member commission to conduct a fact-finding mission to Grenada and Barbados. The group returned on 7 November and, according to Thomas S. Foley, a Democratic whip, 'under the circumstances, the majority – and I would say, the very large majority – feels that the President acted correctly to protect American lives'. But he also warned that 'if I conceived this to be a precedent for other interventions, I would be frightened'.²⁷⁸ In support of Reagan's policy, Dante Fascell also stated that 'under the circumstances which existed in that region, which is virtually in our backyard, I believe the US was justified'.²⁷⁹ Dick Cheney said Reagan's decisiveness contrasted sharply with the approach of the Carter Administration and that 'a lot of folks around the world feel we are more steady and reliable than heretofore'.²⁸⁰ However, as the students began returning from Grenada, the criticism of Reagan diminished markedly. By 28 October supporters of the actions had begun to dominate congressional debate. Speaker O'Neill reversed his earlier criticism and called the intervention to rescue US citizens 'justified'.²⁸¹

British Public Opinion

On the British side, news of the invasion of Grenada by US and Caribbean troops and the powerlessness of the British Government to prevent it shocked the House of Commons and led to harsh criticism of both the British Government and Reagan by opposition parties and

²⁷⁷ See O'Neill, T., *Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1987) pp.364-371.

²⁷⁸ *The New York Times*, 9 November, 1983.

²⁷⁹ *Congressional Record*, 27 October 1983, H8706.

²⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, 28 October 1983.

²⁸¹ *The New York Times*, 9 November 1983.

some of Thatcher's own Conservatives. The chief charge against the United States was that the US justification for the invasion of Grenada was not legal and the whole incident appeared to be a violation of the United Nations Charter. Denis Healey, chief Opposition spokesman on Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said that none of Reagan's objectives justified the invasion of an independent state, especially when the British official who went to the island confirmed that the situation on the island was 'calm' and when the RMC had said that the Americans and other foreign residents on the island were not in imminent danger. He added that this invasion appeared to be a violation of the UN Charter and had split the Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean in two. Healey asked Thatcher to protest directly in the strongest possible terms and urged Howe to make the Government's condemnation of the invasion plain for all to see. The Labour Party also remarked that the Government's foreign policy was too closely linked to that of the United States, and that Thatcher's staunch support for Reagan was not matched by American sensitivity to Britain's interests.²⁸² David Steel, leader of the Liberal Party, said it was quite obvious that reasons given by the American administration for this exercise were not validated by international law or by the Charter of the UN. Steel said, 'there is no rule of international law which allows big powers in the world to go round establishing friendly governments in smaller countries of the world. That is a dangerous proposition to be allowed to pass without comment. The process of encouraging liberal democracy was not assisted by going around supporting every thug in Latin America who happened to be anti-Communist.'²⁸³

²⁸² *The New York Times*, October 25, 1983.

²⁸³ *The Times*, 26 October 1983.

Secondly, on the issue of lack of consultation, Norman St. John-Stevás, a Conservative, said that whatever reasons might have inspired the US to their action, they had acted precipitously, unwisely and illegally in invading an independent state, made worse by the fact that Grenada was part of the Commonwealth. Jeremy Corbyn, of Labour, said the Government's performance had been a pathetic and demeaning example of what it was unable to say to the US. Healey said that it was a serious matter when a Commonwealth country subject to the Queen was invaded by Britain's closest ally and the British Government was informed of the intention to invade at the very moment when the invasion was taking place and its protestations were pushed aside. He recalled that Howe had just told the House on October 24 that he had no reason to think that American military intervention was likely and that he knew of no American intention to invade. 'It is an extraordinary statement to come from a representative of a Government which prides itself on being America's most loyal ally'.²⁸⁴ It appeared that the British Government had on this occasion been 'deceived by its American ally and by some of its Commonwealth partners.'²⁸⁵ He also stressed that 'the tendency of the US to go it along' and the way Reagan saw the world 'exclusively in terms of red and white' would be an immense danger for world peace.²⁸⁶ He then asked if the Government were aware of the fact that the British Government was approached by the OECS on Friday night. Was Howe aware of it when he told the House he had no reason to believe America was contemplating such a step 24 hours later on Monday? Healey finally concluded: 'I could not say the Foreign Secretary was deceiving the House, but he was certainly misleading it in the words he used. Either

²⁸⁴ See Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Sixth Series, Vol. 47, House of Commons, Official Report, 26 October 1983, pp.291-335.

²⁸⁵ See Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 47, 26 October 1983, pp.291-335.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.291-335.

the Government was deceived by its major ally or the Government was deceiving the House and this event represents an unpardonable humiliation.'²⁸⁷ Turning on the Prime Minister, Healey said:

When ...the last 12 months when the possibility of a military attack on an independent Commonwealth state was widely discussed throughout the Caribbean ... they must conclude that the Government was guilty of the same sort of fecklessness. ...How on earth could the Prime Minister possibly imagine that a couple of minutes on the telephone with President Reagan...would make any difference? ...The Prime Minister had been the obedient poodle of the American President, especially when the Secretary of State Shultz said: 'We...are always impressed with the views of the British Government and Mrs. Thatcher, but that does not mean we always have to agree with them.' It really is time for the Prime Minister to get off her knees and join the other allies of the United States who are deeply concerned about the President's trends in American policies.²⁸⁸

Trying to play down the criticism that the Government did not make its disapproval clear enough, Thatcher described the United States as having been pressured to act by other Caribbean nations and having been worried about the lives of American citizens on the island. Howe explained that different views had been taken by different Commonwealth governments in the Caribbean, some supporting the action and some not. He said that nothing could be less helpful than to condemn the United States when operations to restore democracy to Grenada were under way. 'The Americans had made plain their wish to withdraw from the Grenadian scene at the earliest opportunity. Meantime, their forces and those of Commonwealth countries involved are exposed to great danger. We shall do

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25 October 1983, pp.143-4.

²⁸⁸ *The Times*, 27 October 1983.

nothing to make their task more difficult.’²⁸⁹ Lady Young, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said, ‘the Government was consulted. The situation was that the United States and some Commonwealth countries on the Caribbean took the view that the risk their citizens were exposed to required some action. We regret the action the Americans decided to take but we do not necessarily agree with the Americans on every issue any more than they always agree with us, nor should we expect to’.²⁹⁰

In support of the Government, Peter Blaker, a Conservative, said as far as he knew there was no agreement or convention which obliged the United States to consult Britain about its actions in Grenada. But Britain had been consulted. It was farcical to talk about betrayal. Anthony Kershaw of the Conservative Party said it was not true to say that because Britain’s advice had been rejected on this occasion this country could not rely upon the US to take its advice about other matters. Roy Jenkins said he ‘would not join in condemnation of the Americans for their invasion of Grenada. ...The lesson to be learnt from Grenada was that it was not right to call into question the alliance every time the major partner did something Britain did not like. Criticism ought to be restrained.’²⁹¹ At the end of the debate, the Government were supported by 336 MPs to 211, a majority of 125. But Robert Rhodes James, a Conservative backbencher, said: ‘The whole thing is a total humiliation and disaster.’ In opinion polls, Thatcher’s score for skill in this crisis had dropped from 63 per cent to 38 per cent since the June general election. Her rating for understanding world problems had slipped from 47 per cent to 28 per cent.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ *The Times*, 27 October 1983.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *The Times*, 3 November 1983.

²⁹² *The New York Times*, November 7, 1983.

III. ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE US INVASION OF GRENADA

Nature of the Crisis

The US invasion of Grenada was essentially a crisis between two allies in which one of them perceived the Caribbean to be its own 'backyard' and the revolution on the island of Grenada, with its extremely left-wing regime, to be a major threat to its security. The other ally did not share its views and thought the use of force to remove the regime in Grenada to be a violation of international law and was worried that it might set a dangerous precedent. It is noteworthy that the dangers to the functioning of the Anglo-American alliance were so great that at the end of 1983 Anglo-American relations were said to be in a worse situation than 'at any time since Suez.'²⁹³ In terms of its duration and scale, America's incursion in Grenada was obviously of shorter duration than the Falklands War. The issue involved in this crisis was also less easy to defend because Grenada was an independent sovereign country and a member of the British Commonwealth invaded by the US and its Caribbean neighbours. In contrast to the Falklands, it was the US who sought political support rather than military help from Britain in order to share the international implications that would arise out of the crisis and finally seemed to overlook the fact that Britain had particular interests to protect in the Caribbean. The Falklands was obviously a crisis in which Britain wanted America to help, regardless of the fact that this might result in losses to America's potentially broader foreign policy interests or friendship in Latin America.

²⁹³ Quoted in Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984*, p.194.

Sources of Crisis

The discordant perceptions towards ‘alliance commitment’ which were seen in the crisis raised the most fundamental question about the special relationship between Britain and the US. In Britain, there were deep concerns about Reagan’s display of force and the long-term implications this might have for future Anglo-American relations. In terms of its results (removing the Marxist regime) the US invasion of Grenada was warmly welcomed in London. However, on the issue of lack of consultation, the British were surprised that the US had moved against a Commonwealth member without informing it and it was the manner of deliberately delaying consultation on the part of Washington that had rankled with the British government. Although some consultations did take place between the two governments prior to the American invasion, they were ‘regrettably less’ than Britain would have wished for.²⁹⁴ In the words of Lord George Younger,

I think we should be to the possible fullest extent to be consulted about everything and this was an exception which we would not have wished but, nevertheless, it was an exception.²⁹⁵

From the British point of view, since Grenada was a member of the Commonwealth and the Queen was the Head of State, and since there were a number of British nationals on the island, Britain had a right to be involved on both ‘constitutional and humanitarian’ grounds

²⁹⁴ *The Times*, 27 October 1983.

²⁹⁵ Interview with Lord George Younger, former Minister of State for Defence, 7 April 1998, The Royal Bank of Scotland, 138-142 Holborn, London.

and therefore expected US consultation right from the start of the crisis.²⁹⁶ The British Government tried hard to keep in touch with Washington throughout the whole event and, though the US had always assured the British that they would be consulted immediately if the US decided to take any further steps, Britain was only 'informed' at the last moment. Thatcher was outraged on this point because she believed that she had gone out of her way to support Reagan while he had decided to go ahead and even disregarded her strongest protests. Many other British officials were angry with America because they assumed that it was 'customary' for neither side to take any decision to act on anything that touched the interest of the other without full consultation. In this case, they were reading more into the special relationship than had ever existed.²⁹⁷ But the decision to keep the invasion plan secret was seen by the British as a deliberate policy decision made by the US government and one of the reasons of doing so was to 'allow the US to operate swiftly without any negative voices'. If the Thatcher government had known this early enough, the British would have made a great fuss over the operation and there might well have been delay or, even worse, the operation might have been called off.²⁹⁸ According to Wright, the British were particularly angry with the Americans on this issue because 'the Commonwealth was basically consulting together about what they could do with these people as their neighbours; and the Americans sort of took things out of our hands'.²⁹⁹

In the light of the unpredictable way in which the US invaded Grenada and its determination to push ahead with their plan to intervene in spite of clearly expressed

²⁹⁶ Quoted in Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher*, p.127.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.129-131.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Edward Streater, 28 April 1998.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Sir Oliver Wright, former British Ambassador to Washington, 27 April 1998, London.

British objections, the British felt aggrieved not only because Britain had been deceived by their closest ally but it had been humiliated by having its interests and views so plainly disregarded in Washington. As Younger said,

I think the British views would not have been strong enough to change their minds. They were very nervous about things happening in the Caribbean, it is their under-belly there. ... We were pretty put out that they had done it that way. Fortunately it was all over fairly quickly. We did feel that we were close allies and that we should have been consulted and they agreed actually that we should have been consulted and they said they are sorry.³⁰⁰

For the British, they could not be sure that whether the Americans just made a mistake or whether they thought it through and, according to Younger, decided that 'the best thing for us to do is to do it and not to ask the British too soon because they can not agree to it!'³⁰¹ America thus appeared to be an unreliable ally and the Anglo-American alliance seemed to be an ineffective alliance because of America's refusal 'to honour, or even violate, a set of commitments, and act in a totally unpredictably way'. It was therefore difficult to commend the American action, as the MPs would have wished, yet, it was almost 'equally impossible for the British Government to condemn the United States for that would have done nothing for the future of Anglo-American relations, already badly damaged - just for the sake of disagreement over a small island in the Caribbean.'³⁰² At any rate, Thatcher made her opposition on the American rescue operation openly and soundly. In the BBC World Service phone-in programme, she said:

³⁰⁰ Interview with Lord George Younger, 7 April 1998.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, p.331.

I am totally and utterly against Communism and terrorism. ... But if you are going to pronounce a new law that wherever Communism reigns against the will of the people, even though it has happened internally there, there the United States shall enter, then we are going to have really terrible wars in the world. ... We in the Western countries, the Western democracies, use our force to defend our way of life. This does not mean you are entitled to go into any country either in Central America or Eastern Europe. ... when things happen in other countries that we do not like, we don't just march in. We try to do everything by persuasion.³⁰³

It is easy to understand why Britain was so aggravated and embarrassed. Since the US and UK have preserved a special relationship for a long time, the British thought that at least the United States should have given the British government effective consultation before they intervened in Grenada. On this point, the Americans had a different view. The Americans explained that the delay in consultation was, according to Reagan, not 'one of lack of trust in her [Thatcher] or on your [British] side of the ocean' but was in order to 'reduce the possibilities of a leak on our [the US] side and elevate the risk to our students' and 'the minute we could, I explained to her what our situation had been and why I had made the decision I made'.³⁰⁴ Seitz also emphasised that 'there was nothing intentional about it. There was no wish to embarrass the British' and he apologised that 'it was our fault. We regretted that we just didn't think to tell them in enough time, ... because it was one of these things that is pretty easy to do. ...in those rather hectic difficult hours on that

³⁰³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 October 1983.

³⁰⁴ See Reagan, *An American Life*, p.451.

Sunday evening.³⁰⁵ On the point of misleading the British, Shultz offered his apology to Howe, he said, 'There was no intent to mislead. I'm sorry if it appeared that way.'³⁰⁶

To defend the point that the US had not given Britain an opportunity for consultation on the Grenada operation, the Pentagon spokesman Robert Sims argued that at the time when 'American interests and the lives of American citizens were at stake', it would have been 'irresponsible of the US to ignore the situation or allow its actions to be vetoed by Britain.'³⁰⁷ Seitz also explained that:

although British opinion is almost always valued and probably valued more than another opinion by an outside power in Washington, not on all subjects, but on many subjects. But in the end, we're the ones who have to make the decision - that's not ignoring anybody but in the end, particularly on strategic matters, we made the decision.³⁰⁸

Jeane Kirkpatrick, the US Ambassador to the UN, argued that Thatcher had misunderstood the whole basis of the US action and ignored one basic point: 'We cannot give our allies veto power over our national security.'³⁰⁹ Shultz also told a press conference that although the American government was always impressed by the British government's views, 'it did not always have to agree and that it had to make decisions in the light of the security implications of its own citizens.'³¹⁰ Fortunately, the effects of the crisis were short-lived and did not undermine the Special Relationship fundamentally. In the words of Sir Charles

³⁰⁵ Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

³⁰⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.336.

³⁰⁷ Correspondence with Robert Sims, 15 May 1998.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Dickie, 'Special' No More. *Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality*, p.188.

³¹⁰ *The Times*, 1 November 1983.

Powell, Thatcher's foreign policy adviser:

Before it, the relations between Britain and the United State were fine, still warmed by the Falklands experience. But for a very brief period during the Grenada crisis, relations were very difficult and very scratchy because we didn't think the Americans had played entirely straight in this. They had not revealed their intention to invade Grenada, which was after all a territory where the Queen was the Head of State and that was a pretty drastic thing to do. ... But it was essentially a short spat. We didn't have any difficulty with the American purpose. ... But the lack of consultation was not in the spirit of the Anglo-American relationship, ... So there were difficulties but only for a matter of two or three weeks. It didn't do any lasting damage.³¹¹

In terms of getting support from its allies, the Americans felt poorly compensated for their role in the Falklands War. The US viewed its policy as part of the burden which their closest ally, Britain, was expected to bear and therefore, expected Britain to act in accordance with the US policy or to offer their political support over the incident in Grenada. The reluctance of the British to do so, thus, produced a feeling of dismay and raised the question of burden-sharing with an alliance. Needing British support in its operation and not getting it, the Reagan Administration was not only disappointed at the reactions of the British government but felt that Thatcher's opposition was 'just plain wrong'.³¹² Having made sacrifices for its erstwhile allies in the Falklands War, according to a Pentagon official, there was 'a deep sense of outrage' at Britain's refusal to participate.³¹³ Reagan had hoped to get a better reaction from Thatcher and in that he was 'deeply disappointed', while Shultz commented 'we are always impressed with the views of the

³¹¹ Interview with Sir Charles Powell, 27 April 1998.

³¹² Quoted in Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp.336-340.

³¹³ See *The Times*, 26 October 1983.

British Government and Mrs. Thatcher, but that does not mean we always have to agree with her, and of course, we also have to make decisions in the light of the security situations of our citizens as we see it!’³¹⁴ ‘Whatever the reasons for Prime Minister Thatcher’s opposition, she did not exhibit any particular concern for the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and America. ... We had turned ourselves into pretzels for Mrs. Thatcher over the Falklands crisis’, Shultz said bitterly.³¹⁵

Having explained the different interests and their orders of priority in this case, a pattern of the two allies’ crisis behaviour is found as follows: the divergence of interests and stakes of Britain and the US in the Grenada built up different perceptions between the two allies and therefore made the US ignore Britain’s interests in the crisis. (*See Table 4.1 – Pattern of Allies’ Crisis Behaviour in the US invasion of Grenada*) This led them to have wrong expectations on the way which the other was prepared to act. When the US and its Caribbean allies eventually invaded Grenada without informing the British, the British felt indignant and made their opposition to the American-led operation openly.

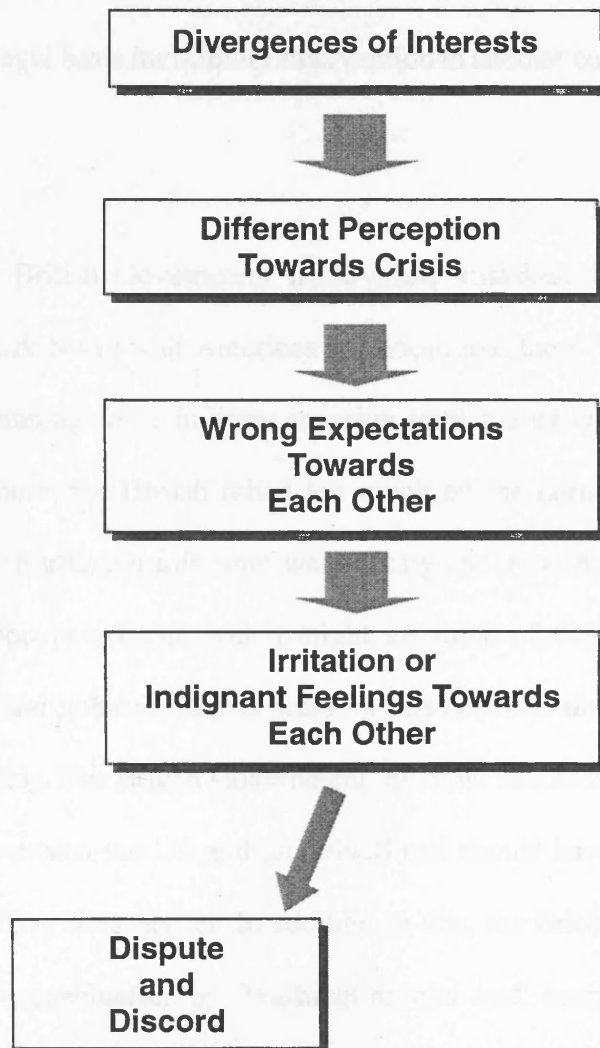
This thus resulted in discord between the two allies. In the course of research, it is clear that the reasons for the disagreement between the United States and Britain clearly lay in different perception about threats and stakes. In this case, the American community in Grenada was five times larger than the British community and more exposed. The United States had particular reason to consult most closely with the Caribbean countries which had called on it to help resolve the crisis, especially when their citizens’ lives were also at stake.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp.336-340.

Table 4.1

Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the US invasion of Grenada



In contrast the British way of looking at this was different. Britain did not share America's desire to fight in areas where America's interests, mostly in security, were threatened. Although the British Government thought that it was inevitable that America should be more concerned with events in her own backyard than Britain, it is apparent that the law on the matter that the US decided to invade Grenada to save Americans lives was not at all clear because the legal basis for military intervention in another country is only on the right of self-defence.

In retrospect, the British Government made some mistakes. The British Government remained in the dark both about American intentions and the extent of the United States and Caribbean planning for a military invasion until the early evening of Monday 24 October. Furthermore, the British relied too much on the normal information channels while the American officials this time were acting under strict instructions not even to allow any suspicion to get out, which might go some of the way to explaining why normally reliable and helpful officials were on this occasion not only uninformative but positively misleading. The British Government therefore should have noticed the extent of the consultation between the US and the OECS and should have taken positive steps to make their opposition clear earlier. In addition to this, the British Government had only been assured of consultation by Washington and had been deprived of adequate information through the usual State Department channels. The British Government also gave undue weight to the messages from the Deputy High Commissioner's reasonably reassuring interview on 24th October with the Governor-General Scoon.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is true that the United States consultation in this case was less than the British would have wished. But the British Government had reacted too passively to events and signals emerging from the Caribbean itself because they based their reaction to events entirely on advice from Washington that proved to be unreliable. The invasion had also clearly touched a political nerve for three reasons. Firstly, it affected Thatcher, who had believed that she had a special relationship with President Reagan, which had been found wanting at a critical moment. Second, the Americans' pragmatic approach to international law upset the British. It seemed that if something was morally and politically right, the Americans would act ignoring the fact that it was not legal in international law. Thirdly, what had come out of the crisis also showed the differences between the two countries in crisis situations. It seemed that, if the issue involved in a crisis is vital, such as national security issues, the two countries may act disregarding the other's interests. If it was a lower level crisis, Britain might only be prepared to act if it had American support; whereas America, because it was a superpower, was prepared to ignore British demands and concerns.

Should this crisis be seen as a warning about America's behaviour or just as an accidental incident that should not cause concern? For the British part, this case revealed the US' unpredictable action and lack of consultation that the British feared might re-occur. This kind of unpredictability carried an immense danger for world peace since Britain would deploy the intermediate-range Cruise missiles on its soil in November 1983. It also

represented a piquant contrast about the time when British opinion was concerned with a comparable duty to consult over the use of American nuclear weapons - the Cruise missiles.

Howe said, 'I was concerned that American lack of consultation and unpredictability might be repeated there with very damaging consequences.'³¹⁶ The British should no doubt 'base the future strategic planning increasingly upon the premise that Grenada, rather than the Falklands, offered the best evidence of American instincts.'³¹⁷ The example of Grenada existed as, in many ways, a useful precedent for the British. However, to take a sweeping look at the long-term implications for the Anglo-American relationship, what had happened in this case, does not and must not be allowed to weaken the essential fabric of the Anglo-American alliance. Thatcher noted later that Britain's special relationship with the United States must on 'no account be jeopardised whatever short-term difficulties Britain had with the United States, the long-term relationship between the two countries, on which Britain's security and the free West's interests depended, would not be damaged.'³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, p.340.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.326.

CHAPTER 5

THE US AIR RAIDS ON LIBYA, 1986.

I. INTRODUCTION

The United States' military attack against Libya on 15 April 1986 was probably the most controversial foreign policy action against terrorism undertaken by the Reagan Administration. It marked the culmination of America's frustration over years of being attacked with impunity by international terrorists. In this crisis, the United States mounted air strikes against Libya - a Third World regime outside the area of responsibility in NATO - and sought the British government's permission to use American F-111 fighter aircraft stationed in Britain. The idea of engaging in military reprisals against terrorism had been circulating in the United States since the Tehran hostage crisis and had been endorsed by President Reagan in its aftermath. However, such an idea was not shared by the British government, who thought the use of force would be more likely to provoke terrorism. This message, sent from the Reagan Administration had thus posed a major test for the Anglo-American special relationship. Nevertheless, Thatcher reluctantly made a decision to accede to the US request and proved Britain's commitment to the alliance. This chapter examines the reason why the British felt reluctant to grant their permission to their closest ally, the differences between the two countries in approaching the crisis, the interests of each side, and the different perceptions of the two governments.

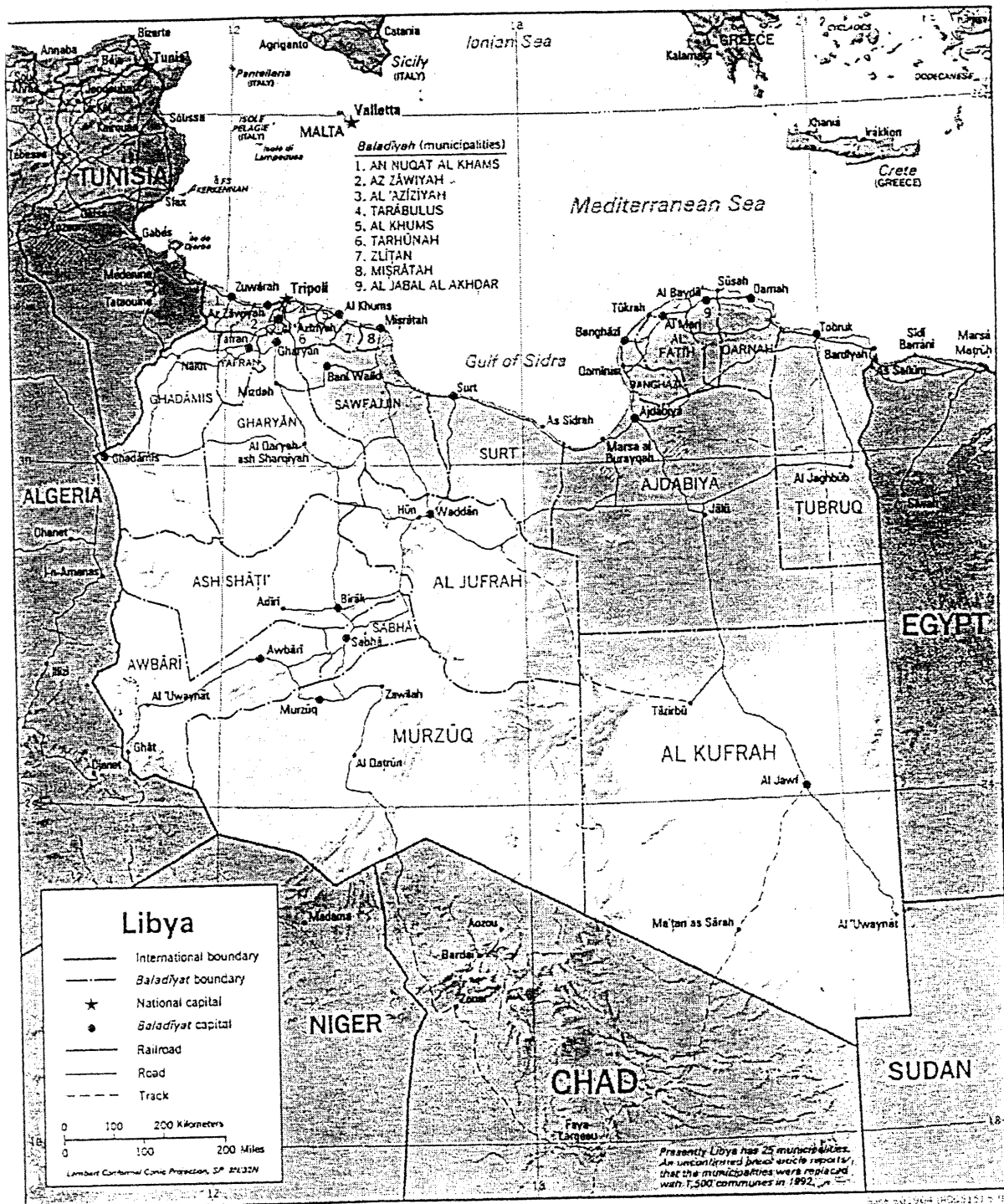
The Gaddafi Regime

Libya, located in North Africa with 1,100 miles of Mediterranean coastline and a land mass of 685,524 square miles, is the fifteenth largest country in the world. In 1949 a United Nations resolution had granted Libya nominal independence and King Idris, a traditional religious leader, came to power in 1951. (*See Map 5.1 – Libya*) In 1959, with the discovery of oil, Libya's prospects changed dramatically, by 1969 Libya was the second largest oil producer in the Arab world.³¹⁹ On 1 September 1969 troops under the command of a group of young nationalist officers seized control of key installations in Libya while 79-year-old King Idris was abroad. They then announced the formation of a Libyan Arab Republic under the control of a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) which claimed to be the authentic representative of the Libyan people and named 27-year-old Colonel Muammar al Gaddafi as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and Chairman of the RCC.

The new regime immediately began militant rhetoric on behalf of the pan-Arab and Palestinian causes and vowed to eliminate foreign dominance. Domestically, businesses owned by foreigners (except banks and oil companies) were nationalised. Abroad, the new regime began to look for allies in the Arab world. Gaddafi also began to break the Idris regime's ties with the West by negotiating with the Western countries about the removal of the US airbase, at Wheelus Field outside Tripoli, and the smaller British bases, at Tobruk and El Adem. in December 1969. However, since there was a shortage of skilled labour such as industrial, construction workers, technicians and managers, the regime employed

³¹⁹ Kaldor, M. and Anderson, P. (ed.), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.92.

Map 5.1 – Libya



thousands of foreign workers. In 1975 42 per cent of the Libyan labour force was of non-Libyan origin.³²⁰ The role of the RCC and Gaddafi was strengthened by two successes. First, because Libyan oil was consistently under-priced, the new regime pressed demands upon the Western oil companies in a highly confrontational manner, determined to reverse perceived exploitation. The second success was in the area of economic redistribution aided greatly by the huge increase in petroleum revenues. Under Gaddafi's so-called Quranic socialism, a social welfare system was rapidly constructed. By the mid-1970s, Libyans were enjoying free education, better housing, subsidised cars and shops overflowing with imported consumer goods. However, from 1978 onward, Gaddafi undertook a series of radical economic reforms and his rule increasingly took the form of tyranny.

Libyan Relations with the United States and Western Europe

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Libya used terrorism as one of the primary instruments of its foreign policy and supported radical groups that used terrorist tactics. Gaddafi was widely suspected of financing international terrorist activities and political subversion around the world and there were allegations of Libyan assistance to groups such as 'the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the Fatah dissidents, Muslim rebels in the Philippines, the notorious Abu Nidal group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General

³²⁰ Kaldor & Anderson (ed.), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya*, p.96.

Command and left-wing extremists in Europe and Japan.³²¹ Into the 1980s, the question of how to deal with Libya-sponsored terrorism became a major issue for West-West relations. The United States, in particular, viewed Libya's support as aid and comfort to international terrorists. In the early 1970s relations between the two countries went from bad to worse. Citing the continuing Libyan involvement in terrorism and subversion, the US State Department forbade transfer to Libya of equipment that could enhance Libya's military capability. Washington also began to pressure its allies not to supply weapons to Libya.

Upon taking office in 1977 President Carter continued the policy of mild, low-key punishment of Libya while Gaddafi became particularly hostile to Israel and the United States. The major reason for Gaddafi's hostility was due to Washington's sponsorship of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process. US-Libyan relations were further damaged when on 2 December 1979 in protest against Washington's policies in Iran, a mob of two thousand sacked and burned the US embassy in Tripoli. Under the pressure caused by this episode, the Carter Administration decided to take a strong stance against Gaddafi. In April 1980, the US expelled two Libyan diplomats for intimidation of Libyans in the US. In May the State Department not only announced the expulsion of four of the five remaining Libyan diplomats in Washington due to continuing threats, but also withdrew its remaining representatives in Tripoli and closed its Embassy there while formally maintaining diplomatic relations with Libya. Gaddafi responded sharply by suddenly discovering 'espionage' among American oil workers, detaining two and expelling twenty-five of

³²¹ 'Libya Under Qadhafi: A Pattern of Aggression', United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Special Report No. 138, January 1986, pp.1-2.

them.³²² At the same time, he not only threatened to cut off oil supplies to the US but also threatened war against the United States unless it 'withdrew from Egypt, Somalia, Oman, and Saudi Arabia and stopped reconnaissance flights over the Gulf of Sirte.'³²³ The decline in US-Libyan relations was thus further exacerbated by regional problems.

Following the inauguration of President Reagan in January 1981, Gaddafi's support of international terrorism was identified as 'the most prominent state sponsor of and participant in international terrorism' and had become the subject of secret meetings involving Reagan's top national security aides.³²⁴ Haig, was reported to have referred to Gaddafi as 'a cancer that has to be removed', while Vice-President Bush described him as an 'egomaniac who would trigger World War III to make headlines'.³²⁵

Although recognising the fact that among those Arab states who supported terrorism, such as Syria and Iran, Libya was not even the most important one, but in order to avoid the danger of triggering a broader Middle East escalation, the Reagan Administration felt that Libya's vulnerability was the most appropriate place to begin drawing the line.

In the words of Francis Fukuyama, the Policy Planning staff in the State Department,

It is true Gaddafi is not the source of all terrorism, but he is the source of an identifiable large part - and

³²² *US-Libyan Relations Since 1969*, United States Department of State, prepared by David D. Newsom, *Current Policy*, No. 216, Washington, D.C., G.P.O., 1980, pp.4-5.

³²³ Quoted in Davis, B. L., *Qaddafi, Terrorism, and the Origins of the US Attack on Libya* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p.38.

³²⁴ See 'International Terrorism', Hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 10 June 1981.

³²⁵ See *New York Daily Post*, 17 May 1981 and *Washington Post*, 14 October 1981.

furthermore we can deal with him because he is militarily and politically isolated.³²⁶

The US soon began its efforts to isolate Libya internationally, reduce its oil revenues, and disrupt its trading relationships. NATO allies, such as Italy and France, were urged to prevent the Libyans from purchasing military spare parts and to maintain the embargo on arms deliveries.³²⁷ The US campaign against Gaddafi started with the Sixth Fleet's manoeuvres in the Mediterranean Sea in August 1981 including the Gulf of Sirte. Gaddafi had claimed in 1973 that the Gulf, 'constitutes an integral part of the territory of the Libyan Arab Republic and is under its complete sovereignty' and that everything within the Gulf should be considered Libyan territory. Libyans responded by opening fire on a pair of American F-14s thirty miles from the Libyan coast. However, these SU-22s missed and were shot down. Gaddafi responded angrily, issuing a call for Arab 'active forces' to strike at the United States and threatened to attack NATO nuclear depots should the United States enter the Gulf again. The Libyans then started a new round of terrorist plots against Western countries which were to obtain revenge for Libya's defeat in the Gulf of Sirte. For instance, in November 1981 Kenyan officials foiled a Libyan plot involving explosives planted in stereo speakers, being flown to Khartoum for detonation at a Saturday night dance at the American Embassy Club where hundreds of people would be in attendance. In Rome, Italian police uncovered an apparent plot to assassinate American Ambassador, Maxwell Rabb.

³²⁶ Martin, D. C. & Walcott, J., *Best laid Plans. The Inside Story of America's War Against Terrorism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p.82.

³²⁷ Wright, C., 'Libya and the West: Headlong Into Confrontation?', *International Affairs*, Vol.58, No.1, Winter 1981/82, p.13.

In order to reduce the possibility of a new hostage crisis, the Reagan Administration declared that it considered travel by Americans to Libya to be hazardous. On 9 December 1981 Deputy Secretary of State William Clark called upon 'all Americans to leave Libya as soon as possible' and announced that 'United States passports are being invalidated for travel to Libya effective immediately', with only journalists exempted.³²⁸ It also urged US oil companies operating in Libya to begin an orderly withdrawal of their employees, an estimated 2,000 Americans, and to eliminate non-essential operations. However, the oil companies did not heed its warnings. Abroad, the administration made diplomatic isolation a major part of its effort to co-ordinate containment of Gaddafi with some Western governments. Nevertheless, those governments did not co-operate with the campaign to isolate Libya on the basis of their own perceived short-term interests. In March 1982 the Reagan Administration announced a boycott on the import of Libyan oil, the requirement of licenses for all exports to Libya except food and medical supplies, the barring of the export of oil and gas technology, high technology equipment, and equipment of potential military usage. However, the other NATO countries, in order to ensure a steady supply of oil, tried to remain on reasonable terms with Gaddafi and refused to join the sanctions. Only Britain, with its independent supply of oil, took a strong stand on this issue. The sanctions did hamper Libya economically but the allies' refusal to join greatly weakened their impact. The issue of trans-national military retaliation against terrorism thus became a continuing subject of heated debate between the US and its allies. A paper written by the NSC staff summed up the view from Washington, 'NATO allies, despite Gaddafi's demonstrated capacity for mischief-making, compete with each other for profitable Libyan contracts while pronouncing the convenient rationale that it is better to collaborate with

³²⁸ Martin & Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, p.81.

Gaddafi than to isolate him.³²⁹

There are a number of reasons and excuses for the European allies' reluctance to impose sanctions against Libya. First of all, some Western Europeans thought that sanctions against Libya would have only symbolic value and declared repeatedly that economic sanctions were ineffective and never successful. However, experts believed that dramatic effects would be produced by the sudden withdrawal of the thousands of Western European technicians in Libya or by a boycott of Libyan oil (because Western Europe purchased more than 90 per cent of Libya's oil). The second argument against sanctions concerned the relations with Arab states. Many of the Western Europeans believed that the sanctions would only force the governments of the Arab world to rally around Gaddafi and produce a united front hostile to the West. The 1973 oil embargo had affected Europe more severely than it had the United States. The Europeans therefore were reluctant to break out of their pattern of submissive behaviour toward the Arab world. Another reason was the assertion that Gaddafi would become more reckless and dangerous if he were to be isolated. Beyond doubt, the fear that he would take hostages from among their nationals in Libya weighed upon the Europeans' minds. For instance, in 1983 Gaddafi had arrested eight West Germans in Libya on trumped-up espionage charges in order to retaliate against West Germany for obtaining the release of two Libyans charged with torturing Libyan dissidents in Bonn. The most important reason for the rejection of sanctions upon Libya was because Libya was the sixteenth leading buyer of EEC exports. The pattern of placing economic interests ahead of combating terrorism was nothing new for the Europeans, and while the oil glut had increased Libya's vulnerability to economic sanctions, it had also increased the

³²⁹*Ibid.*, p.262.

Europeans' incentive to remain in Libya because the Gaddafi regime had accumulated many millions of dollars in arrears for their completed work, and the Europeans wanted to be sure they could collect. The final consideration was that the Europeans believed that their economic ties with Libya served to counterbalance the Soviet Union's military ties. The Europeans therefore wanted to keep Western doors open to Gaddafi so as not to drive him into the arms of the Soviet Union, though this was one of the least frequently heard arguments for refusing sanctions.

Concurrently, there were continuing Libyan-sponsored terrorist incidents. In March 1984, four bombs exploded in London and Manchester near homes of Libyan exiles or at business addresses frequented by them, resulting in more than 25 being injured.³³⁰ On 17 April, Gaddafi ordered the Libyan People's Bureau in London to open fire on a crowd of anti-Gaddafi demonstrators outside the embassy. Machine-gun fire from the embassy killed a British policewoman, Yvonne Fletcher, while she was policing a peaceful demonstration, and wounded 11 anti-Gaddafi demonstrators, prompting Britain to break diplomatic relations with Libya.³³¹ In the same month, a bomb hidden in an unclaimed suitcase, probably unloaded from a Libyan airliner, exploded at London's Heathrow Airport and injured 25.

Meanwhile, within the Reagan Administration, there was a division into 'dove' and 'hawk' factions on the issue of Libyan-sponsored terrorism. The reported members of the dove

³³⁰ 'Libya Under Qadhafi: A Pattern of Aggression', Bureau of Public Affairs, United State Department of State, Special Report No. 138, January 1986, p.6.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p.6. Also see Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, HarperCollins, London, 1993, p.351.

faction were Weinberger, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense Department as a whole, Bush, most of the CIA, and the State Department regional bureaus. The reported hawks were Shultz and some political appointees at the State Department; National Security Adviser McFarlane, his deputy Admiral John Poindexter, and the NSC staff, Pentagon advocates of special operations forces, and CIA director William Casey. Weinberger opposed a military strike for a number of political reasons while Shultz disagreed with him and emphasised that the United States must no longer appear to be paralysed in the wake of terrorist attacks. The National Security Council staff was the most enthusiastic lobby for action against Libya but it did not dominate foreign policy, while at the time Reagan made it clear that he was inclined toward economic sanctions rather than military retaliation.³³² The leading consideration was said to be fear that Gaddafi would take hostages from among the 2,000 Americans in Libya.

On 8 July 1985, in a speech aimed at increasing public support for counter-terrorism action, Reagan said Americans 'are not going to tolerate intimidation, terror, and outright acts of war against this nation and its people'.³³³ Denouncing the international terrorist network and specifically citing Libya, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, and Nicaragua, Reagan declared; 'we are especially not going to tolerate these attacks from outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, Looney Tunes, and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich'.³³⁴ While addressing a meeting of the National Security Planning Group (NSPG), Reagan and McFarlane declared that diplomatic and economic measures had failed to stop

³³² For details of 'dove' and 'hawk' factions, see chapters about Libya in both Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* and Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*.

³³³ *Facts on Files*, 12 July 1985.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

Gaddafi and that stronger action by the United States would be necessary. Assignments were soon passed out; the CIA was ordered to plan possible covert action against Gaddafi, the State Department was to develop further plan for economic and political pressure, the Pentagon was to develop contingency plan for possible US strikes on Libyan targets, and the NSC staff and the CIA were to explore possibilities for joint US-Egyptian military action. In late December US intelligence was hearing yet more reports of imminent actions by Libyan-linked terrorist groups, and these warnings were passed on to Western European officials.

On 27 December 1985, Rome's Leonardo da Vinci and Vienna's Schwechat Airport were attacked by the Libyan-linked Abu Nidal group. In the two attacks 114 people were wounded and 18 were killed, including 5 Americans. Three of the passports used by the Abu Nidal Group in the Vienna attacks were traced to Libya.³³⁵ On 3 January 1986, *The New York Times* reported that US Navy had moved planes to the aircraft carrier *Coral Sea* in case military action was ordered, and the next day there were reports of Navy EA-6B 'Prowler' electronic warfare planes designed for eavesdropping and radar-jamming, being sent from the United States to Sigonella, Sicily to join the carrier USS *Coral Sea*. Air Force F-111 fighter-bombers based in the United Kingdom secretly practised for an attack on Libya with non-stop night-time runs to Canada and to Turkey.³³⁶ On 7 January President Reagan announced that there was 'irrefutable evidence' of Libya's role in the Rome and Vienna massacres and stated:

³³⁵ Owen, D., 'State Terrorism, Internationalism and Collective Action', *Review of International Studies*, 1987, 13, p.83. Also see *The Times*, 28 December 1985.

³³⁶ *The Times*, 3 January 1986.

By providing material support to terrorist groups which attack US citizens, Libya has engaged in armed aggression against the United States under established principles of international law, just as if he had used its own armed forces. Civilised nations cannot continue to tolerate in the name of material gain and self-interest, their murder of innocents. Gaddafi deserves to be treated as a pariah in the world community. We call on our friends in Western Europe and elsewhere to join with us in isolating him.³³⁷

In this speech Reagan also called on all Americans to leave Libya and announced economic sanctions banning trade between the United States and Libya apart from the import of news materials and the export of humanitarian supplies, banning credit on loans to Libyan government entities, banning US labour in Libya and transactions pertaining to travel between the United States and Libya except for journalistic purposes, and prohibiting economic transactions between Americans and the Libyan government, all upon pain of civil and criminal penalties. The next day all Libyan assets in US banks would be frozen. Reagan made his warning to Gaddafi clear enough. The final statement of his speech was, 'If these steps do not end Gaddafi's terrorism, I promise you that further step will be taken'.³³⁸ In response to the American actions, on 8 January in a meeting with Western European ambassadors in Tripoli, Gaddafi not only emphasised Libya's 'common interests' with Europe but also hinted that he might respond to US pressure by drawing closer to the Soviet Union. In the end, he warned, 'If it comes to war, we will drag Europe into it'.³³⁹ While America's allies began to rule out the idea of economic sanctions, for instance, on 10 January 1986, British Prime Minister Thatcher told the American

³³⁷ Davis, *Qaddafi, Terrorism, and the Origins of the US Attack on Libya*, p.83.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83.

³³⁹ *The New York Times*, 16 January 1986.

Correspondents' Association in London that she rejected economic sanctions on the ground that they 'don't work' and characterised retaliatory strikes against terrorism as 'against international law' and likely to cause 'much greater chaos.'³⁴⁰

On 15 January 1986, Reagan sent the Deputy Secretary of State, John Whitehead, and State Department counter-terrorism Ambassador Robert Oakley on a tour of NATO capitals to present further evidence of Gaddafi's guilt, to press the allies to 'reduce their purchases of Libyan oil, to cut off sales of military hardware to Gaddafi, to stop extending official credits to Libya, to condemn Libya by name for supporting terrorism, and to shut down Libya's People's Bureaus, which continued to function as recruiting offices and command posts for terrorist activities.'³⁴¹ Being pressed by the Americans, the EEC foreign ministers delivered a long communiqué condemning terrorism and resolved to ban arms sales to those countries supporting violence, though Libya was not explicitly mentioned. The EEC also set up another high-level working group, the Trevi group, to develop an international strategy on terrorism. However, there were no specific economic sanctions imposed by the Community and the allies declined to stop buying Libyan oil. Greece even refused to join in an arms embargo. Canada and Norway endorsed the call for sanctions against Libya. Canada's Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, cited the 'moral issue' and took three limited economic measures against Libya, but Norway decided to act only in concert with its European neighbours. Italy's government announced a ban on weapons transfers to Libya. West Germany and Britain did not want to increase the pressure upon themselves to impose sanctions upon South Africa. Other European governments, one by one, began ruling out

³⁴⁰ *Washington Post*, 11 January 1986.

³⁴¹ Martin & Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, pp.275-6.

diplomatic and economic sanctions. Western Europe's reluctance to use force was based on their proximity to Libya and their economic and historical ties with the Mideast. As one French official claimed, 'We are not disloyal allies. But don't forget, Libya is almost as close to us as Cuba is to America.'³⁴² This reluctance and unreadiness to sacrifice any of their economic links with Libya further intensified the American anger and strengthened American's impression that its allies were not willing to assist the United States against any enemy other than the Soviet Union.

US Sixth Fleet Naval Manoeuvres

On 21 January 1986, the Reagan Administration approved air and naval manoeuvres in the Mediterranean north of Libya which involved the aircraft carriers *Coral Sea* and *Saratoga* and their over one hundred aircraft and twenty-three auxiliary vessels. According to Vice Admiral Frank Kelso, the commander of the Sixth Fleet, the purpose of this exercise was 'to show we could operate in international waters and not be blackmailed by Gaddafi into thinking the Gulf of Sirte is his lake.'³⁴³ Trying to play down the criticism that the US administration deliberately provoked Gaddafi by extending the Sixth Fleet exercises into the Gulf of Sirte, Shultz said:

The freedom of the seas is crucial to America and to all other maritime nations, and such challenges are necessary on an almost regular basis; without them, government after government around the world

³⁴² See 'In Western Europe, Strains Among Friend', *US News and World Report*, 28 April 1986, pp.24-5.

³⁴³ Martin & Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, p.278.

would slowly encroach outward until ships at sea would be intolerably restricted whenever near a coastline.³⁴⁴

On 25 January Gaddafi again attempted to close off the international waters of the Gulf of Sirte which he renamed the 'Zone of Death' and vowed to destroy any American ships or planes which penetrated this area. He also declared the parallel 32°30' north latitude to be the 'line of death' - a boundary more than one hundred miles off the coast of Libya and far beyond the twelve-mile limit set by international law, and threatened to fire his new SA-5 missiles at US Navy planes that flew over the Gulf of Sirte. The reason for the US-Libya confrontation in the Gulf of Sirte was, as Weinberger explained, '... extremely important that Gaddafi not be allowed either to intimidate us, or to carry out any of his threats.'³⁴⁵ Besides, the US wanted to make Gaddafi understand that 'there was a price he would have to pay for that kind of behaviour [terrorism and other aggressions]', and that the US 'wouldn't let him get away with it'.³⁴⁶ On the other hand, the US government did not want to confront Libya unilaterally and therefore sought to build a multilateral front by involving some of its allies. Reagan contacted French President Mitterrand on 25 February and asked him to send a French carrier to join the US manoeuvres arriving in the Gulf of Sirte in late March. However, the French declined to join Washington because the French believed that US action against Gaddafi would be counterproductive since it would not be designed to bring a complete end to him.

The operation, codenamed 'Prairie Fire', began on 23 March. US Navy planes began flying

³⁴⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.680.

³⁴⁵ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.130.

³⁴⁶ Reagan, R., *An American Life*, Hutchinson, London, 1990, p.518.

sorties across the line of death and a surface action group of three US ships sailed across the line. Soon Libyan SA-5 and SA-2 missiles were fired at several US carrier-based planes (which missed). Several Libyan patrol boats, carrying missiles with forty- to forty-five-mile range, were sent towards the US surface action group (these were destroyed by Navy A-6s firing Harpoon antiship missiles).³⁴⁷ The United States had suffered no casualties or damage to its planes or ships. On 29 March, the US Navy departed from the Libyan area; the *Saratoga* sailed home, while the *America* and the *Coral Sea* sailed for the north of the Mediterranean. Among the United States' allies, Israel and Great Britain strongly supported the US actions in the Gulf of Sirte. Israeli officials called them a blow against international terrorism, and Thatcher emphasised the rights of self-defence and of free passage in international waters and airspace. Though there was a strong consensus that the Gulf of Sirte was international waters, Canada and a number of other allies, without directly criticising the United States, stated that the dispute over the Gulf of Sirte should be settled by peaceful means.

Facing the defeat of Libyan Armed Forces, Gaddafi changed his tactics and turned to the use of terrorism to retaliate against the US. He issued an order to the Libyan People's Bureaus in East Berlin, Paris, Rome, Madrid, and three other European capitals to develop plans for terrorist attacks against US military installations and civilian targets frequented by Americans. He said, 'It is a time for confrontation - for war. If they [the United States] want to expand the struggle, we will carry it all over the world'.³⁴⁸ On 27 March, Reagan warned in a speech that he would hold Gaddafi accountable for any Libyan terrorist acts

³⁴⁷ Martin & Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, p.283.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.284.

against Americans. Military planners went back to work crafting a retaliatory strike for use if Libya did succeed in killing Americans. On 2 April a bomb went off as TWA Flight 840 from Rome to Athens was beginning its descent. A Colombian-American was immediately killed, and a Greek-American grandmother, her daughter, and her infant granddaughter fell to their deaths over Greece.³⁴⁹ US officials characterised Gaddafi as a suspect in the action and, at the same time, the Abu Nidal group claimed responsibility for the incident as a retaliation for Libya's defeat in the Gulf of Sirte. On 4 April, a message was intercepted and decoded by both the NSA and the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The message, sent from the East Berlin People's Bureau to Tripoli, said, 'We have something planned that will make you happy. It will happen soon, the bomb will blow, American soldiers must be hit.'³⁵⁰ Though the translated messages were soon sent to officials in Washington, it was still 15 minutes late. On 5 April at 1:49 a.m. local time, a bomb exploded in the La Belle discotheque in West Berlin. A US soldier and a Turkish woman were immediately killed; another American soldier was mortally wounded and died two months later. There were 180 other persons wounded, including 50 Americans, mostly soldiers.³⁵¹ After the explosion, a message was also intercepted and decoded, sent from the East Berlin People's Bureau to Tripoli, reporting that their operation had been carried out successfully 'without leaving clues.'³⁵²

Since evidence of Libya's involvement in the La Belle explosion was 'direct, precise and irrefutable', Shultz, Poindexter, Casey, and Reagan had formed a solid bloc in favour of a

³⁴⁹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.683.

³⁵⁰ Davis, *Qaddafi, Terrorism, and the Origins of the US Attack on Libya*, p.110.

³⁵¹ Public Papers of the President - Ronald W. Reagan 1986, Vol. 1, US G.P.O., Washington, 1988, p.478.

³⁵² Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.683.

military reprisal against Libya.³⁵³ Bush had declared that he favoured hitting hard at Gaddafi after his next terrorist act while Weinberger, on his two-week trip to Asia, also agreed to the idea of military action in his communications with Washington. The administration believed that it was time to strike a blow against terrorism in general and although Gaddafi was not the whole problem: punishing him could help discourage terrorism from others, including Syria and Iran. It was felt that the evidence on the La Belle bombing was too good to pass up the opportunity to implement the White House's long-announced doctrine of reprisal against terrorism. Besides, there was intelligence information that showed continued Libyan terrorist plots against the US worldwide. For instance, a rocket explosion near the American embassy in Beirut early on 6 April was traced to Libya, also a Libyan plot to attack the US consulate in Munich was uncovered. Plans to bomb the US chancery and Embassy and the kidnapping of the American ambassador in an African country were also discovered. The European allies continued to reject tough non-military measures against Libya, however. Even though the State Department shared evidence on La Belle and other Libyan terrorist plots with the allies, the Europeans remained intransigent. The pressure put on the European allies to close the Libyan People's Bureaus and introduce economic sanctions were both ineffective. It seemed that the United States had nothing to lose by hitting Libya and could perhaps deter plots that were already in motion.

³⁵³ See *The Times*, 16 April 1986. Also see Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.683.

II. OPERATION EL DORADO CANYON

US-UK Collaboration in Operation El Dorado Canyon

After the La Belle explosion, the US administration felt that, according to Weinberger, 'we had absolute proof that they [the terrorists] had all originated in Libya and had been paid for by Libya, and had trained there. So it was necessary that we carried out the measures that deterred them from trying to do it again.'³⁵⁴ Reagan then directed planners to develop scenarios to minimise the risks to US pilots and to civilians on the ground. Some officials argued that this 'did not need to be a combined operation, with the Air Force flying those extremely long routes to the target', and suggested other military options, such as moving 'another aircraft carrier into the Mediterranean and use different, less sophisticated aircraft'. But a joint Navy-Air Force strike was soon decided upon and the F-111 aircraft based in Britain were to be involved.³⁵⁵ The reason for using the F-111s stationed in Britain was, according to Weinberger, because 'the F-111s could drop the precision heavy bombs that carrier planes could not and it was a very integral part of it.'³⁵⁶ Several targets had also been chosen which included: the spacious Bab Aziziyya compound in Tripoli, a site for terrorist training and the 'nerve centre' of the regime; communications and intelligence centres; a barracks of revolutionary guards; headquarters for the Libyan Military; and Gaddafi's working and living quarters.

³⁵⁴ Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, 4 March 1998.

³⁵⁵ Correspondence with Robert Sims & Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

³⁵⁶ Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, 4 March 1998.

In order to carry out this operation, the US needed both British approval for the use of the American facilities in Britain and French permission to fly over their air space. In the evening of 8 April a top-secret telex, in which no objectives or targets were precisely specified, was sent from Reagan to Thatcher requesting permission for British endorsement of a US strike on Libya and permission for the use of USAF F-111s and support aircraft based in Britain in strikes against Libya. France was also approached. However, President Mitterrand was equivocating about granting overflight rights and invited General Vernon Walters, the US roving ambassador to Paris, to talk about the operation. Attorney-General Edwin Meese was also sent to Europe to discuss ways to combat terrorism.³⁵⁷

The British response to the American request was, according to Defence Secretary, George Younger:

We considered then and we agreed that night to send back a message saying that we would like to be helpful of course, but we were not yet persuaded that this would be a good idea, we wished to discuss it further with them.³⁵⁸

On 9 April, Reagan made a personal call to Thatcher stating that the US intended to take military action to deter further Libyan terrorism and sought British support for this action by requesting permission for the F-111s and aerial tankers to fly from bases in England. Reagan emphasised that the raid was to be justified as self-defence against ongoing Libyan

³⁵⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, 13 April 1986.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Lord George Younger, Defence Secretary, 7 April 1998, London.

terrorism as well as retaliation for the La Belle incident. The American request for the F-111s thus posed a dilemma for Thatcher. Both the Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe, and the Defence Secretary, George Younger, were worried about Britain being associated with the idea of a strike which could be condemned as a violation of international law. Howe was concerned that the response of the Arab world might be directed against Britain and was worried about the consequences that an air strike might have against British subjects in Libya. Younger expressed his doubts as follows:

We were reluctant to agree because we could not see what it [the US air strike on Libya] would lead to, because bombing another country, you never quite know what would happen.³⁵⁹

In an interview broadcasted by Radio Scotland Younger also admitted that:

my colleagues and I are very dubious as to whether a military strike is the best way of doing this. It is liable to hit the wrong people. It creates other tensions in the area.³⁶⁰

Thatcher shared the fears of other NATO allies about the aftermath of an attack on Libya, and worried about the implications for two British hostages in Lebanon who were under Libyan control and the fate of about 5,000 British subjects in Libya. However, as Reagan explained, the reason to use the F-111s stationed in Britain was because the F-111s would 'provide the safest means of achieving particular objectives with the lowest possible risk both of civilian casualties in Libya and of casualties among US service personnel'.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1998.

³⁶⁰ Kaldor and Anderson (ed.), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya*, p.6.

³⁶¹ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, 16 April 1986, pp.889-90.

Without the use of the F-111s and their ability to deliver 2,000-pound, laser-guided bombs at night, the US would still go ahead with their action but the US Navy could not cover all five targets and the strike would not be nearly so punishing. Britain itself had also suffered from Libyan terrorism, which included the murder of WPC Fletcher. Libya was known to provide the Provisional IRA with money and weapons. Moreover, when thinking of the Western Alliance and the 'debt' in the South-Atlantic a few years previous, Thatcher felt that she had no choice but 'to stand by the Americans as they had stood by us [Britain] over the Falklands'.³⁶² During the day, Thatcher consulted with Attorney-General, Michael Havers, about the legal propriety of bombing Libya and was given enough positive indications that the raids on Libya would 'fall within the terms of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which allowed military action for the purpose of self-defence'.³⁶³ Simultaneously, between Britain and the US, according to Younger:

there were several exchanges but at the end of it all, it was clear that there was a real danger of Col. Gaddafi doing something dangerous and fierce which would probably lead to other hostilities anyway. So we [the British] thought on the basis of that, we would agree.³⁶⁴

On 10 April, after discussion with Howe and Younger, another cautious message was sent back to the White House in which Thatcher indicated Britain's unqualified support for the use of US aircraft from their bases in the UK as long as the criterion that 'action directed against specific Libyan targets demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of

³⁶² Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.446.

³⁶³ For a review of the doctrine of self-defence, see Owen, D., 'State Terrorism, Internationalism and Collective Action', *Review of International Studies*, 1987, 13, pp.81-89. Also see Young, H., *One of Us* (London: Macmillan, 1991) p.476.

³⁶⁴ Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1998.

terrorist activities' was met.³⁶⁵ Reagan confirmed that 'the targets would be closely defined under categories: those which were directly terrorist related; those to do with command, control and logistics which were indirectly related; and those relating to defence suppression'. Reagan also offered an explanation from the American Ambassador in London, Charles Price, who gave the exact connection between each target and Gaddafi's support of terrorism, which relied on a legal analysis prepared by the State Department.³⁶⁶ Without informing its EC partners, the British Government reluctantly made its decision to allow US warplanes to launch air attacks on Libyan targets from British air bases.

In contrast to the British, the French – who controlled the air route from England to Libya – refused overflight rights. The reason that France had opposed the US military action was because, as Mitterrand later claimed, the US action was not strong enough and only a 'pinprick' attack..³⁶⁷ Reagan was incensed that even permission to land the F-111s in Corsica after the raid was refused. The Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, also said 'no' to the possibility of US aircraft overflying Spain or being refuelled by tanker aircraft based there (Italy and Greece had already made it known that their bases could not be used; but the administration had made no plans to ask for this.) At the same time, threats of retaliation in Europe continued to come from Tripoli. The kidnapping of the Italian bishop of Tripoli and four Franciscans, in Benghazi, was linked in speculation to efforts by Libya to deter European support for a US attack.³⁶⁸ On 14 April the EC Foreign Ministers gathered in The Hague to try to counteract Libyan-backed terrorism. However, the package

³⁶⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.445.

³⁶⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.445.

³⁶⁷ Martin & Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, p.293.

³⁶⁸ *The Times*, 5 April 1986.

fell short of American expectations. Despite the warnings from Howe that if the Europeans were 'concerned about the possibility of an American military attack, the Europeans must be able to show a commitment to alternative means'.³⁶⁹ But tough action against Libyan diplomats, including the closure of the People's Bureaus, was opposed by the Europeans and the communiqué made no mention of economic sanctions that the Americans wished for. The ministers' final communiqué called for unspecified restrictions in the movements of Libyan diplomats and reductions in the staff of Libyan diplomatic and consular missions, tighter visa requirements for Libyans, and, in an obvious plea to Washington, 'avoid further escalation of military tension in the region.' However, the immediate US response was negative.³⁷⁰

According to the plan, codenamed 'Operation El Dorado Canyon', Libya was split in half by the US Navy and the Air Force, with the Navy on the eastern side of the Gulf of Sirte and the Air Force on the west. The US Air Force - a total of fifty-eight aircraft which included twenty-four F-111s, nineteen KC-10 aerial tankers, ten smaller KC-135 tanker aircraft, and five EF-111 electronic planes - launched from bases in Britain would attack targets at 'Tripoli Military Air Field, Azziziyah Barracks, and Sidi Bilal Terrorist Training Camp'. The US Navy launched strikes from the carriers USS *Coral Sea* and USS *America* to hit targets at Benina Military Air Field and Benghazi Military Barracks.³⁷¹ Due to the fact that France and Italy would not permit the F-111 bombers to cross their air space on the way to join carrier-based planes from the Sixth Fleet in the attack, the F-111s had to detour

³⁶⁹ See Howe, G., *Conflict of Loyalty*, p.506.

³⁷⁰ *The Times*, 15 April 1986.

³⁷¹ Public Papers of the President - Ronald W. Reagan 1986, Vol.1, p.478.

more than 1200 miles over the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. This shortened the bombers' effective range and, by leaving them with less fuel in reserve, made them more vulnerable during the attack. On 15 April, at 5:36 twenty-four F-111 fighter-bombers at Lakenheath and five EF-111 Raven radar-jamming craft at Upper Heyford began departing on a 5600-nautical-mile round trip to Tripoli via the Strait of Gibraltar, a route almost twice as long as that which a flight over France would have afforded.³⁷² At about the same time as the operation began, the Soviet Charge d'Affaires in Washington was summoned and informed that an attack was taking place and that it was in no way directed against the Soviet Union, but rather against Libyan terrorism.

Despite repeated assurances from the Americans that civilian casualties were to be avoided, there were still thirty-seven people killed and ninety-three injured, including two of Gaddafi sons, aged three and four, and his fifteen-month-old adopted daughter.³⁷³ The French Embassy was devastated in the American raid; the Austrian and Finnish Embassies and the Swiss Ambassador's residences were extensively damaged. The result of the raid measured by the bomb-damage assessment was less than impressive. In attacking the Jamahariyah barracks, according to Rear Admiral Jerry Breast, the planes from the *America* hit a warehouse and destroyed four MiGs and 'only got ten per cent of their weapons into the target area.'³⁷⁴ The *Coral Sea* had sent nine A-6 bombers to the airfield, though two of them had turned back with equipment problems, the remaining seven attacked six hangars and a row of MiGs. Fourteen MiGs were destroyed and only two of

³⁷² *The Times*, 15 April 1986.

³⁷³ *The Times*, 17 April 1986.

³⁷⁴ Martin & Walcott, *Best Laid Plans*, p.311.

the hangars received significant damage. In terms of results of the F-111s which were targeted against the Azziziyah barracks, 'We didn't hit it as well as we wanted', General Charles Donnelly, the commander of US Air Forces Europe, said.³⁷⁵ Of the nine planes only two dropped their bombs and neither had scored a direct hit. One F-111 had even dropped its bombs on a residential neighbourhood near the French Embassy by picking out the wrong set of docks for its 'off set' point. After the raids, Weinberger thanked Britain and expressed 'considerable disappointment' over France's refusal to allow US planes to fly through French airspace.³⁷⁶ Due to President Mitterand's refusal to let the American fly over France, to the press the route went around Brittany, the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Peninsula, through the Straits of Gibraltar and on across the Mediterranean. Nowhere between Britain and Libya did it touch land, though most of the land involved was that of America's NATO allies. The reason that the damage caused by the raid had been so insignificant was, as Weinberger stated, partly due to the denial of overflight rights by France which had stretched the F-111 beyond their limits. Pentagon spokesman, Robert Sims, also rejected claims by some military analysts that the raid could have been conducted more simply and at less risk without using the F-111. He insisted that 'there was a need to use both the Air Force and the Navy planes or we could not have carried out a coordinated and simultaneous strike', and the use of F-111 bombers from American bases in England was 'a vital component of the US raid on Libya and not merely a gesture to demonstrate active support from at least one European ally'.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.309.

³⁷⁶ *The New York Times*, 17 April 1986.

³⁷⁷ *The Times*, 17 April 1986.

Public Opinion and Political Debates

Following the raid Reagan declared that the strikes on Libya were ‘conducted in the exercise of our [US] right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter’ and the purpose of this operation was ‘designed to deter acts of terrorism by Libya’. He also promised that ‘Today we have done what we have to do. If necessary, we shall do it again. It gives me no pleasure to say that, and I wish it were otherwise.’³⁷⁸ America soon rallied behind Reagan for his attack on Libya as an apprehensive nation braced itself for reprisals while Arab nations rallied round Libya. Criticism of Washington came from Libya’s traditional allies – Syria and non-Arab Iran – as well as from Egypt, its political adversary, and from Saudi Arabia, which has often differed with Gadaffi’s policies. Three extremist factions – including Abu Nidal’s Palestinian group – said that as a result of Thatcher’s involvement in the operation, Britons and British interests were now targets, just as much at risk as the Americans. Hamed Houdeiry, Head of the Libyan People’s Bureau in Paris, issued a warning that Britain would be held partly responsible for the raid, in having ‘supported and contributed in a direct way’ to the bombardment by allowing American planes to take off from British soil. On 16 April, Radio Tripoli also urged all Arabs to ‘kill every American, civilian or military, without mercy and ruthlessly and without any compassion pursue them everywhere’.³⁷⁹

Outrage and fear was the European public’s immediate reaction to news of the US bombing of Libya on 16 April. In the UK, demonstrations were held outside the US Embassy in

³⁷⁸ Public Papers of the Presidents - Ronald W. Reagan 1986, Vol. 1, pp.468-9, 478.

³⁷⁹ *The Economists*, 19 April 1986, p.21.

London, several government buildings and four main US bases involved in supporting the US bombing. In a MORI poll for *The Times*, only 29 per cent of Britons thought Reagan was right to order strikes against Libya while 68 per cent disapproved of Thatcher's decision to allow the use of British bases by the Americans.³⁸⁰ The practical results of the attack were in doubt, too. More than 8 out of 10 people believed that the likelihood of Libyan-backed terrorist attacks in Britain had increased. Only a tiny handful – 4 per cent – thought terrorist outrages were now less likely.³⁸¹ The entire basis of the American action appeared to be rejected by the majority. MORI's figures seemed to show widespread support instead for the European options for dealing with Libya, a concerted package of economic sanctions.

Among America's allies, only Britain, Canada and Israel supported the US raid, whereas the European Community's 12 member governments - 11 of them NATO allies of the United States - were against it. The British government was alone in immediately voicing full support for the American air attack on Libya. The Continental allies were angry over the American bombing raids especially when it came only hours after an emergency meeting of EEC Foreign Ministers in The Hague which had called for 'restraint on all sides'. The Netherlands described the American action as a 'slap in the face' for Europe.³⁸² In Spain, Gonzalez said, 'I do not agree with the method used', but he described Gaddafi's 'threats against Spain and other countries' as intolerable.³⁸³ Italy was shocked by the American attack on Libya and Prime Minister Bettino Craxi said, '... far from weakening

³⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, 17 April 1986.

³⁸¹ *The Times*, 17 April 1986.

³⁸² Quoted in *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

terrorism, military action risked provoking explosive reactions of fanaticism, extremism and criminal and suicide acts.³⁸⁴ In France initial polls showed that 66 per cent of the French people were in favour and 32 per cent against for the US raids, but 63 per cent approved of the French government's decision not to allow the use of French airspace by US bombers.³⁸⁵ The French Foreign Minister, Jean-Bernard Raimond, confirmed the French refusal to allow US aircraft to use its airspace and he made clear that France felt under no obligation to comply with the American request to fly over French territory, as the decision for the raid was made by the US alone and taken without the approval of its NATO allies. In West Germany, the opinion polls indicated that 75 per cent of the German public opposed the US bombing. Chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed his doubts but said he understood why the Americans had acted. 'The Federal Government has constantly rejected force'. He added, 'but those who, like Colonel Gaddafi, continually preach and practice force must reckon that those concerned will defend themselves against it'.³⁸⁶ In contrast to Kohl's mild opposition, the leader of the West German group of Socialist MEPS, Herd Walter, said that Colonel Gaddafi's actions were 'mad' but that Reagan's equally insane actions threatened the political basis of NATO.³⁸⁷ The US raids on Libya thus resulted in a danger of a split in NATO with Britain and the US on the one side and the other NATO states, especially states in the southern EEC – Greece, Spain and Italy – and West Germany, on the other. These member states were fearful of Arab reprisals against American bases and facilities, and were disturbed by Britain's decision to allow America to use bases in Britain. 'Britain was caught between its bilateral commitment to America and

³⁸⁴ *The Economists*, 19 April 1986, p.22.

³⁸⁵ Kaldor & Anderson (ed.), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya*, p.41.

³⁸⁶ Quoted in *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

its loyalty to Europe', one EEC diplomat said.³⁸⁸ Europeans were angered that they had only been informed instead of consulted over the American action, and that Reagan had barely waited for The Hague meeting to end before sending in the bombers.

On the American side, officials played down the notion that the US attack on Libya had caused a rupture in the NATO alliance and tried to minimise the importance of French and Spanish refusal to allow use of their airspace. However, privately, they expressed their unhappiness towards the NATO allies. As one State Department official said, 'A lot of them are worried that if they support the US in public, they will get a grenade up their kazoos.'³⁸⁹ Domestically, the Americans gave overwhelming support for Reagan's decision. The post-attack polls showed that Reagan's approval ratings reached a peak for his presidency, soaring as high as 70 per cent; Reagan's foreign policy rating shot up from 51 per cent the previous week to 76 per cent. The polls also indicated that 77 per cent approved of the strike itself and also of the strategy; only 14 per cent disapproved.³⁹⁰ As *The Economist* put it, 'The United States, to the grateful relief of most of its citizens, was no longer a Gulliver tormented by the Lilliputians.'³⁹¹ The British Embassy in Washington was flooded with calls thanking Thatcher for allowing American planes based in Britain to be used in the raid. 'From that moment on, Thatcher', according to Raymond Seitz, 'was a great hero in America, far more so than ... in her own country.'³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Quoted in *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

³⁸⁹ *Washington Tribune*, 16 April 1986.

³⁹⁰ Quoted in The New York Times/CBS Poll, see *The New York Times*, 17 April 1986.

³⁹¹ Davis, *Qaddafi, Terrorism, and the Origins of the US Attack on Libya*, p.145.

³⁹² Interview with Raymond Seitz, the former US Ambassador to London, 7 April 1998, London.

‘Take that, Khadafy!’ exulted the *New York Post*. Two television networks carried ‘America Strikes Back’ logos on their morning news programmes. *The New York Times* commented,

... even the most scrupulous citizens can only approve and applaud the American attacks on Libya ... if there were such a thing as due process in the court of world opinion, the United States has prosecuted and punished [Gaddafi] carefully, proportionately - and justly.³⁹³

‘An act of morality’ was the judgement of the *New York Daily News*. ‘There can be no delight in the spilling of blood, but equally no humane argument for defending the methodical murderous madness of the international terror machine.’³⁹⁴ *USA Today* said, ‘We can only pity the poor people of Libya who know only what they hear from a raving dictator who despises the USA.’³⁹⁵

Congressional reaction was also generally favourable and in tune with public opinion. Congressional leaders of both parties, such as Robert Dole, Robert Michael and Speaker O’Neill, all supported Reagan’s action against terrorism. Some Congressmen held back, however. Senator Christopher Dodd, for instance, said that it would be a matter of weeks before it could be decided whether the counter-terrorist response was both proper and effective.³⁹⁶ But underlying the general satisfaction, there was concern and an expectation that Libya would seek revenge, disappointment over the patchy support from Europe, and

³⁹³ Quoted in Kaldor & Anderson (ed.), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya*, p.56.

³⁹⁴ *The New York Daily News*, 16 April 1986.

³⁹⁵ Quoted in *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

³⁹⁶ *The Economists*, 19 April 1986, p.21.

praise for the role played by Britain. While Speaker O'Neill called French action 'unconscionable', Robert McFarlane, former National Security Adviser, criticised the Europeans for their greed and for their fear while Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State, said: 'Retaliation had to come sooner or later. The President deserves our total support. I am disappointed in the European response because an alliance involves reciprocal obligations.'³⁹⁷

On the British side, the news of the US raids on Libya shocked the House of Commons and led to harsh criticism of both the British Government and President Reagan by opposition parties and some of Thatcher's Conservatives. Though many Conservative MPs praised the American action, Labour members accused Thatcher of bowing to the wishes of Reagan rather than to the wishes of the British people. Thatcher explained that the US government had evidence showing 'beyond dispute' that the Libya had been and was directly involved in promoting terrorist attacks against the United States and other Western countries, and that it had made plans for a wide range of further terrorist attacks.³⁹⁸ It was under the circumstances of '...the Libya's promotion of terrorism, the failure of peaceful means to deter it, and the evidence that further attacks were threatened', that she had replied to the President that Britain 'would support action directed against specific Libyan targets demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of terrorist activities.'³⁹⁹ 'It would have been inconceivable', Thatcher said, 'for the Government to have refused permission for the United States to use its own British-based F-111s to strike in self-defence against

³⁹⁷ *The New York Times*, 16 April 1986.

³⁹⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1986.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

the scourge of terrorism'.⁴⁰⁰ She also made clear that having agreed to the deployment of US aircraft from bases in the UK, she had 'reserved the position of the UK on any question of further action, which might be more general or less clearly directed against terrorism'.⁴⁰¹

The chief charge against the United States came from Neil Kinnock, Leader of the Opposition. He said that even if there was enough evidence against Gaddafi, the bombing could not be justified as an act of self-defence under international law. He accused Thatcher of being 'supine' and 'not acting in the interests of Britain'.⁴⁰² Kinnock also accused Thatcher of making the decision to 'grant the US permission of using the air bases alone' and suggested that Howe 'had not learnt of American intention until Monday morning'.⁴⁰³ He also said that the use of such force could not punish and prevent terrorism, in contrast, the use of such force is much more likely to provoke and expand terrorism. Besides, the strikes would create a hero in the Arab and Third Worlds and damage Britain's long-standing and wise anti-terrorist policy. Thatcher's support for Reagan had exposed Britons both in Libya and Britain itself to further terrorist attacks. Finally he concluded that Thatcher 'has not defended British citizens; she has put them in greater jeopardy'.⁴⁰⁴ Edward Heath, the former Conservative Prime Minister, said that he did not believe 'bombing cities is the right way to attempt to destroy terrorism'.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁰ *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

⁴⁰¹ *Parliamentary Debates, Hansard*, Vol. 95, 16 April 1986, p.879.

⁴⁰² *Parliamentary Debates, Hansard*, Vol. 95, 16 April 1986, p.886.

⁴⁰³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1986.

⁴⁰⁴ *Parliamentary Debates, Hansard*, Vol. 95, 16 April 1986, p.886.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.891-3.

Some critics alleged that the reason for using the F-111s was to involve Great Britain in the operation. Many military experts questioned whether the power of the F-111s would really be militarily necessary for any operation against Libya. They believed that the aircraft on board the carriers, *Coral Sea* and *America*, in the Mediterranean, would have been enough. However, there seemed to be a bias in favour of making the attack as multilateral as possible. According to *The Times*, even Portugal was asked to allow overflight of its air space, which seemed to have only symbolic value.⁴⁰⁶ On this point, Thatcher explained, 'the President had made clear that the use of F-111s was essential, because by virtue of their special characteristics they would provide the safest means of achieving particular objectives with the lowest possible risk both of civilian casualties in Libya and of casualties among US service personnel'.⁴⁰⁷ Besides, there are no other F-111s stationed in Europe. 'Had Britain refused permission for the use of those aircraft, the United States operation would still have taken place; but more lives would probably have been lost, both on the ground and in the air', she said.⁴⁰⁸ Ken Weetch accused Thatcher of not acting in the interests of Britain. He emphasised that the major objective of British foreign policy in the Middle East is to 'prevent instability ... to keep oil flowing from the Gulf and to try to minimise the penetration of Soviet influence throughout the Middle East'.⁴⁰⁹ In this case, British foreign policy interests in the Middle East have been critically damaged by Thatcher's decision to accede to the US request.

Thirdly, there were charges that Reagan's policy had divided the Western alliance as none

⁴⁰⁶ *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

⁴⁰⁷ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 95, 16 April 1986, p.879.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.879.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.889-90.

of the other eleven members of the European Community had supported the view that Britain had taken on this matter. This caused Britain to be more isolated from other European allies.⁴¹⁰ James Callaghan, the former Labour Prime Minister, said that in this case 'the British Government has tried to go further than some other Governments have been willing to go. The other members of the Community would not even agree to close their embassies'.⁴¹¹ The provision of British facilities also divided the European nations who could have a special role in the world, provided that they keep their own united voice. Kinnock said that 'the influence of the United States and Great Britain has been diminished' in the Middle East and that Thatcher was wrong to 'disregard the reservations of the other European allies' and this decision had caused Britain to 'be more isolated from other European allies.'⁴¹²

On the question of the Americans using their own aircraft from this country, the presence of American aircraft in Britain is part of the overall NATO alliance. It was argued that, if American aircraft based in Britain were going to be used, it should be only within the area of responsibility in NATO. In this case the air strike was unjustified because Libya was outside the area of NATO responsibility. Henry Plumb, Leader of the British Conservative group, said he regretted that 'our American friends had succumbed to emotionalism, and that exercising their right of self-defence would not have the desired effect of ending the spiral of terrorist violence'.⁴¹³ Heath said that the use of F-111s should be 'limited to NATO and this situation in Libya is not a matter for NATO' and Callaghan said that the

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.886.

⁴¹¹ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 95, 16 April 1986, p.893.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p.884.

⁴¹³ Quoted in *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

F-111s 'could be used by the United States with British permission for purposes outside NATO', however, it is not 'an obligation of the Prime Minister, either moral or implied, that would have required her to give her consent when she was asked for it'.⁴¹⁴ In support of Thatcher's decision, however, Julian Amery 'congratulated her [Mrs. Thatcher] on the strong support she gave to the American allies in seeking to deter not just terrorism but a terrorist state which have been Britain's enemy as much as the enemy of the US and of the moderate Arab countries'.⁴¹⁵ In defense of Government's decision, Thatcher explained to the Commons:

The United States is our greatest ally. It is the foundation of the Alliance which has preserved our security and peace for more than a generation. In defence of liberty, our liberty as well as its own, the United States maintains in Western Europe 330,000 service men. That is more than the whole of Britain's regular forces. The United States gave us unstinting help when we needed it in the South Atlantic four years ago. The growing threat of international terrorism is not directed solely at the United States. We in the United Kingdom have also long been in the front line. To overcome the threat is in the vital interests of all countries founded upon freedom and the rule of law. The time had come for action. The United States took it. Its decision was justified, and, as friends and allies, we support it.⁴¹⁶

Finally, about ten Conservatives, including Edward Heath, and Ian Gilmour, a former Foreign Office minister, rebelled against the government's decision to sanction the American air strike against Libya in the Commons. The Government won the debate by 325 votes to 206, a majority of 119. During the debate Thatcher won the overwhelming

⁴¹⁴ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 95, 16 April 1986, p.891-3.

⁴¹⁵ *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

⁴¹⁶ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 95, April 16, 1986, p.880-1.

support of her party with a defence of the government decision to allow British-based F-111s to take part in 15th April night's air strikes against Libya.⁴¹⁷

III. ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE US AIR RAIDS ON LIBYA

Nature of the Crisis

The US air raids on Libya represented a crisis where America did not need Britain's military assistance as the actual military strikes could have been carried out using American carrier-based aircraft. The issue involved here was different from the previous two crises and was much less easy to define. It was about fighting terrorism, rather than one of the countries being at war. What the Americans needed from the British in this case was Britain's political support, and to have allies to share with them the international criticism that came out of the crisis. Whereas what Britain was about to damage was not so much its relations with Libya and the Arab states in the region, but its relationship with its European allies.

The strikes against Libya resulted in the threat of a split in NATO, with Britain and the US on the one side and the other NATO states on the other. In terms of its duration and scale, it was a relatively medium scale crisis of short duration. It was unique because the American request created a situation which was not comparable to any of the post-war crises which have strained the trans-Atlantic relationship. It was notable because the functioning of the

⁴¹⁷ *The Times*, 16 April 1986.

long-standing special relationship between the two countries might have been seriously damaged if the British had refused to help.

Sources of Crisis and Pattern of Crisis Behaviour

In the Libyan case the differences between the position of the US and that of Britain were marked in the initial stage. The Americans felt that its vital security interests were affected by Libyan-sponsored terrorism and therefore sought its European partners' help. From the American view, retaliation against terrorist acts was a legitimate response and an expression of self-defence. Nevertheless, no collective action was taken by the European countries, and the Reagan Administration thus decided to take direct military action against Libya to defend its own interests. The British position on the idea of air strikes was underlined in January 1986 when Thatcher said that the idea of 'retaliatory strikes' against Libya would be 'against the law' and might produce 'much greater chaos' than terrorism itself. 'Once you start going across borders, then I do not see an end to it. I uphold international law very firmly,' she said.⁴¹⁸ However, after three months, Thatcher had changed her stance on international law and decided to support fully the United States action against Libya. Her strong support for the US led to considerable trouble both with Britain's European allies and at home. What were the considerations which influenced Thatcher and finally made her change her mind and grant permission to the US?

⁴¹⁸ See *The New York Times*, 11 January 1986. Also see Dickie, *'Special' No More. Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality*, p.190.

First of all, in terms of the need to maintain the Anglo-American special relationship, since 1945 Britain had become less able to fulfill the role as the United States' 'indispensable number two', due to the decline of Britain's relative economic strength. As a result, the main objective of Thatcher's foreign policy was to strengthen Britain's ties with the United States in order to reverse the decline. In order to sustain the Anglo-American special relationship, Thatcher pursued a diplomacy of supporting the United States and encouraging it to do what it desired while other allies were urging more restraint. Thatcher believed that she could gain influence over the American administration by providing America with exactly what the US government needed most - the symbolic support and involvement in NATO out-of-area operations - though this contribution would be limited due to the UK's relatively weak economy. From the American view, this kind of symbolic support from America's allies was certainly very important. In the words of Raymond Seitz:

You see this often - the United States does something, then you have this kind of reaction in the world. It is always very important that if the British are prepared to support something, that they say it publicly or are prepared to say it publicly. Again I know from my own background that you find a lot of instances where people actually approve of what you're doing but they don't want to say it publicly. But the British are always quite prepared to say it publicly if they approve. Sometimes even if they don't approve.⁴¹⁹

The benefits of this strategy were not only hard to demonstrate, it was also difficult to determine exactly how much influence Thatcher could actually exercise, as in the case of

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998, former US Ambassador to the Court of St. James.

Grenada. But from 1981 onwards, the Reagan Administration had increasingly inclined to 'have a significant country alongside them' in its continuing global campaign against Soviet-inspired subversion.⁴²⁰ The renewed co-operation with Britain thus enhanced this idea as the US could have *independent* support from Britain for America's out-of-area operations. By gaining such support from its allies, the US could show the world that the Americans had 'support from other countries rather than acting *unilaterally*' to defend purely American interests.⁴²¹ Such support for the US sometimes would be at the cost of Britain's other interests in the world, notably its relations with Europe. This was proved in this case when the Americans asked for British permission to use the F-111s based in England to strike Libya.

In response to Libyan terrorism, the US claimed that they had the right to act in self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The Americans consistently sought to justify British involvement in the bombing of Libya by stating that only the USAF's British-based F-111s possessed the technical capacity for precision night bombing of highly specific targets, with minimal civilian casualties and risk to US pilots. However, it seemed clear that the decision to have Britain involved by using the F-111s based in the UK had much wider political connotations. The British realised that the American request was not only based on straight forward military criteria, but implicitly, it contained a desire to have Britain associated with the American policy of retaliation against Libya. As Sir Antony Acland, the former British ambassador to Washington, said:

⁴²⁰ Correspondence with Sir Antony Acland, 5 May 1998, former British Ambassador to Washington.

⁴²¹ Correspondence with Sir Antony Acland, 5 May 1998.

The US Administration does attach great importance to having a significant country alongside them. ... Increasingly the United States likes to have support from other countries rather than acting alone and usually their expectation is that Britain will be the country most likely to respond.⁴²²

Thatcher's foreign policy adviser, Charles Powell, explained the British involvement as:

They naturally expected us, as their closest ally, to give them some political cover, to join them, and we did so. ... I suspect it was more important politically than militarily. They [the US] could have done it with carrier-borne aircraft or with long-range aircraft coming out from the United States. But they wanted someone else to be involved in this action, because they [the US] don't like to be isolated.⁴²³

The Americans also admitted that the British permission in this case was political rather than military. Seitz said:

Politically it was very important. ... Mrs. Thatcher might have questioned the judgement of doing this, or the wisdom of doing this,. But nonetheless, not only was she prepared politically to support it, but she was also prepared politically to accept the public outcry at home. So, politically the role publicly and privately was important, but militarily - no, there was obviously an alternative action.⁴²⁴

This issue thus posed a challenge to Thatcher's unswerving loyalty to US foreign policy. Opinion polls had also showed the idea of military retaliation against terrorism to be highly unpopular with the British public and the Cabinet. Thatcher herself was also worried about

⁴²² Correspondence with Sir Antony Acland, 5 May 1998.

⁴²³ Interview with Sir Charles Powell, 27 April 1998.

⁴²⁴ Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

the implication of giving permission for the use of US bases in Britain for a strike against Libya. She said:

I was worried that US action might begin a cycle of revenge. I was concerned that there must be the right public justification for the action which was taken, otherwise we might just strengthen Gaddafi's standing. I was also worried about the implications for British hostages in the Lebanon. ...⁴²⁵

However, on the other hand, she realised the political importance of Britain's involvement in this operation especially when all the other allies had declined the US request. She was also very much aware of the damage that would have been done to Anglo-American relations. By supporting the US, she could demonstrate her commitment to the Special Relationship and show that, in a serious crisis, the US would be able to count on Britain's support. According to Powell:

Mrs. Thatcher took the view that 'allies are allies' and when allies ask you for help, you give it to them. ... This is what allies are for. If you're an ally, you're an ally. If one wants help, they get help.⁴²⁶

Under these considerations, Thatcher tried to place herself in line with international law, even if the case did not stand serious examination. Secondly, according to the agreement by Attlee and Truman, later confirmed by Churchill and Truman in January 1952,

Under arrangements made for the common defence, the United States has the use of certain bases in the United Kingdom ... use of these bases in an emergency would be a matter for joint decision by Her

⁴²⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.443.

⁴²⁶ Haass, R., *The Power to Persuade* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), p.107.

Majesty's government and the United States government in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time.⁴²⁷

The use of British-based American forces, particularly for nuclear operations, would be subject to British government consent.⁴²⁸ Under the terms of the agreement, as former Prime Ministers Heath and Callaghan insisted, Thatcher had 'no obligation ...either moral or implied ...to give her consent'.⁴²⁹ However, as a British Prime Minister, could she simply tell the Americans that they could not use their own aircraft based in Britain for a non-NATO purpose? Although many US forces deployed in Britain were assigned to NATO, they were also free to be used for any US national purpose in peacetime. Britain had no right to question the purpose of US military flights, which 'in any case they are under no obligation to file flight plans with the authorities unless they are intending to fly through what is termed 'controlled airspace''.⁴³⁰ What if the Congressmen ask, 'why should we keep them there to protect Europe if we are not allowed to use those same forces to protect ourselves when we think it necessary?'⁴³¹ Moreover, when facing a choice of refusing permission for a US action outside NATO, could the British government back up its diplomatic refusal with a practical veto? For instance, could the British air traffic control authorities stop US aircraft from taking off? As Seitz explained:

That sounds a little silly but if you think about it that's basically what she [Thatcher] would have been saying 'You [the US] may not use your own aircraft.' Can you imagine what the reaction of the Congress

⁴²⁷ Kaldor & Thompson, *Mad Dogs*, pp.30-1.

⁴²⁸ This kind of verbal understanding has never been codified into the form of a treaty or published agreement, see Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 97, 16 April 1986, p.899.

⁴²⁹ See Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 97, 16 April 1986, pp.889-897.

⁴³⁰ Quoted in Kaldor & Anderson (eds), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya*, p.33.

⁴³¹ Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher*, p.194.

would have been? ... Our air planes are stationed in Europe for a primary purpose but they are not prisoners in Europe. ... It's not as if we have reserved these aircraft all over the world. Each one of those aircraft probably costs 30-40 million dollars, and if I were a Congressman, I would stand up and say, 'What do you mean we can not use our own aircraft? The political reaction in America would have been very different from the political reaction over here.'⁴³²

In these circumstances, Thatcher realised that 'the alternative of saying no was not only impossible to contemplate but which would really sour the relations with Reagan to a very considerable extent.'⁴³³ Had she not granted her permission, the American action would have gone ahead anyway but 'the American people and their Government would have felt bitterly betrayed' by the fact that Thatcher had refused Britain's closest ally, with whom the British still have a special relationship.⁴³⁴ She would have to face the hostile political reaction in America and it would clearly have provoked a crisis or even ruined the bedrock of the special relationship.

On the issues of the trans-Atlantic and NATO alliance, there were concerns about the long-term consequences for the Western alliance. The belief that only 'the presence of American forces in Europe could be sufficient to deter Soviet expansionism' has been a principal view of British policy since the Second World War.⁴³⁵ One of the main objectives of British foreign policy was to retain the American, conventional and nuclear, forces and American commitment to Europe. British policy makers were willing to sacrifice their own interests to a considerable extent to ensure this objective. After Reagan took office, there

⁴³² Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

⁴³³ Interview with Sir Oliver Wright, 27 April 1998.

⁴³⁴ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.445.

⁴³⁵ Croft, *British Security Policy: the Thatcher Years and the End of the Cold War*, p.144.

was growing disillusionment in the US administration over the fact that the Europeans compartmentalised Western security by demanding American support in Europe while leaving the Americans to deal with challenges elsewhere. Therefore, the US has expected NATO allies to respond positively to the American request for support at times of crisis, either militarily or politically. The crisis thus posed as an opportunity for Britain.

Other European allies had privately pressured Thatcher not to grant the United States' use of British bases in England or Cyprus. Any further unilateral military reprisals or 'pre-emptive' strikes by the United States, together with Britain, would obviously deepen the divisions in the North Atlantic alliance. In contrast to the reactions of other European allies and those opposed, Thatcher did not simply view Britain to be a large aircraft carrier for United States forces. Instead, she realised the fact that America 'has been presented in Europe through NATO protecting Western European interests' since the end of the Second World War and this 'has been a very significant and expensive commitment.' She thought this deserved to be taken into account.⁴³⁶ In Thatcher's own words:

The United States is our greatest ally. It is the foundation of the Alliance which has preserved our security and peace for more than a generation. ... We had to weigh the importance for this country's security of our Alliance with the United States and the American role in the defence of Europe.⁴³⁷

If Britain, America's principal ally, had refused the American request to grant permission for UK-based F-111s to bomb Libya, Washington would have been totally deserted by its

⁴³⁶ Correspondence with Sir Antony Acland, 5 May 1998.

⁴³⁷ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 97, 16 April 1986, pp.879-881.

European allies in this operation. The Americans would undoubtedly have gone ahead with their bombing of Libya. But the refusal would have been seen by the US as an act of ingratitude when over 300,000 US troops risked their lives to defend the liberty of Europe and thus cause anger and disillusionment with NATO in the United States. Furthermore, it could have increased US domestic pressure for the massive commitment of ground troops to be withdrawn from Europe, and possibly have resulted in a split in the NATO alliance. As Seitz explained:

From time to time it [the burden-sharing debate] was a problem. The Congressman would come over here and look at Germany and say, 'God, they're richer than we are! Why are we paying for all this? Why are our boys from Oklahoma and Kansas, five thousands miles over there in Europe, why? Why can't they do it themselves?' It required the Europeans to be able to demonstrate that they were playing their part as well. This was one example [Libya] of how, in a way, they were playing the ball. ... I think she [Thatcher] understood that. It would have raised all these questions about NATO and why we [the US] were here and all those kind of things unnecessarily.⁴³⁸

The British also felt disappointed at other allies' non-cooperative behaviour. In the words of Younger:

We were completely scornful of the refusal of NATO to take part in this activity for whatever reason. We thought they were completely blind to the danger of Col. Gaddafi and they were just taking the easy way out as they very often do. We were not at all sympathetic to them. ... I can assure you, she [Thatcher] was very scornful of all of them. ... They wouldn't get permission from Spain, nor from France and they wouldn't get permission from Germany or Italy. So we were the only friend they had on this. Although

⁴³⁸ Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

actually the other NATO nations in private were very supportive, but only in private. That made it worse. ... They forced the American planes to fly right round through the Straits of Gibraltar as if they had been ships. We thought that was pretty poor.⁴³⁹

According to Ronald Dick, the Head of British Defence Staff at British Embassy in Washington:

My irritation was with my French opposite number when the Libyan raid was launched. I am sure that the French had good political reasons (from their point of view) for closing their air space to US military aircraft, but I remember that I had little sympathy for a step which bowed so clearly in the direction of French fears of a reaction from North Africa rather than favouring the US request for overflight rights. The subsequent operation of the F-111 crews based at Lakenheath was thereby made into an unexpectedly severe challenge.⁴⁴⁰

Thatcher thus decided that Britain could not be one of the 'fair-weather friends' and that 'it was necessary to prove Britain's sincerity as an ally by demonstrating a willingness to bear pain on behalf of the United States'.⁴⁴¹ The view Thatcher took was, in the words of Powell:

If you expect support from allies yourself, then the ally is entitled to expect your support. ... Allies are allies. When allies ask you for help, you give it to them even it is politically inconvenient for you to give that help.⁴⁴²

In terms of the 'debt' of the Falklands War - the memory of how the Reagan Administration

⁴³⁹ Interview with Lord George Younger, 7 April 1998.

⁴⁴⁰ Correspondence with Ronald Dick, 25 May 1998.

⁴⁴¹ See Young, *One of Us*, p.476.

⁴⁴² Interview with Sir Charles Powell, 27 April 1998.

had given crucial help to Britain in the Falkland War, when the interests of the US in Latin America would be seriously damaged and the US was under no legal obligation to assist a NATO ally in this sort of out-of-area operation - was another crucial factor which influenced Thatcher.⁴⁴³ Though Reagan was perceived to be a degree more belligerent than his predecessors, he had been much more supportive to Britain in the Falklands war than other European allies might have been. Alliances are not, comfortable arrangements, and they lead to debts. Libya was seen by many American officials as the third episode in a sequence during the Reagan-Thatcher period. Over the Falklands the Americans had backed Britain, however, Britain had failed to support the United States over Grenada. If Britain, again, had not backed the American over Libya, there would have been even more bitter reminders that Britain had twice failed to repay the Falklands debt. The crisis thus was an opportunity for Thatcher to repair the harm caused by Grenada. Considering this, Thatcher strongly emphasised in her statement about the debt that Britain owed to the United States during the Falklands War by saying that 'the United States gave us unstinting help when we needed it in the South Atlantic four years ago' and Britain 'had to stand by the Americans as they had stood by us over the Falklands.'⁴⁴⁴ In the words of Sir Nicholas Henderson:

They helped us when we are in trouble in somewhere, even if it is not within the NATO area, we therefore must be ready to help them when they are in trouble. And that was because of the NATO solidarity.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 April 1986.

⁴⁴⁴ Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, 16 April 1986, p.881.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with Sir Nicholas Henderson, 30 July 1997.

Wright also admitted that the debt of the Falklands was an important factor which made Britain finally grant permission to the US:

There was a feeling that we owed them one. They have done us favours in the Falklands, we haven't supported them over Grenada ... we owed them one, so we would support them and I think this was the basic thing.⁴⁴⁶

When considering Britain's own interests in this crisis, Thatcher understood that there were risks in what the US proposed and she knew the political cost 'of giving permission for the use of US bases by the United States in their strikes against Libya would be high.'⁴⁴⁷ Domestically, for instance, the Labour Party fumed and opinion polls showed that almost two-thirds of the British electorate – partly concerned that innocent civilians had been killed and partly fearful of Libyan reprisals to come – disapproved of the British government's involvement in the American raid. However, Thatcher simply rode out the criticisms and informed the House of Commons that it would have been 'inconceivable' for the British government to refuse the American request for assistance when all else had failed to subdue Gaddafi.

She said:

Whatever the cost to me, I knew that the cost to Britain of not backing American action was unthinkable.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Sir Oliver Wright, 27 April 1998.

⁴⁴⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.443.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.442.

On the other hand, there was no doubt that the British involvement in the operation would have implications for two British hostages in Lebanon. Thatcher was also aware that this might have provoked further reprisals from Arab terrorists and caused further damage to Britain's relations with the Arab states. However, the growing threat of international terrorism was not directed solely at the US, Britain itself had also suffered from Libya's direct and continuing support over the years for the Provisional IRA in the form of money and weapons. There have been several instances over the years of Libyan-sponsored attacks against Britain's interests. These examples include, a ship loaded with Libyan arms, with Irish republican leader Joe Cahill on board, seized off the Irish coast in 1973. In 1984, the Irish Republican Army, supported by Gaddafi, had nearly killed Thatcher with a bomb planted in her hotel. Furthermore, of course, WPC Yvonne Fletcher was murdered by shots fired from the Libyan people's bureau in St. James's Square, London.⁴⁴⁹ Though the Libyan Bureau staff were allowed to leave the country on grounds of diplomatic immunity, the British government broke off diplomatic relations with Libya. In January 1986, a cache of arms in boxes marked 'Libyan Armed Forces' was discovered in the Irish Republic.⁴⁵⁰ British sympathies were therefore entirely with the Americans on the issue of terrorism itself. In these circumstances, Thatcher agreed with Reagan that 'terrorism must not go unpunished', that 'firm and decisive action may make those who continue to practice terrorism as a policy think again'. 'To overcome the threat is in the vital interests of all countries founded upon freedom and the rule of law,' she said, therefore, in terms of the

⁴⁴⁹ 'Libya Under Qadhafi: A Pattern of Aggression', US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Special Report No. 138, January 1986, p.6.

⁴⁵⁰ Kaldor & Anderson (ed.), *Mad Dogs. The US Raids on Libya*, p.95.

effects - fighting Gaddafi and eliminating terrorists, 'as friends and allies, we support it.'⁴⁵¹

Having explained each side's stakes, the two allies' crisis behaviour in the case of Libya is as follows (*See Table 5.1 Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the US air raids on Lbiya*): the obvious reason for the initial disagreement between the US and Britain was that the two governments had placed different priorities on different interests in the case of Libya which thus illustrate divergences and complementarities of the two nations. The United States placed the highest priority on punishing Libya for terrorism while Britain held a different view on this point. However, Britain believed that, influenced by the Falklands factor, the US must not be abandoned by its closest ally in its hour of need or it would have done serious damage on both the Anglo-American special relationship and the Atlantic alliance. Under these circumstances, a solution came out as Britain decided to sacrifice its own interests in order not to damage its links with Washington and to demonstrate its commitment of being an accountable ally at times of crisis. The British support in this case proved that even if Britain no longer possessed the capability to be 'America's universal number two', it could at least provide assistance with all the resources at its command in certain limited contexts and the Americans were very grateful for Britain's help. In the words of Weinberger:

She granted the decision immediately and was wholeheartedly supportive of the air raid on Libya ... we were certainly grateful for it. It was a marked contrast to the French who refused to even allow our planes to fly over France.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ Quoted in Renwick, R., *Fighting with Allies*, p.250. Also see Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard*, Vol. 97, 16 April 1986, pp.880-1.

⁴⁵² Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, 5 March 1998.

The Pentagon spokesman, Robert Sims, also said:

Indeed, other allies did not show the same degree of co-operation as Britain. Americans generally, and the American military in particular, were extremely appreciative of the support from the UK in this instance - and equally dismayed at the lack of resolve shown by other 'allies'.⁴⁵³

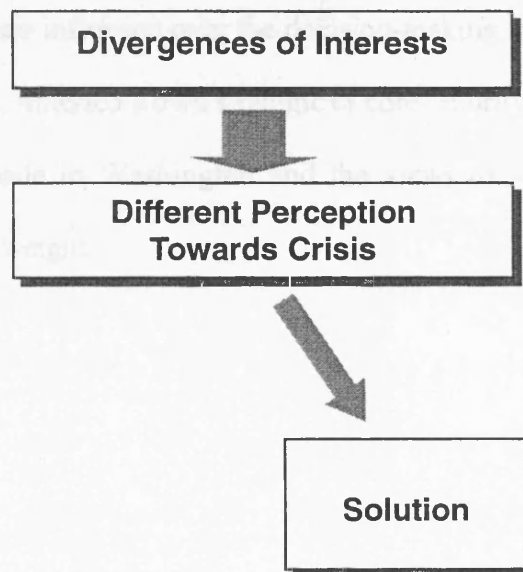
Conclusion

In conclusion, two interesting issues were raised from the crisis. First, what posed a problem for the British in this case was that many of Britain's European allies did not share the American perception about the threat coming from Gaddafi and therefore, they were unwilling to co-operate with the United States, their major ally in NATO. However, from Thatcher's point of view, giving help to Washington was much more important than keeping other European allies informed of her policies. She did not waver over her tough policy on terrorism and won tremendous acclaim in America as the only ally who had stood side by side with them. In order to demonstrate the value of the special relationship with the United States, she wanted to show that it was not one-way traffic, Thatcher chose to act in line with the American policies and was willing to pursue this policy despite criticism from the other European allies.

⁴⁵³ Correspondence with Robert Sims, the former Pentagon spokesman, 15 May 1998.

Table 5.1

Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the US air raids on Libya



Secondly, it was obvious that what mattered was not a question of consultation with the British because the American decision to use US bases in Britain for the raid on Libya had already been made by the US. Even if the British government disapproves, that does not necessarily prevent US action. The British have sought to maintain their influence over the US and is seemed to enjoy continued influence in Washington. However, the British should not over-estimate their influence over the decision-making in Washington because after all, on issues involving America's own strategic or core security interests, the ultimate decision would only be made in Washington and the views of America's allies, even British, may be given little weight.

CHAPTER 6

THE PERSIAN GULF REFLAGGING OPERATION, 1987.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the Persian Gulf and its energy resources has been acknowledged by the Western countries since the 1970s. In March 1987, the United States made its decision to accede to the Kuwaiti request for protection of its tankers against Iranian attacks, a step which signalled the beginning of the internationalisation of the Gulf War. Eventually, the U.S. assembled a large naval task force in the Gulf to live up to its commitment and several Western European allies joined the US Navy in their escort duties. The deepening involvement in the Persian Gulf crisis not only placed the United States and Britain in an increasingly precarious position but also gave rise to a NATO out-of-area debate between the US, Britain and other European allies. Although there were disagreements and frictions between the US and UK, co-operation and co-ordination finally did take place and worked satisfactorily. This chapter examines the divergent interests of the two members of the alliance in this crisis; what the stakes of each side were and their different perceptions towards this crisis. In addition, why did Britain initially turn down the US request to send minesweepers to the Gulf and refuse to play the role of supporting the US in sharing the burden; and what finally made Britain and other European allies reverse their policy and take parallel action with the United States? By examining these factors, we seek to explain the intra-alliance behaviour in this crisis and find out what affected the degree of discord and cohesion among alliance members. This analysis will show how this event affected the

broader relationship between the US and UK, and illuminate the sources of alliance cohesion that extend beyond this case study.

The Iran-Iraq War

The Gulf War started with Iraq's forces moving across Iran's border on 22 September 1980 and ended in July 1988. It was one of the most devastating conflicts since the Second World War. Since the collapse of the Shah's regime in 1979, the relationship between Iran and Iraq had deteriorated steadily. The Iranians began to deliberately challenge Iraq aggressively by giving renewed encouragement to the Kurdish opposition groups in northern Iraq, and calling for the replacement of the region's traditional monarchies as well as the Baathist party dictatorship in Iraq and the death of the Iraqi leadership. These steps not only threatened the integrity of Iraq but also posed the growing possibility of an expensive military campaign because the Iraqis felt that 'once Ayatollah Khomeini's Shi'a Islamic republic consolidated itself, it was bound to cover southern Iraq which was the home of the country's large Shi'a population and the Shi'a holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.'⁴⁵⁴ Saddam Hussein felt that the best time to achieve Iraq's position of regional supremacy was before the Iranian revolution put down its roots, especially when the struggle for control over the revolution in Iran weakened Iranian military power and when its relationship with both superpowers and most regional states was strained. In the light of these points Saddam Hussein decided to wage war. In response to the Iraqi attack, Tehran

⁴⁵⁴ Quoted in Seale, P., 'Iraqis fear their Soviet 'friends'', datelined Baghdad in *Observer*, 3 February 1980. Also see Maull, Hanns W. and Pick, O. (eds.), *The Gulf War* (London: Pinter, 1989) p.46.

chose to fight this 'imposed war' and at the same time labelled it as a struggle between 'Islam and blasphemy'.⁴⁵⁵

In the first two years, the war was of a limited scale and, since it occurred at a time when oil markets were full of supplies and both Iran and Iraq relied on oil as their main sources of revenue, there never was a serious threat of shortage and no major loss of production. The United States initially focused on preventing the fighting from spilling over to the oil tanker traffic in the Gulf. The British, from December 1980 onwards, had contributed to the free movement of Gulf shipping by deploying the 'Armilla Patrol', an escort service (which consisted of a small naval force with one destroyer and two frigates) for British shipping sailing between Bahrain and the Straits of Hormuz. The other Europeans did not intervene because their vital interests had not been directly and immediately threatened. From 1982 onwards, when Tehran began to carry the war into Iraq, the costs of the struggle to both sides increased dramatically. Among the Europeans, France threw its support behind Iraq - one of its most important customers for arms before and during the war - while Germany and Britain tried to protect their commercial and political ties with Iran.

In the event of an intensified conflict between two major oil exporters, oil was likely to have a decisive impact, not only being used as an instrument for victory or as a target for attack, but most importantly, it was used as a factor to contribute to the internationalisation of the conflict. In 1984 Iraq started the 'tanker war' with attacks on oil shipping in the Gulf, together with the deepening of the war through the effective use of chemical weapons. In September 1986, Iran began singling out Kuwaiti-flag oil tankers serving Kuwaiti ports for

⁴⁵⁵ Quoted in Maull and Pick (eds.), *The Gulf War*, p.6.

attack, in an attempt to intimidate its neighbours to change policies and to weaken support for Iraq. In November 1986, Kuwait approached the permanent members of the UN Security Council to explore ways to protect Kuwaiti-associated shipping. The Soviet Union soon expressed their willingness to provide support. In March 1987, alarmed by Soviet offers to Kuwait, the US government made the decision, without consultations with European allies, that American naval protection should be extended to US-flagged Kuwaiti tankers. Washington's decision to accede to the Kuwaiti request for protection of its tankers against Iranian attacks thus signalled the beginning of a major internationalisation of the Gulf war.

Western Policy towards the Middle East

Throughout the post-war period, there have been disagreements between the US and Western Europe on the protection of Western political and economic interests in the Middle East, such as the harsh differences over the French and British Suez adventure in 1956 and the clash between Washington and European allies over US policy during the October War in 1973. These differences of interests for the Western Alliance in the Middle East were due to different perceptions about threats and stakes, objectives and appropriate policies. The major interests of the Western alliance in this area can be divided into two spheres: oil and strategic stability.⁴⁵⁶ These interests coincided for all members of the Western Alliance; on the other hand, they resulted in important nuances and even divergences due to the

⁴⁵⁶ Quoted in Maull and Pick (ed.), *The Gulf War*, p.153.

structural differences in interests and different perceptions of objectives between the members of the Alliance.

In terms of oil, the dependence of the economy of the US and Western Europe on Persian Gulf oil created direct interests in this area. Foremost among these were the free flow of oil through the Gulf and access to the vast oil resources of the region. In 1980 West European countries depended upon imports from the Gulf for as much as 70 per cent of their petroleum needs.⁴⁵⁷ Since the oil import dependence of Western Europe was much higher than that of the United States, Western Europe was more vulnerable compared with the United States when major oil supplies were disrupted. (See *Table 6.1- Oil Import of Western Europe and the United States*) The dependence of the Western world on Gulf oil also naturally elicited Soviet interest, by virtue of the fact that the area vital to the West's economic strength lies not far from the Soviet borders. In the later 1970s, the instability of the region, further damaged by the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, raised increased concern among Western states about the security of oil supplies from the Gulf region. By moving into Afghanistan and building up air bases which placed Soviet fighter and attack aircraft close to the Straits of Hormuz and the Northern Indian Ocean, Moscow seemed capable of direct action in the Middle East.⁴⁵⁸ The US and the Western Europeans thus faced particular strategic problems: to contain Soviet expansionism and prevent a potential Soviet attempt to seize the oil fields. It was also for this reason that local conflicts in this area were more likely than those in other regions to involve either, or both,

⁴⁵⁷ US Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Western Vulnerability to a Disruption of Persian Gulf Oil and Supplies: US Interests and Options*, prepared for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, DC, G.P.O., 1983, p.24.

⁴⁵⁸ See Kupchan, C., *The Persian Gulf and the West* (Winchester: Allen & Unwin, 1987) pp.177-9.

superpowers. This consequently increased the chances that a war initially limited in the Middle East would escalate to a broader East-West confrontation.

In the 1970s the US believed that regional developments in the Middle East could easily undermine vital Western interests and threaten world peace. In order to produce additional benefits and reduce those risks, the policy the US pursued was to preserve friendly governments in the major oil-producing states through an active policy of strengthening moderate, pro-Western and status quo forces and weakening radical and pro-Soviet elements. However, the Europeans' assessments of threats and the appropriate policies to reduce them, had often differed from those of the United States. For instance, the British were concerned primarily with protecting their economic interests in this area; whereas the interests of the US were more focussed on US-Soviet global competition and viewed the central issue as the containment of Soviet political and military advances into the region as well as the maintenance of free passage through the canal for ships of all nations. Also, whilst American policymakers' main objective was to prevent Soviet political or military control of the resources and governments in the Middle East, the aim of Western Europeans was to avoid a dangerous East-West confrontation over the Middle East.

TABLE 6.1**Oil Import Reliance of Western Europe and the United States**

	<i>United States</i>			<i>Western Europe</i>		
	1950	1970	1980	1950	1970	1980
<i>Oil imports as per cent of oil consumption</i>	6.4	25.3	30.4	96.0	101.4	86.6
<i>Oil imports as per cent of energy consumption</i>	1.9	10.6	18.2	9.1	59.3	46.1
<i>Share of Gulf in total oil imports (per cent)</i>	N/A	13*	28	N/A.	68*	59

Sources: *Comite Professionnel du Petrole*; BP; OECD; US Department of Energy

*1973 statistics

In the early 1980s, considering the proximity of Soviet troops, supplies and air bases, the Gulf area emerged as one of the West's most strategically exposed areas outside the NATO theatre. In his State of the Union address of 23 January 1980, President Carter stated that 'Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force'.⁴⁵⁹ This declaration quickly came to be known as the Carter Doctrine in which conflict containment was based on three premises, (i) conflict and upheavals were endemic in the Middle East, political efforts to resolve conflicts are not promising; (ii) the impact of regional conflicts on critical Western interests (such as the free-flow of oil and the prevention of Soviet expansionism) need not always be directly dangerous; and (iii) military force may have to be used if vital Western interests are threatened.⁴⁶⁰ Though the Middle East lies beyond NATO's geographic responsibility, a cut-off of Persian Gulf oil would pose immediate threats to the collective security of the West. The US and its allies therefore agreed that this should be addressed on an alliance-wide basis. To enhance its ability to project military power to deter Soviet encroachment, the Carter Administration established a rapid action force for non-NATO contingencies which came to be known as the 'Rapid Deployment Force' (RDF), and voiced a new commitment to defend the Gulf against external aggressors. The measures included the allocation of some 230,000 personnel in the region, propositioning military hardware, holding exercises with regional states, and supplementing US naval and air deployment in the Gulf area.⁴⁶¹ At the same time, the US

⁴⁵⁹ 'The State of the Union - Address by the President of the United States,' *Congressional Record*, Vol. 126, No. 7 (House Document No. 96-257), pp. 166-169.

⁴⁶⁰ Maull and Pick (ed.), *The Gulf War*, Chapter 12, p.161.

⁴⁶¹ For the evolution of the policy under Carter, see Kupchan, *The Persian Gulf and the West*, pp.84-9.

began efforts to convince its allies that NATO should include potential contingencies in Southwest Asia in its planning cycle as Congress and the public were demanding that the Europeans share the burden of defending the Gulf. Furthermore, once the RDF were sent to the Middle East, there would be a 20 to 30 per cent decline in the number of US troops available to reinforce Europe.⁴⁶²

After Reagan took office, he adopted the Carter Doctrine and succeeded in increasing substantial military power in the following years. Its basic mission reflected two themes: 'to assure continued access to Persian Gulf oil and to prevent the Soviets from acquiring political-military control directly or through proxies.'⁴⁶³ The US also proposed the establishment of a NATO 'quick-strike-force' composed of American and European vessels and personnel that would be used primarily to patrol the Persian Gulf area.⁴⁶⁴ The British government soon expressed a willingness to develop a British contribution to the RDF, while other European allies expressed their concerns about the usefulness of military intervention in the Gulf. Though initially unwilling to discuss it, the Europeans finally agreed to consider out-of-area problems in NATO Councils. The out-of-area debate rose to the top of NATO's agenda. At the Bonn Summit in June 1982, the alliance advanced a formula for responding to conflict in the Southwest Asia region based on consultation, facilitation, and compensation. The allies agreed to '*consult* on out-of-area deployments and the Europeans agreed both to *facilitate* the transport of US troops and to *compensate*

⁴⁶² US Congressional Budget Office, Rapid Deployment Forces - Policy and Budgetary Implications, Washington, D.C., G.P.O., 1983, pp.xvi-xxx.

⁴⁶³ Quoted in Maull and Pick (ed.), *The Gulf War*, Chapter 10, p.131.

⁴⁶⁴ 'US Asking Allies to Assume More of Military Burden,' *The New York Times*, 14 April, 1980.

for the diversion of US assets'.⁴⁶⁵ Though this formula served as the basis of NATO's out-of-area policy since 1982, the agreements did not eventually lead to any tangible change in force levels or burden sharing. The trouble with such divergent policies has over time become obvious. European countries have neither individually nor jointly been willing or able to muster the resources required to shape events independently and thus provide an alternative to the United States in the Middle East – and often, they have also had considerable difficulties agreeing on a common approach. However, there were still times when alliance interests were compatible and the Europeans were willing to co-operate with the United States. This was based on the assumptions that co-operation held advantages and could be made effective, therefore, there was a need to 'share the burden'. One of the most prominent examples for this is the allied co-operation in the Persian Gulf mining episode in 1987-88.

II. ALLIED CO-OPERATION IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Disagreement over Western Action in the Gulf

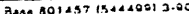
In 1986 the situation in the Gulf changed rapidly with Iranian successes on the Fao peninsula and attacks on Basra. Iraq escalated the tanker war by mining the waters of the Gulf in the hope of drawing the superpowers into the conflict and thus forcing Iran to the negotiating table. This time the Iraqi strategy worked, though indirectly. In this

⁴⁶⁵ See Kupchan, C. A., 'NATO and the Persian Gulf: Examining Intra-Alliance Behaviour', *International Organization*, Spring 1988, Vol. 42, No. 2, p.322.

circumstance, Iran became increasingly under stress in its export operations. Attempting to retaliate for Iraqi attacks, Iran began to mine the waters of the Gulf and searched ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Iraq's new missiles were ranging as far south as the Larak and Lavan terminals, and also put all Iran's oil terminals in the Persian Gulf at risk. (See Map 6.1 – *Iran and the Persian Gulf*) The more sustained Iraq's attacks on shipping serving Iran became, the more acute the pressure on Iran to submit passively or to exert pressure militarily on the Gulf states. Iran then threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz - only 24 miles wide and through which all ships entering or leaving the Gulf must pass - and menaced commercial shipping. Iran also chose Kuwait, a small but oil-rich nation which lies to the north-east of Saudi Arabia, as their focal target among the Gulf Arab states as it was known to be actively supporting Iraq's war effort. Iran first accused Kuwait of being a transshipment point for arms destined for Iraq, then pressured it by launching naval attacks against shipping of all nations bound to and from Kuwait's ports, using the Silkworm surface-to-ship missiles to attack its ships and mining of its shipping channels. In addition, on 15 October 1986 a Liberian-flagged, US-owned tanker *Sungari* at the sea-island terminal off the coast of Kuwait was hit by a Silkworm missile. Again, on 16 October 1986, the US-flagged Kuwaiti tanker *Sea Isle City* was hit by a Silkworm at the sea-island terminal and the terminal was struck on 22 October.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁶ See Weinberger, C., *Fighting For Peace: Seven Critical Years At The Pentagon*, Michael Joseph, London, 1990, p.294.

Iran and the Persian Gulf



When compared with other shipping in the Gulf, one per cent of the shipping in the Gulf had been subjected to attack while six per cent of Kuwaiti shipping had been attacked. In total, since September 1986, 41 ships calling on Kuwait had been hit, among them, 23 were oil tankers.⁴⁶⁷ All these activities were in an effort to intimidate Kuwait and its neighbours, thereby dissuading them from providing political and financial support to Iraq. The 'tanker war' had thus expanded, with more shipping hit and more casualties caused than the cumulative total of the previous years.

Disturbed by these developments, in early November 1986, Kuwait approached members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), with the idea of superpower protection for shipping in the Persian Gulf.⁴⁶⁸ It was encouraged to ask the US in preference to the Soviet Union. However, since it achieved independence in 1962, Kuwait had been more friendly towards the Soviet Union than to the US because the US refused to sell them military equipment. In November 1986 Kuwait therefore made informal approaches to the Soviets aimed at soliciting Soviet protection for their oil tankers and soon reached a tentative agreement with them on a chartering plan. Later in December, a request for information and registry of Kuwaiti tankers under the American flag was made to Washington by the Kuwait Oil Tanker Corporation.⁴⁶⁹ Then in January 1987 Kuwait formally requested the United States to assist with the convoy of its oil tankers through the Persian Gulf and

⁴⁶⁷ For empirical data, see U.S. Military Forces to Protect 'Reflagged' Kuwaiti Oil Tankers, Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 100th Congress, 1st session, June 5, 11, 16, 1987, US G.P.O., Washington, D.C., 1987, (*Congressional Record*, S201-16), pp.93-6.

⁴⁶⁸ The six member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council are: Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁶⁹ For the chronology, see: The Policy Implications of U.S. Involvement in the Persian Gulf, Joint Hearings of the Investigations Subcommittee and the Defense policy Panel of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 100th Congress, 1st session, June 9 and 11, 1987, U.S. G.P.O., Washington, D.C., 1988, (*Congressional Record*, H201-29), pp.81-3.

expressed its fear that Iran's open attacks on Kuwaiti and other shipping in the Gulf posed a major danger to the freedom of the seas.

At the time there were strong feelings throughout the Reagan Administration that the US should not be 'played against the Soviets by the Kuwaitis' and that the US 'should not be part of an effort by the Kuwaitis to draw the Soviets into the Gulf'.⁴⁷⁰ However, important figures in the Reagan Administration believed that 'the security of the Persian Gulf – the free and open access to its oil resources and to its shipping lanes, peace and security in its littoral nations – is of critical strategic importance to the United States and our allies. ... We simply cannot allow the Kremlin to have its will in this region, or allow the most extreme, virulently anti-Western forces to control events, threaten friendly nations, or jeopardise our interests.'⁴⁷¹ Alarmed by the firm response from the Soviets and the idea of 'the Soviets playing a key maritime role in the Gulf', the US government reluctantly decided to 'step up its presence in the Gulf'.⁴⁷² In February 1987 the US offered to extend military protection to Kuwaiti tankers from attack by either Iran or Iraq when its vessels were proceeding through Gulf waters, even though the US Navy did not possess the minesweeping capability necessary to protect either neutral merchant shipping or American warships. In March Kuwait changed its request by proposing 'transferring the registration of half of its oil tankers to American flag registry'. The Americans then agreed to protect all the Kuwaiti shipping.⁴⁷³ On 19 May Reagan approved the announcement that, in response to Kuwait's

⁴⁷⁰ See both Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.926 and Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace*, p.294.

⁴⁷¹ Such ideas had been expressed by both Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger. See *Congressional Record* H201-29, p.7.

⁴⁷² Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.294.

⁴⁷³ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.36.

request, the US would reflag eleven Kuwaiti tankers so that the US Navy could escort them. This meant the start of the 'reflagging operation' and the US Navy would have the obligation to 'escort such commercial shipping up and down the Gulf' and 'keep open the international sea-lanes of commerce'.⁴⁷⁴

On the European side, as the Iran-Iraq war intensified, the British Defence Secretary, George Younger, visited his French opposite number, Andre Giraud, in Paris in March 1987 to discuss the threat posed by Iranian mines in the Gulf to their shipping and European oil supplies. They shared the idea that it would be easier if other European countries would support them as well. So Younger contacted the Dutch Defence Minister, Willem van Eekelen, whose turn it was to be Chairman of the Western European Union (WEU), and informed him of the proposal of a joint WEU operation in the Gulf in the future.⁴⁷⁵ In the US, most press commentaries and the Congressional reaction to the Gulf operation were hostile, due to the fact that the US took little oil directly from the Persian Gulf, but Reagan refused to bow to Congressional objections. In a speech trying to persuade the Congress to support the American reflagging and escorting of Kuwaiti ships through the Gulf, President Reagan warned, 'in a word, if we don't do the job, the Soviets will.'⁴⁷⁶ He then said, 'Our role in the Gulf is vital. It is to protect our interests and to help our friends in the region protect theirs'.⁴⁷⁷

At the time, demands for the involvement of NATO allies to 'share the burden' of keeping

⁴⁷⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, pp.926-7.

⁴⁷⁵ Quoted in Smith, G., *Reagan and Thatcher*, Boldley Head, 1990, p.235.

⁴⁷⁶ *New York Times*, 21 July 1987.

⁴⁷⁷ *New York Times*, 21 July 1987.

the Gulf waters open was raised in the US Congress. A number of Congressmen felt that the responsibility of keeping the Gulf waters open should be shared and that countries such as Britain should play a part. For instance, in the Congress, David Martin emphasised that '60 percent of that [oil] is going to Japan, which would cause anybody in America to ask, well, why are we the ones if we have nothing – if we are not getting the oil, why are we there protecting Kuwaiti oilers, and 30 percent of it is going to Europe.'⁴⁷⁸ Ike Skelton said 'Europe gets approximately 30 percent of its oil through this area, from the Persian Gulf and Japan, and 60 percent of its oil comes from there. We get approximately 6 percent. ... What are our European allies doing to assist us and to help pay their fair share of this total?'⁴⁷⁹ Claudine Schneider asked, 'What about our allies role in all this? After all, ... they receive between 5 and 10 times the petroleum that we do from the Persian Gulf. Don't they have some responsibility to Kuwait?'⁴⁸⁰ While Les Aspin said, 'Our allies ought to do more. ... Everyone in Congress thinks the allies aren't doing enough. Unless this administration pursues vigorously and unrelentingly and with words and deeds and hints consistent with the formal stuff urging the allies and others to get into this, this policy and our while Persian Gulf policy is in deep, deep trouble.'⁴⁸¹ Similarly Senator Warner said, 'It is my hope that the President can persuade out allies and the GCC countries to participate.'⁴⁸² Senator Levin agreed by saying that 'we should insist on the French and the British providing support with ships, which both countries have, and bases, which the

⁴⁷⁸ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.42.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ See Kuwaiti Tankers, Hearings before the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, House of Representatives, 100th Congress, 1st session on Oversight on the Reflagging of Kuwait Tankers, June 18, 1987 and U.S. Naval Escorts For Kuwaiti Tankers, August 6, 1987, U.S. G.P.O., Washington, D.C., 1987, p.282.

⁴⁸¹ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.45.

⁴⁸² *Congressional Record*, S201-16, p.6.

French have in Djibouti.’⁴⁸³

On this point, Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, in joint hearings before the House of Representatives, explained to the Congress that:

The United States should not – and does not - carry these burdens and risks alone. There is a broad consensus in Western European countries and Japan regarding the importance of the Gulf, and we are working intensively with our allies ... to determine whether and what additional assistance would be appropriate.⁴⁸⁴

At the time, in order to appeal for allied support, Weinberger began discussions with his NATO colleagues on an individual basis (with respect to the additional contributions and additional co-operation that could be achieved) on 26 May 1987 during a NATO meeting in Brussels. The same request was made by Reagan to leaders of Western nations and Japan at the Venice Summit in early June. According to Murphy, even before the Summit, the US began directly to approach the participants at a high level to ‘urge greater individual and collective efforts to seek peace and ensure protection of our common interests in the Gulf region’.⁴⁸⁵ There were a number of similar messages passed from Admiral Crowe to Admiral of the Fleet Sir James Fieldhouse, Chief of the British Defence Staff.

However, the initial response from the allies was negative because, since NATO forces do

⁴⁸³ *Congressional Record*, S201-16, p.7.

⁴⁸⁴ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.80.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.80.

not operate in the Persian Gulf, the Europeans would not consider having a joint action outside NATO. On the other hand, they feared an escalating involvement as US and Iranian forces interacted and did not want to be drawn in. Both Germany and Japan claimed constitutional constraints which prevented them from military participation in naval escort operations in the Gulf. In Britain, there were anxieties on the question of whether to involve itself into the Gulf at this stage: what would the roles of ships be? How long would they stay? And would this joint operation be an open-ended commitment? Finally, Thatcher, shared the Ministry of Defence's anxiety about being sucked into an open-ended operation, and decided to reject the American idea, despite the fact Britain has 'the best mine hunting capabilities of anyone ... and the mine-hunting expertise ... (for the very good reason that our coast is extremely suitable for mining)'.⁴⁸⁶ Britain had maintained the Armilla Patrol Force which had been successfully escorting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the southern half of the Gulf from 1980 onwards. France - with its naval presence based in Kijibouti - was also reluctant to be associated with the American operation but fully supported the UN Security Council initiative to secure a cease-fire.

On 20 July, the UN Security Council unanimously voted a binding resolution calling for an end to the Iran-Iraq war. Resolution 598 demanded an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of forces prior to negotiation of outstanding issues between the two parties. On 24 July a mine damaged the *Bridgeton* (an ex-Kuwaiti oil tanker sailing under US flag) on its way to Kuwait under American escort. Deficiencies in US minesweeping capabilities in the Gulf became obvious, but even so, the request from Secretary Shultz asking allies to contribute to the minesweeping effort and to help clear international sea lanes were still

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1998, 138-142 Holborn, London.

turned down by Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and even by Britain. The British decision, taken by Thatcher after consultation with Foreign Secretary Howe and Defence Secretary Younger, was communicated to the US State Department. It was felt, according to Younger, that British minesweepers in the Gulf would reduce the chance of any diplomatic solution, and that their presence would place British merchant vessels and Royal Navy warships in a more threatened position. Secondly, 'at that stage ... it was Britain only' and therefore 'she [Thatcher] was reluctant to do this because it was difficult to find the resources... and she felt that we would have be isolated and doing the job without any support from anyone else.'⁴⁸⁷

The decisions by the British and other European allies to reject the US request for assistance in clearing the mines in the Gulf was seen as a rebuff in Washington. American officials were clearly taken aback and deeply disappointed. 'It's looking more and more like the minesweeping assistance we get from others is going to be limited to non-existent', one US official said bitterly, 'We're in this escort business for the long term, so the decision was made that we had better start getting more of our own gear over there'.⁴⁸⁸ Secretary Shultz also admitted that there had been a problem over mine sweeping. 'I remembered their [the British] opposition to our action in Grenada. Ours was a 'dead-end policy', the British said, and they wanted no part of it', Shultz said.⁴⁸⁹ With a hint of reproach to the Europeans who had refused to help with the minesweeping, he said that mines in international waters were an international problem. At the time in the Pentagon, officials

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1998, 138-142 Holborn, London.

⁴⁸⁸ Quoted in *The Times*, 3 August 1987.

⁴⁸⁹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.933.

were still trying to make Britain change its stance despite being shocked by Britain's refusal, as there were 'strong signals from London that aid would be forthcoming'.⁴⁹⁰

The Western Powers Agreed on Action

Soon after these diplomatic moves, it seemed the British were not comfortable in turning their closest ally down and began to soften the blow of their rejection of the US request by emphasising that the volatile situation in the Gulf could change Britain's decision.⁴⁹¹ Some British officials tried to reassure their American counterparts that the decision was not meant to be a rebuff. David Mellor, Minister of State at the Foreign Office and Howe's deputy, said the significance of Britain's decision should not be exaggerated:

If circumstances change, our attitude to this matter might change ...There are all matters upon which view this week may not be the same as my view next week.⁴⁹²

Thatcher told the US National Security Adviser, Frank Carlucci, on 3 August that the decision was not final. In early August, European allies and the US also started to consult with each other over the possibility of international action to protect Gulf shipping in the event of a further increase in tension there. Britain appeared to be taking a particularly active role in attempting to reconcile the serious differences that had emerged between Europe and the US.

⁴⁹⁰ See *Financial Times*, 1 August 1987.

⁴⁹¹ David Mellor, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, see *The Times*, 3 August 1987.

⁴⁹² See *Financial Times*, 3 August 1987.

The British Government changed its stance following the incident on 10 August: the US-operated supertanker *Texaco Caribbean* was damaged by a mine outside the Gulf, and mines were discovered outside the waterway off the coast of the United Arab Emirates which was previously regarded as a safe place. For the British government, this constituted a much more direct assault on British interests and a more direct violation of the principle of free passage. The Armilla Patrol would need more protection as the Iranians were now laying mines in waters where the Armilla Patrol was operating and had been considered to be clear.⁴⁹³ On 12 August after a strong recommendation by the First Sea Lord, Admiral William Staveley, Britain reversed its initial policies and dispatched six minesweepers to the Gulf to assist the Armilla Patrol in its regular escort operations and these minesweepers were operated separately from the American operational command.⁴⁹⁴ Asked if she was doing a U-turn, Thatcher said, 'If there are mines and British ships, naval or tankers, why do you find it so surprising that you send minesweepers?'⁴⁹⁵ On the same day, France also ordered two minesweepers to be sent to reinforce the French naval presence in the region; the aircraft carrier *Clemenceau* and three other vessels were also en route to the Gulf. The decision marked the first concrete sign of co-ordinated allied action in this crisis. However, the British Government stated that its change of heart over sending the vessels had nothing to do with the US request but was purely a reaction to the discovery of mines in areas covered by the Armilla Patrol. British officials in Washington also 'played down the idea

⁴⁹³ Quoted in Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role*, pp.184-6.

⁴⁹⁴ British decision was made after a strong recommendation by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir William Staveley, in which he said that the Armilla Patrol would be unable to carry out its duties properly with the new risk of indiscriminate mining.

⁴⁹⁵ Quoted in *The Times*, 13 August 1987.

that an international co-ordinated effort was imminent and said that the UK preferred to work on an informal basis with the US in the Gulf'.⁴⁹⁶ At the same time, Defence Secretary Younger insisted that the minesweepers would still 'accompany' British-flagged merchant ships and the four vessels would operate in the area patrolled by Royal Navy warships, which did not include the area south of Kuwait.⁴⁹⁷ Though the British stressed officially that the four minesweepers would back up the small UK naval task force in the area, it was recognised that they would be very useful to the large US naval presence in the Gulf and there would be some co-ordination and co-operation between the United States and the United Kingdom. Without doubt, these minesweepers would also be in a position to lend assistance to American warships in the Gulf.

The US warmly welcomed the decision by Britain and France to send a total of six minesweepers to the Gulf, saying this backed American claims that mines in the area posed a threat to international shipping. Shultz singled out Britain among American allies which had co-operated closely with Washington in the Gulf and said, 'We have been getting a lot of co-operation. The British, in particular, have been very active and other states as well'.⁴⁹⁸

While Iran warned Britain and France that 'if England and France want to stand back-to-back with American forces to implement the aggressive policies of the Reagan Administration, we are ready to repeat the events of Lebanon which resulted in their flight ... no country's flag will be taken as a criteria of consideration'.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ See *Financial Times*, 12 August 1987.

⁴⁹⁷ *The Times*, 12 August 1987. This decision appeared to meet the American request for help only halfway, what Weinberger originally asked for was a British minesweeping presence in the Gulf to help protect shipping in the narrow area south of Kuwait. See *The Times*, 12 August 1987.

⁴⁹⁸ Quoted in *The Times*, 7 August 1987.

⁴⁹⁹ See *The Times*, 13 August 1987.

Britain then began to lobby its European allies for similar steps to ensure that more of those who benefited from keeping the Gulf open played a part in the work of keeping it navigable. Since the other European countries had shown no inclination to join Britain and France in committing ships to the area, Mellor complained in a BBC interview saying that 'countries heavily dependent on oil imports through the Gulf were not pulling their weight in assuring the safety of supplies'.⁵⁰⁰ Attention was being drawn at high levels to the fact that Britain was making a large contribution although it had little to gain as only 6 per cent of oil consumed by Britain passed through the Strait of Hormuz, whereas the Netherlands depended on the same sea-lanes for 63 per cent of its oil, Japan 54 per cent, Italy 40 per cent and Belgium 38 per cent. The only other European nation who had sent minesweepers, namely France, obtained 24 per cent of its oil via the same route.⁵⁰¹ Letters sent by Thatcher to European allies were followed by some sharp exchanges between London, Brussels, the Hague and Rome. West Germany, which had the largest minesweeper force of any NATO nation - 57 vessels - was also approached. However, there were no public statements made on these talks as Britain neither wanted to be entangled in wider US operations which would further internationalise the defence of the Gulf area nor give the impression that it was acting as Washington's agent in conducting an allied initiative against Iran.

Initially there were problems in persuading more allies to join in the Gulf minesweeping efforts as the Reagan Administration had been increasingly seen by the Europeans as militaristic and aggressive. The Europeans, as a result, were much more wary of the

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted in *Financial Times*, 18 August 1987.

⁵⁰¹ See *The Times*, 14 August 1987.

Americans taking a lead in this operation. On 18 August, the Netherlands proposed talks on the Gulf among the seven nations of the WEU. In the meeting, the Europeans agreed that there was an urgent need for European co-operation through the WEU on the Gulf crisis and a plan, which Younger 'had discussed earlier with his French opposite number Andre Giraud', of transforming 'the whole European participation into a Western European Union operation quickly attracted comprehensive WEU support'.⁵⁰² The Belgians, Dutch and Italians soon joined the French and British in providing minesweepers while Luxembourg provided cash. The Defense Minister of West Germany, Manfred Woerner, announced that a new deployment of its naval vessels would replace those dispatched to the Mediterranean to fill in for allied vessels patrolling in the Persian Gulf.⁵⁰³

On 2 September Iranian forces attacked two Italian and British merchant ships, *Folly Rubino* and *Gentle Breeze*, 'while the Italian Government was debating its involvement in the Gulf and what level of support it should provide'.⁵⁰⁴ Thus both Italian and British support in the Gulf was solidified. Hence, the joint operation took place and worked satisfactorily under the umbrella of the WEU with the exception of a few incidents. These incidents included: on 14 April 1988 the USS *Roberts* struck a mine injuring 10, on 16-8 April a US-flagged tug and a UK tanker was also being attacked by the Iranians whereas the final incident before the end of the Gulf war on 3 July 1988 was the USS *Vincennes* shot down an Iranian civilian aircraft en route from Bandar Abbas to Dubai.⁵⁰⁵ In a hearing

⁵⁰² Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1987. Also see Howe, G., *Conflict of Loyalty*, p.546.

⁵⁰³ See: U.S. Policy In The Persian Gulf, Hearing before the Subcommittees on Arms Control, International Security and Science, and on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 100th Congress, 1st session, December 15, 1987, U.S. G.P.O., Washington, D.C., 1988, (*Congressional Record*, H381-46), pp.54-8.

⁵⁰⁴ Quoted in Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.290.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.300-1.

before the House of Representatives, Murphy said:

Our commitment to regional stability ... has won us increased support from our allies ... We have now the British, the French, the Dutch, the Belgians, the Italians, and their naval presence has either been strengthened or introduced to the Gulf, and they're doing a very effective job. We have talked with the Japanese on cost-sharing. They have agreed to discuss that with us. ... The Dutch and the Belgians have announced that they intend to keep their forces in the Gulf until at least mid-1988. The Italians continue their convoying operations with their eight naval vessels. The Australians have announced their readiness to send a team of divers to the Gulf to help with mine clearing. ... They have been very supportive.⁵⁰⁶

As regards the practical co-operation, in the words of Younger:

It worked very well, no problem at all. We have Diego Garcia, the base which is ours actually in the Indian Ocean, but the Americans had leased it, rather like the Ascension Island. ... it helps such in a sense that, for instance, we can refuel if we wish to do it at the American refuelling base in Diego Garcia, as one of them. That helps. And in all sorts of ways if there're friendly ships around, the aircraft carriers, as usually an aircraft carrier there outside the Gulf but near enough. That is helpful in lots of ways, for protection, and for fuelling and security and for day-to-day contacts. We were always very close together.⁵⁰⁷

The involvement of the WEU was very important in several aspects. According to Younger:

⁵⁰⁶ *Congressional Record*, H381-46, p.2 & 26.

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with Lord George Younger, 7 April 1998, 138-142 Holborn, London.

It was very important that it was the first successful use of WEU, that was very important. It was very important in that we could not have successfully remove the mines without we were the only people that were available to do it, that was important. It was also important in the sense that it demonstrated that the Western countries, the Western European countries, would take a responsible role outside the NATO area if it was correctly done and correctly organised. Because up to that point, it's been absolutely holy writ that you couldn't go outside NATO area for anything.⁵⁰⁸

Weinberger also said:

It was a joint operation and there was very close linkages and we worked very well because we knew and we had had long friendship and relationships with the British and also with a number of countries that were participating. We worked very well. Our ships got through, the Iranian attempts to stop them were completely blocked and frustrated. And the Gulf was proven again to be an international waterway, there was freedom of the seas. So it was actually a completely successful operation as far as we were concerned. If we had not done all those things and if other countries hadn't joined us, Iran would have been able to block the Gulf which was their goal.⁵⁰⁹

At its peak, the Western presence in and around the Gulf amounted to sixty-three ships, half of them were American. Finally, on 15 August 1988 the Iranians gave up, agreed to comply with US Resolution 598 and accepted a cease-fire with the Iraqis. The naval escort and minesweeping operation in the Gulf in 1987-8 was a remarkable example of an unprecedented out-of-area co-operation by NATO allies in an area of vital concern to Western Europe. This kind of allied out-of-area co-operation has been a long-standing American objective which the United States has not found its NATO allies very helpful in

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, 5 March 1998.

achieving in the past. The crisis demonstrated that America's allies were willing to play their role in supporting the US in carrying its burden. The European governments, though initially more discreet, were ultimately as willing as the United States to deploy naval forces to protect their oil interests. The most important achievement of this operation was that it heightened the US stake in achieving an end to the fighting and thus forced Washington (as Iraq and the GCC states had hoped) to intensify the search for a diplomatic solution through the UN which finally led to UN Security Council Resolution 598. It also increased the isolation and pressure on Iran and reassured the conservative GCC states. The Western strategy of dispatching naval and peace-keeping forces to contain Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti tankers in the Gulf had thus worked in this crisis and successfully prevented a further escalation.

Political Debates

In the US, the initial Congressional reaction to the Gulf operation were hostile. In the House, Helen Bentley asked, 'Aren't we already providing deterrence by having seven of our naval vessels in the area? The act of reflagging will not enhance our ability to deter. Instead, the act of reflagging these Kuwaiti vessels only hurts the US merchant marine ... The Administration should not twist US maritime laws to reach non-maritime goals which do not promote the US merchant marine'.⁵¹⁰ Thomas Manton disagreed with the policy by

⁵¹⁰ Kuwaiti Tankers, Hearings before the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, House of Representatives, 100th Congress, 1st session on Oversight on the Reflagging of Kuwaiti Tankers, June 18, 1987, US G.P.O., Washington, D.C., 1987, pp.18-9.

saying that 'it is ill conceived and ill advised. ... We place at risk all shipping in the Persian Gulf and weaken our national security. The administration is pursuing a poorly planned policy based on a very loose interpretation of existing law and historical precedent'.⁵¹¹ However, some Congressmen agreed the Reagan Administration's policy to reflag the Kuwaiti tankers. Herbert Bateman said, 'Keeping the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz open has been the announced policy of this nation for decades, ... We cannot maintain our credibility in the eyes of our friends and foes if we are not willing to deploy the Navy in support of our commitments'.⁵¹² Similarly, Tom Lantos stated his strong, unequivocal support for the continued American presence in the Persian Gulf but he emphasised that the policy of 'reflagging of the Kuwaiti tankers is the wrong way to proceed in the Persian Gulf. It is both unnecessary and unwise.'⁵¹³ He also asked that 'all nations that benefit from the flow of oil should share the burden, where feasible, with a naval presence, but under all circumstances at least financially'.⁵¹⁴

To explain the reason why the Administration decided to pursue the policy of reflagging the Kuwaiti tankers, Secretary Weinberger said:

They [the Kuwaiti] would go to the Soviet Union, who would be delighted to do it. The Soviet Union would then have an excuse for increasing substantially their presence in the Gulf. ... I think it would be a very disastrous situation if we had refused that request.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p.27.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.30-31.

⁵¹⁴ Kuwaiti Tankers, Hearings before the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, House of Representatives, 100th Congress, 1st session on Oversight on the Reflagging of Kuwaiti Tankers, June 18, 1987, US G. P. O., Washington, D.C., 1987, p.31.

⁵¹⁵ *Congressional Record*, H210-29, pp.48-53.

On the point of burden-sharing, he defended the unilateral US action, saying that:

The result is important enough to us that we should not give up the result simply because we cannot get the co-operation ... We are able to do this task ourselves, but we should have contributions; and we seek them and seek them as effectively as we can.⁵¹⁶

On the British side, in early August 1987, some Conservative MPs strongly criticised the Government's refusal to send any of the Navy's 42 minesweepers to help clear the international sea lanes. After learning that the Government had changed its stance, the Labour Opposition and some of the Conservative MPs launched a fierce attack on the Government for 'posturing with sailors' lives'.⁵¹⁷ Leon Brittan, the former Conservative Cabinet Minister, warned that, although he approved of the decision to send four British minesweepers to the area, 'the Government should avoid becoming entangled in wider US operations in the Gulf that could extend the conflict'.⁵¹⁸ The first charge against the Government's decision to send the British minesweepers to the Persian Gulf was that the US strategy was more likely to provoke than to prevent a challenge. The minesweeping force, therefore, should be under the jurisdiction of the United Nations. For instance, Labour's Deputy Leader, Roy Hattersley, said that 'since the Persian Gulf was an international sea lane, it was appropriate that an international minesweeping force under the jurisdiction of the United Nations was used. The British Government was clearly wrong

⁵¹⁶ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.61.

⁵¹⁷ *The Times*, 12 August 1987.

⁵¹⁸ Quoted in *The Financial Times*, 15 August 1987.

to abandon its low profile, non-provocative approach'.⁵¹⁹

Secondly, the Labour Party attacked the Government's foreign policy for being too closely linked to that of the United States.⁵²⁰ There was a fear that the United States would be trapped in a process of escalation that it could not control. Once the British minesweepers reached the Gulf, there would inevitably be a combined US-British operation and the British ships would be further involved in the crisis and become ideal targets for the Iranians. It was not in Britain's interests to join the American operation for this might damage British relations with the Gulf states and, therefore, there was a demand for the Government to recall the minesweepers immediately. Labour foreign affairs spokesman, Donald Anderson, said the Government's decision to send the minesweepers was a grave and alarming development and a 'giant step' towards a combined US-British operation.⁵²¹ He claimed that Britain had been pressured into this crisis by the United States and alleged that Thatcher had changed her mind on this matter because of her closeness to Reagan. 'The danger is that we shall be sucked deeper and deeper into a conflict we cannot control,' he said.⁵²² George Robertson, another Labour spokesman on foreign affairs, said the Government should recall the four minesweepers immediately or put them under the United Nations flag as part of a multi-national protection force in the Gulf. He said that there was little military rationale behind what was being done and the Government had no clue what would happen if one of the vessels was hit. 'The British ships will become ideal targets when they reach the Gulf in five weeks time because they are clearly military but

⁵¹⁹ *The Times*, 12 August 1987.

⁵²⁰ *The Times*, 18 August 1987.

⁵²¹ *The Times*, 12 August 1987.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

don't have the same capacity to retaliate as the America fleet'.⁵²³

Trying to play down the criticism, Mellor said that 'there is an illogicality at the heart of the Labour position. They say they support the Armilla Patrol. But they would deny the minesweeping back-up which the Armilla Patrol's own commanders say the need. That is not just illogical, it is irresponsible.'⁵²⁴ Mellor then condemned the idea of a multi-national force as 'escapism', saying that there was no prospect of any United Nations force being agreed to or dispatched in the necessary time scale. He said Britain had no objection at all to multi-national involvement and was keen to ensure that more of those who benefited from keeping the Gulf open played a part in the work of keeping it navigable. The objection to the call for UN involvement was that there was 'no realistic prospect of that coming about'.⁵²⁵ On the question of relations with the friendly Gulf states, Mellor said that normal discussions were continuing: 'There is little doubt that the presence of the Armilla Patrol is welcomed and so is the decision to send minesweepers'. The Opposition arguments, he finally concluded, were 'devoid of any thread of consistency or principle'.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ *The Times*, 18 August 1987.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ Quoted in *The Financial Times*, 18 August 1987.

⁵²⁶ *The Times*, 18 August 1987.

III. ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE REFLAGGING OPERATION

Nature of the Crisis

The 'Reflagging Operation' in the Persian Gulf in 1987-8 is a crisis in which the US needed both political support and military help from its European allies by means of the multilateral involvement to give the reflagging operation legitimacy and to win wider public support. The US therefore requested Britain to act as the bridge to bring the Europeans in line with the US. However, along with other European allies, Britain agreed with the US that the explosive situation in the Gulf was a serious matter but did not perceive the Iranian challenge as a direct attack on British interests or as a real threat to the international order. Accordingly, the British government openly rejected the US request for mine-hunting assistance in the Gulf. It was only when the crisis later escalated as the Iranians further mined the Straits of Hormuz, which constituted a much more direct assault on British interests, that Thatcher complied and began to lobby her European allies. For a time the functioning of the Special Relationship was threatened by the blunt British rejection of the American request for assistance. It is notable that the US made public its requests and thus risked an equally public rebuff. This gives the whole affair a political importance it might otherwise not have had. In terms of its scale, the US reflagging operation is obviously not a crisis of the same high political content or tension as the other three crises discussed in this study. It was a lower level crisis by virtue of its low casualties and limited violence. As compared with the other three crises in this period, the issue involved was not a core security issue to either British or the US and was therefore less

important.

A pattern of crisis behaviour runs through this troubled point in relations between Britain and the United States. As Table 6.2 (See *Table 6.2 - Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Reflagging Operation*) shows, differences resulted from the divergence of each side's interests, which then built up into different perceptions of the crisis, leading the two states to have misleading expectations of each other and finally producing indignant feelings. Fortunately, the situation dramatically altered and, as a result, a resolution was reached which prevented

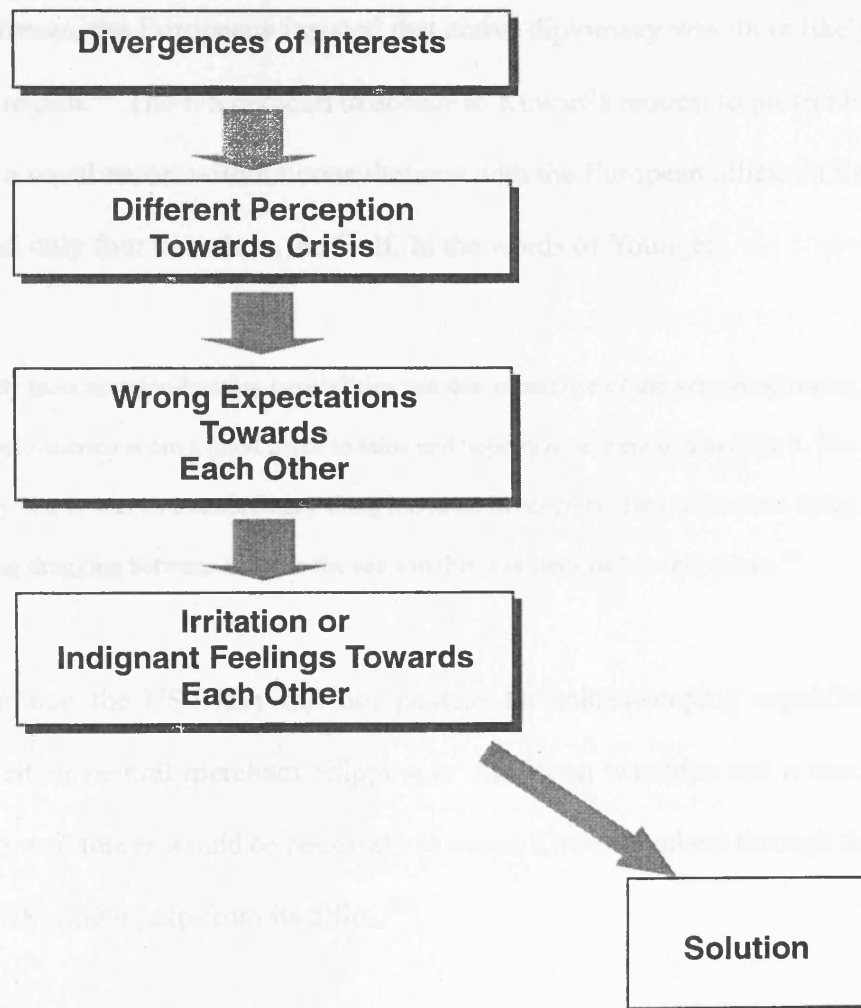
the undermining of the foundation of the Special Relationship. From here, we might question why these two allies initially failed to manage this crisis to their mutual advantage and what made them so reluctant to resolve their differences? To find out the answer, it is necessary first to understand the stakes of each side in the Gulf affair.

Sources of the Crisis

The North Atlantic Treaty had clearly specified the defence of Western Europe and the North Atlantic area as the primary concern of the alliance, but it did not preclude the possibility of allied actions outside Western Europe. Since 1980 the United States had tried to convince its allies that NATO should include potential contingencies in Southwest Asia in its planning cycle. Congress and the US public also demanded that the Europeans share

Table 6.2

Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Reflagging Operation



the burden of defending the Gulf. After all, Western Europe was obviously much more dependent upon Middle East oil than the United States. However, the European allies shared a different view on this issue. European leaders were uncertain about the usefulness of military intervention in the Gulf and argued that the greatest threat to the regular supply of oil was likely to come from the intrusion of outside military forces in the Gulf. Instead of active expeditionary forces, the Europeans insisted that active diplomacy was more likely to be effective in this region.⁵²⁷ The US decided to accede to Kuwait's request to protect its tankers and provided a naval escort without consultations with the European allies. At the time, the US Navy had only four vessels in the Gulf. In the words of Younger:

The Americans virtually have no mine-hunting capabilities and that is because of the very good reason that the Atlantic coast of America is not a good place to mine and nobody is near enough to mine it. The only mine hunting they had ... was an extraordinary thing based on helicopters. Two helicopters flying together with something dragging between them in the sea and this was supposed to find mines.⁵²⁸

It soon became clear that the US Navy did not possess the minesweeping capability necessary to protect either neutral merchant shipping or American warships and a much larger deployment of naval forces would be necessary to escort Kuwaiti tankers through the Gulf. Therefore, the US sought help from its allies.⁵²⁹

The general motivation for the US intervention in the Gulf seemed to lie in its overall

⁵²⁷ Quoted in G. Stein, J., 'The Wrong Strategy In The Right Place', *International Security*, Winter 1988/89, Vol.13, No. 3, p.159.

⁵²⁸ Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1998, 138-142 Holborn, London.

⁵²⁹ Originally the Navy had the USS *Stark*, but it was attacked by Iraq in May. So senior officers demanded a much larger deployment of ships. Two months later, the size of the US force had increased to 40 vessels.

strategic and geopolitical interests. In terms of strategic interests, the reason given by the US administration for the 'reflagging' plan was quite clear: to prevent Soviet influence increasing in the Gulf, an area of great strategic interest to the Soviets because of Western dependency on its oil supplies. Since the Kuwaiti Government had approached both the United States and the Soviet Union with the request to protect their oil tankers, and since the Soviet Union had told Kuwait it would help, there was a concern in the US Administration that once the Soviets were allowed to act as Kuwait's protector, a dramatic increase in Soviet military and diplomatic influence in the Persian Gulf was imminent. This was clearly inimical to those interests of the US and Western Europe. Stopping the Soviets from increasing their presence in the Persian Gulf therefore became the key objective of the Reagan Administration. The US feared that if the US did not respond positively to the Kuwaitis, they would have gone to the Soviet Union who would immediately seize this golden opportunity and quickly 'increase substantially their presence in the Gulf'.⁵³⁰ As Murphy said,

They [the Kuwaitis] would have given them [the Soviets] access to facilities which they currently do not have in the Gulf. ... The Soviets presently have no access to facilities in the Gulf. Their lines of supply are long, their lines of supply are difficult, and we must keep it that way.⁵³¹

Weinberger explained:

The Soviets have always wanted the warm water port. They have always wanted, since oil was

⁵³⁰ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.49.

⁵³¹ *Congressional Record*, H201-29, p.76.

discovered in the region, to assure either that they had full access to it or that they had the opportunity to deny access to the West, knowing how dependent the West is on the oil, and what disruptions this could cause, both economically and ultimately militarily.⁵³²

The Gulf states, originally friendly towards the West, would not be able to deny basing and port facilities to their new protectors. Therefore, the US chose to escalate its commitment because it wished to deny the Soviet Union the opportunity to introduce additional naval forces into the Gulf. Weinberger in particular believed that if the United States did not accede to the request from Kuwait, the American people would later blame the Reagan Administration for 'losing the Gulf' to the Soviet Union.⁵³³ Weinberger said:

...if we did not assist in the movement of the oil shipments, the Soviet Union would be more than happy to replace us as the guarantor of the security of the small Gulf states. ... It would give the Soviet Union a tremendous strategic advantage which I did not want them to have.⁵³⁴

The National Security Adviser, Frank Carlucci, also warned on 16 June 1987, that if the United States did not act, the allies would be faced with the choice of either 'giving in to Iranian intimidation or accepting Soviet offers of protection'.⁵³⁵

The second important US motivation in the reflagging decision was to 'maintain the freedom of international waterways and to ensure a free flow of oil through the Gulf' because, according to Shultz:

⁵³² *Ibid* p.51.

⁵³³ *The New York Times*, 9 October 1987.

⁵³⁴ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.273.

⁵³⁵ Quoted in Rubin, B., 'Drowning in The Gulf', *Foreign Policy*, No. 69, Winter 1987-88, p.124.

the principle of freedom of navigation in the Gulf is of paramount importance for us [the US] and for others ... The free flow of oil and other traffic through the Strait of Hormuz must continue unimpeded.⁵³⁶

Initially the tanker war had had a minimal effect on the international petroleum market because the war did not reduce the world's oil supply. The situation soon changed when Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz in 1986 and escalated the tanker war by mining the international open waters and attacking international shipping. By November 1987 there had been more than 375 attacks on shipping, and more than 200 seamen had been killed.⁵³⁷ Kuwait's ability to export its oil and its domestic economy was thus being seriously imperilled. The US objective of ensuring the free flow of oil through the Persian Gulf seemed to be seriously threatened by the Iranian action. The US therefore 'are there to deter acts of aggression against perfectly legitimate shipping by countries that are neutral.'⁵³⁸

As to the argument that, compared with Western Europe, the US had enough oil and that it was unimportant to the United States whether oil shipments moved in the Gulf as long as the US were not seriously affected, Weinberger explained:

Oil is a fungible commodity. Any loss of oil to European and Japanese markets would affect US's oil supply because the United States would then all be competing for supplies from a smaller pool. Secondly, a very large percentage of the oil in the Gulf is lifted, shipped and refined through and by

⁵³⁶ Quoted in Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.929.

⁵³⁷ See Rubin, 'Drowning In The Gulf', p.127.

⁵³⁸ Quoted in *The Times*, 7 August 1987. Also see Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, p.929.

American oil companies. Thus closure of the Strait of Hormuz would directly affect American companies that pay US corporate taxes and employ US citizens. There is one market for oil, and it is a global market.⁵³⁹

However, the British held a different view on these points. According to Sir Antony Acland, the British Government 'had some doubts both about the policy and its practicality and preferred not to be alone with the Americans in the operation' for it was unclear to the British what the US administration's true intentions were.⁵⁴⁰ Although the Americans claimed that their action was prompted by the desire for freedom of shipping in the area, the British were suspicious of this and thought that it was most likely that the Americans had no wish to see their current role being superseded by the Soviet Union, or that they were seeking an opportunity to retaliate against Iran for earlier humiliations. Was the US truly in need of British minesweepers for operational reasons, or did the US just want to get its allies involved in this crisis in order to 'share the political burden' and show the world that the US had not been deserted in the Gulf?

According to *The Times* on 4 August, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff planned air strikes against Iranian military and economic targets if there was any Iranian action against the convoys because America had to take decisive action to reassure its European and Arab allies after Iran-Arm Sales-Contra scandal.⁵⁴¹ Was this operation simply a temporary show

⁵³⁹ Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, pp.274-5.

⁵⁴⁰ Correspondence with Anthony Acland, 5 May 1998.

⁵⁴¹ Some within the US administration, started with the National Security Adviser McFarlane and later Poindexter, involved in negotiations over the sales of US weapons to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages held by the Iranians. Since Reagan had strong desires for the Congress to have Congressionally-authorized funding, they therefore took this as the way to get it without troubling about Congress's refusal to fund the Contras or the legality of the action without informing Reagan. The confidence of the Americans in Reagan and his Administration as a whole was badly shaken by the incident.

of force against the Iranians in order to restore domestic support for President Reagan after the debacle of Irangate? Or perhaps, as Weinberger said, the US chose to intervene in part because it wished to deny the Soviet Union the opportunity to introduce additional naval forces into the Gulf. Or perhaps what the US had in mind was a steady, long-term policy of keeping the Gulf open to international shipping, and of being prepared to suffer the losses which this might cause? If it were the latter, how were the British to know whether, as in the case of Lebanon, American casualties in the Gulf would also be followed by an American withdrawal? Another factor which made the United States decide to offer its protection to the Kuwaiti tankers was the acquisition by Iran of the Silkworm surface-to-surface anti-ship missile. Before Iran acquired this kind of missiles from the People's Republic of China, Iran did not have a weapon with the explosive power that could easily sink a large oil tanker. Now with this weapon, Iran could conceivably close the Strait of Hormuz. According to US intelligence, Iran had deployed a number of actual Silkworm sites along the coast, both east and north in the Strait, that were ideally suited for targeting any ship in the Strait. The United States therefore considered that the installation of these missiles would be threatening to US interests in the region and thought that it had no choice but to respond pre-emptively because this was one of the best ways of preventing a far more risky task later.

The final reasons for the reflagging decision were the issue of the leadership of the free world and the need to restore US credibility in the Gulf and the desire to deter Iranian aggression and Islamic fundamentalist revolution against the conservative monarchies, thereby, preserving friendly governments in the major oil-producing states. Since the

Iran-Iraq war had broken out, Iran had blamed Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates for straying from Islam, befriending the United States and supporting Iraq. It also subsidised and trained small revolutionary and terrorist groups against these oil-rich but vulnerable states. In response, these states formed the GCC in 1981 which bought billions of dollars' worth of high-technology US arms. But, when facing a serious Iranian attack, they still could not defend themselves. On the other hand, these regimes had ambiguous feelings about sheltering behind the US and did not trust the US because of the way the US abandoned the Shah after years of close relations. As for the United States, to establish a strong relationship with the Gulf Arab states was very difficult. However, 'to betray this friendship through inaction in the face of danger would not only seriously damage US credibility but also set back US relations in the region for as many decades as it had taken to build them.'⁵⁴² The US therefore viewed this crisis as an opportunity to restore their credibility in the Gulf.

The need to restore American credibility in the region was understood in London and it was in the interests of Britain that the Gulf should be kept open to international shipping. However, the British felt that the US policy of re-registering Kuwaiti tankers under the US flag only 'created a privileged class of 11 tankers carrying a relatively small portion of Gulf oil exports, it did not contribute greatly to protecting commerce in the Gulf'.⁵⁴³ This was especially the case as Kuwait, the first Gulf oil states to establish relations with the Soviet Union. It was the most distant Gulf oil country from the United States and had consistently attacked American policy in the Middle East in the past. Furthermore, Britain and other

⁵⁴² Weinberger, *Fighting For Peace*, p.276.

⁵⁴³ For the arguments, see Rubin, p.128.

European countries were devoting diplomatic efforts at the UN, believing that the sending of minesweepers would only damage their efforts and threaten to escalate the tension. Following the present course, the US was obliged to use force if the Iranians attacked the Kuwaiti tankers. At best, the US could expect to successfully fulfil this operation for the next several years while at worst, it might find itself trapped in a process of unintended escalation, finally ending in war with Iran. The American strategy was therefore dangerous in the eyes of the British Government because it could not only provoke the actions that originally the US wanted to deter, but also risked entrapping the US and its allies into a process of uncontrolled escalation.

In the light of these issues, despite the embarrassment to the US, Britain declined the US request to send minesweepers to help clear international sea lanes in the Gulf. Britain was anxious to maintain as unprovocative a stance as possible in the Gulf in the belief that it could contribute more effectively to a solution of the Iran-Iraq conflict by diplomatic means, thus avoiding becoming entangled in wider operations with objectives which were far from clear and the means of implementation which seemed inadequately thought out.

The different perceptions of the US and Britain towards this crisis meant that there were a lot of concerns on the British side that 'the Americans were even provoking a clash in the Gulf' by reason of what Iran needed was containment not the threat of escalation.⁵⁴⁴ The Americans felt the opposite way. They 'took the mining incident as a high-intensity crisis and our [the US] decision to reflag those ships was taken for very good reasons'.⁵⁴⁵ These

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Raymond Seitz, April 7, 1998.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

discordant perceptions thus produced the wrong expectations of each side towards 'alliance commitment'. Once again Thatcher was entangled in the dilemma of being asked to accept an open-ended commitment to an American policy of which the consequences had not been calculated. Domestically there were strong critics from the Labour Opposition; internationally there were pressures from the other European allies on Thatcher not to send minesweepers to assist the US. On the one hand, she shared the fears of the European leaders about both the usefulness of military intervention in the Gulf. Nevertheless, Western Europe was obviously much more dependent upon Middle East oil than the United States while the intrusion of outside military forces into the Gulf would only be more likely to escalate the crisis and thus, disrupt the regular supply of oil from the Middle East.

On the issue of the Western alliance, it was obvious that, by entering into an expensive and open-ended military commitment, the United States had pinned itself into a corner. Britain was under no obligation to accede to the US request on this matter since there was no Anglo-American naval agreement on common forces outside the NATO area. The unwillingness of the British government to involve itself heavily in the Gulf was understandable: Britain had heavy NATO commitments, already spent a larger proportion of its GNP on defence than most of its North Atlantic allies and did not have the resources of a superpower. On the other hand, however, to help the US clear mines in the international waters - especially when all the other allies of the US had declined their request - was in Britain's interests and would be a golden opportunity to display Thatcher's Atlanticist commitment. The special relationship is not genetic, nor even culturally

unshakeable. If Thatcher was to preserve the special relationship and her dedication to the alliance, she had to provide Washington with more than rhetoric. If Britain had refused the American request, it would have been a serious disservice to the whole NATO alliance and perhaps harmed the bedrock of the Special Relationship between Britain and the US. Therefore, in the words of Acland:

Just as America increasingly does not like to act alone, so Britain - as a member of the European Union - prefers to have European Allies associated with any operation.⁵⁴⁶

Britain thus decided to lobby the other European allies. However, according to Younger, the only problem was that,

The French would object to anything that suggested a NATO operation in out-of-area, in any places beyond the territory of Europe. The only reason they would agree to do it was because we did it through the WEU because the French they very badly want somebody to collectively defend Europe, that is not NATO.... So they can see this as just a very good start to this⁵⁴⁷

Under the circumstances the Americans were urgently in need of mine hunting capabilities and, according to Seitz, did 'not care about the politics'.⁵⁴⁸ Britain suggested putting the operation under the umbrella of the WEU and the other five nations of the WEU agreed and it went very successfully.⁵⁴⁹ The reason for choosing the WEU was, in the words of Powell, Thatcher's foreign policy adviser:

⁵⁴⁶ Correspondence with Sir Antony Acland, 5 May 1998.

⁵⁴⁷ Interview with George Younger, 7 April 1998.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Raymond Seitz, 7 April 1998.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Frankly it was a desire to involve the other European allies. It has always been our ambition to make the Europeans raise their eyes, not think just about internal European problems. We'd actually like to see Europe prepared to play a rather wider role in the world. ...so we saw this as a chance to achieve that.⁵⁵⁰

While Acland explained:

At that time NATO could not easily act out of the NATO area. So the WEU seemed the appropriate umbrella Organization.⁵⁵¹

Regarding the results, Weinberger said:

It made practically no difference in the results whether they technically used the WEU as a forum. As far as the results were concerned, the British were there beside us and we were working together, there was no change in the result other than the effectiveness of the co-operation or the collaboration because with some WEU contacts to it.⁵⁵²

By acceding to the US request to send British minesweepers to the Gulf and by successfully involving the other Europeans, Thatcher proved that Britain was still a worthy partner for the US and had the capability to be 'America's *universal* number two'.⁵⁵³ After all, to offer a minesweeping facility to the Americans was a gesture which could easily be made - and would do much to strengthen both the special relationship and the country's

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with Sir Charles Powell, 27 April 1998.

⁵⁵¹ Correspondence with Sir Antony Acland, 5 May 1998.

⁵⁵² Telephone conversation with Caspar Weinberger, 5 March 1998.

⁵⁵³ Quoted in Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role*, p.186.

international reputation. Exposing American weakness and American humiliation would only mean a loss to Britain.

Adverse reaction in Britain to the American reflagging operation in the Persian Gulf also raised the issue of the adequacy of consultation between the United States and Britain on significant foreign policy issues. This kind of lack of consultation on the military action in the Gulf war had a parallel when in April 1986, President Reagan asked for Thatcher's permission to use the US bases in the UK. The US made its decision to offer American protection to Kuwaiti tankers without prior consultation with Britain. Consultation only took place when later, the US asked the UK to participate in the US naval escort operations in the Gulf. The United States had once again pursued its own policies almost without regard for Britain's opinion.

Conclusion

The allied reflagging operation in the Persian Gulf was eventually a remarkable example of alliance co-operation. This crisis showed that, when US military resources alone were inadequate and could not cope with the threats at hand, Britain was willing to play its role in supporting the US in carrying its burden. Both sides also learnt that the costs of 'going it alone' were too high for either side to be able to bear for very long. It thus provided a successful litmus test of Alliance cohesion. However, the initial British caution and the existence of disagreements and frictions between the two states showed that commitments

to consultation could only be tested during a crisis. This example of the Iranian threats to shipping in the Persian Gulf shows that, on occasions, when American interests were contrary to British interests, the British would not automatically support the Americans and provide backing for the American position even when expressly requested to do so. It also suggests that the co-ordination of different interests and co-operation among allies will be difficult to achieve and occur only on an *ad hoc* basis.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

One of the most salient points of difference between the two types of crises - crises between adversaries and crises between allies - is that the risk in a crisis between allies is less about the danger of the two going to war with each other, or of one side seeking unilateral gains at the expense of the other. Rather, it is about the dangers to the functioning or survival of an alliance, the issue of burden-sharing, or sharing gains and risks. Most of the literature on the subject looks at crises between adversaries, whereas this thesis has focused on crises between allies and examined crisis behaviour between friends when there is a problem resulting from misunderstanding, misperception or conflicting interests.

It should be remembered that, although the allies' common interests were sufficient to induce them to ally in the beginning, their divergent and conflicting interests will threaten to pull them apart. In order to preserve the alliance, as Snyder points out, there is a need to reconcile both the competitive and the common interests between allies by 'either joint or unilateral action in order to maximise joint benefits and minimise costs to one's independent interests'.⁵⁵⁴ An alliance crisis, in this sense, is important because it not only has the potential for systemic change but also has far-reaching implications for the future relationship. It signals dangers and opportunities for members of an alliance; dangers of dealignment and opportunities to strengthen an alliance. Although 'crises do not recur in mechanically exact or independent patterns' and each of them is unique, identifying the

⁵⁵⁴ Snyder, Glenn H., *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) pp.165-6.

similarities from different circumstances or causes and learning lessons may be helpful for coping with future problems.⁵⁵⁵

The preceding chapters focused on the origins and development of the four crises, in which events leading up to each crisis, the two allies' interests, their perceptions towards the threat, and the relationship between them were identified and analysed. Given that each of the preceding chapters ended with a 'analyses and conclusions' section, the main object of this chapter is not to provide an overall statement of the major developments in the Anglo-American relationship during the four crises. Rather, it is to review the substantive and theoretical arguments and lessons that have been made in previous chapters. By summing up these lessons drawn from the four case studies, it is hoped that they will offer some speculation as to how the future Anglo-American relationship might operate in times of crisis.

I. NATURE OF CRISES AND PATTERNS OF CRISIS BEHAVIOUR

The four crises in many respects had similarities; however, in substance, the extent of violence and the issues involved in each were unique. Among the four crises, the Falklands War must be considered to be a high level crisis by reason of the fact that it involved core security issues relating to the territory of the United Kingdom. The interests of the US conflicted with Britain on how to respond to the threat and, as explained before, this initial

⁵⁵⁵ Young, O. R., *The Politics of Force: Bargaining during International Crises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968) pp.41-4.

discord between the two allies was caused by 'the fear of abandonment' and 'the fear of entrapment', as the US was trying to avoid being dragged into a war over interests that it did not share. Britain was offended by the ambiguous position of the US towards its adversary.⁵⁵⁶ Finally, in terms of *realpolitik* and considering its own needs in this alliance system, the interest in preserving the alliance with Britain prevailed and the United States, who risked losing potential broader foreign policy interests and friendship in Latin America, provided military help to Britain to ensure it would win. US ties with Argentina were, as a result, jeopardised by supporting Britain. Although some may argue that the case of the Falklands was not quite a 'resurrection of the old wartime special relationship',⁵⁵⁷ it did prove to be an extraordinary case of the closeness of the Anglo-American special relationship as inter-service informal co-operation between the two allies clearly went beyond 'the scope of customary patterns of co-operation'.⁵⁵⁸

Compared to the Falklands War, the US invasion of Grenada was a lesser crisis, of short duration, falling short of war. The US approached the crisis by viewing the left-wing regime in Grenada to be a real threat to its traditional hegemony in the region. Grenada might have threatened US national security, due to the fact that each island in the Caribbean could offer a potential beachhead for a hostile power or it could be a potential Soviet base from which American strategic shipping routes could be attacked. Britain viewed this crisis from another respect, and tried to localise the problem within a regional context. The fact that US forces finally invaded the island, on the pretext of protecting the safety of

⁵⁵⁶ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p.181.

⁵⁵⁷ For instance, see Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role*, p.180.

⁵⁵⁸ Quoted in Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.200.

American citizens, without informing the British, resulted in major discord in the Anglo-American relationship and caused enormous embarrassment and irritation in Britain. Though the effects of the crisis did not undermine the bedrock of the special relationship, it was a negative instance with serious implications for the Anglo-American relationship.

In the case of the Libyan incident, the roles of the two countries were the reverse of those in the Falklands. The US air raids on Libya represented a relatively medium level crisis with minor clashes, and the issue involved - fighting terrorism - was not as easy to define. In this case, the two allies had a joint interest in fighting terrorism but disagreed about their joint strategy. This was a crisis where the Americans did not need British direct military involvement, but sought British political support in order to share the international fallout which arose from the crisis. While the British were under no obligation to assist the US in such an out-of- (NATO) area operation, what Britain risked in this case was not so much its relations with Libya and the Arab states in the region, but its relationship with its European allies. The strikes resulted in a split within NATO with Britain and the US on the one side and the other NATO states on the other. However, since the permanence of the alliance is not guaranteed, as Snyder argues, in order to 'maintain its attractiveness of the alliance for the partner, the allies may wish to establish a reputation for loyalty'.⁵⁵⁹ In this case, the US had been let down once, as Britain had failed to support the US in Grenada. In order to correct the image the British finally came into line with US policy and restored its reputation for loyalty.

⁵⁵⁹ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p.184.

A crisis of a similar kind was the US 'Reflagging Operation' in the Persian Gulf in 1987-8. Although the duration was rather longer, the reflagging operation was viewed as a lower level crisis, because there was limited violence and the issues concerned oil and burden-sharing debates, rather than core security issues. In this case, the US found itself alone in its attempt to protect Kuwaiti oil tankers from being attacked by Iran. The United States therefore needed not only political support but also military help from Britain and other European allies. However, the American perception of the threat was not shared by its European allies, even Britain. The British, along with other European allies, were afraid of being dragged into an open-ended operation. This resulted in an intra-alliance crisis as the allies, despite having a joint interest in maintaining free passage in international waters, disagreed over their military actions.⁵⁶⁰ The situation soon changed and, again, influenced by the need to establish its reputation for loyalty, Britain decided to commit its naval forces to the region in support of the United States. Furthermore, in order to bring other European allies to join the US, the British acted, as Baylis points out, as a sort of 'a bridge between the US and Europe' and its function was to 'explain American policies to her European allies and transmit European anxieties to the United States'.⁵⁶¹

Given that the four crises varied in nature, took place on different levels and involved different issues, in many respects they highlighted the co-operative and non-cooperative behaviour of the two countries and illustrated issues which the two allies tend to agree and disagree upon. On the one hand, there were examples of extraordinary co-operation

⁵⁶⁰ See Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p.171.

⁵⁶¹ Quoted in Baylis, J., *British Defence policy. Striking The Right Balance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) p.44.

between the two sides, as in the cases of the Falklands War, US air raids on Libya and the reflagging operation. These all reflected a shared appreciation of collective actions when facing threats which impacted on their interests and positions in the world. On the other hand, there were disagreements which led to the relationship reaching its lowest point, as in the case of the US intervention of Grenada, due to the fact that the US did not inform the British in advance. However, when one considers the long-standing partnership, common interests, shared tradition and culture in the Anglo-American special relationship, this discord was in reality just a minor irritation in a basically solid and consistent alliance.

Regarding the Model, to what extent is this an accurate representation of the pattern of crisis behaviour for crises between allies? Proceeding from this, is it possible to find a '*pattern*' of crisis behaviour between Britain and America from these four cases, or was each crisis dealt with on an entirely *ad hoc* basis? As we have seen, the preceding chapters have explained the process of each crisis in detail showing how each crisis originated, escalated and then de-escalated. According to the Model - the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviours - crises could be divided into six phases. A typical alliance crisis is caused by the conflicting interests ('*Divergences of Interests*' - *Phase 1*) of the two countries. Typically the allies share the same information, (although it might come from different sources and intelligence), but they draw different conclusions from it and are therefore led to perceive the crisis in different ways and consequently this results in '*Different Perceptions*' (*Phase 2*) towards the crisis. Each side then estimates the reaction of the other party by assessing the other's interests that are at stake. Since these estimates are based on different perceptions towards the crisis, each side develops '*Wrong Expectations*' (*Phase 3*)

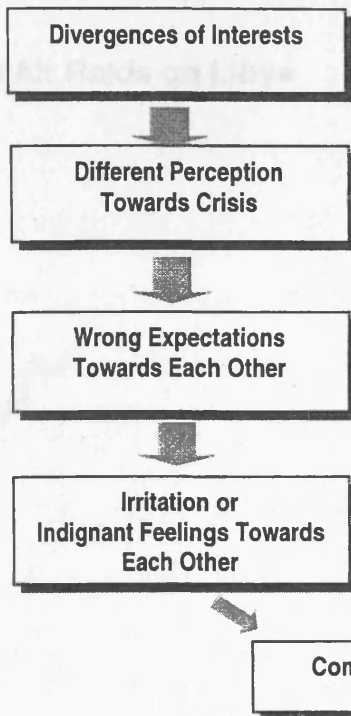
about the other's response or the degree of support that the other will provide, such as wishful thinking, which then causes miscalculation and brings out '*Irritation or Indignant Feeling*' (Phase 4) towards the other party. All these factors then draw the two sides into a '*Bargaining Period*' or more seriously, a '*Confrontation Period*' (Phase 5) and then to the threshold of crisis. It should be noted that the process of crisis may recur and in the phase of Bargaining or Confrontation Period, there may be different levels of intensity with peaks caused by provocative movements or troughs resulted from the possibility of outcomes. After a period of time, the process of crisis might come to a final phase with four possible outcomes (Phase 6)- '*Nature of Relationship Transformed*', '*Dispute and Discord*', '*Compromise*' and '*Solutions*'. Once a settlement is found, there may be no change in the alliance. If there appeared to be a compromise, the interests of the two parties have coincided. If there is dispute between the allies, then the threat of transforming the nature of the alliance relationship will not happen, however, their relationship could be damaged by the discord in some way. Finally if no settlement is found, the nature of their relationship would be transformed and the outcome might be a de-alignment or re-alignment, or more seriously, allies may become adversaries.

Looking back at these four crises, to what extent can we see evidence of this pattern in each case which has been analysed? Furthermore, concerning the Anglo-American special relationship, did this make the way in which the two allies dealt with the crises different? To what extent was their knowledge of the interests of each other influential in the crisis? In the case of the Falklands, it was found that the fact that the US and Britain share a special relationship did affect the perceptions of the two allies and, therefore, made the way they

dealt with the crisis different. The process of this crisis started with the divergent interests of the two allies as the British wanted to regain the Islands while the US wanted to maintain its substantial interests in Central and South America and, as a result, was confused about whether to support the British or to be neutral. (See *Table 7.1 - the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Four Crises*) For the British, the Falkland Islands concerned the most vital issues as it involved Britain's honour and world reputation. Furthermore, the Thatcher government could have fallen if the outcome of the crisis was not accepted by the British public. These implicit factors were overlooked by the Americans and resulted in misunderstandings within the Reagan Administration while some even perceived that the British action of sending the Task Force to the South Atlantic, and disregarding the American interests in maintaining a broad anti-Communist alliance, was a foolish and inconsiderate action. These different perceptions towards the crisis and each other thus caused the initial discord between the two allies: different perceptions led Britain and the US to have wrong expectations of the other. The British wanted to solve the dispute, if necessary by force, and believed the US, their most intimate and powerful ally, would understand this and support them in their hour of need. When America, because of its own strategic interests, overlooked this element and declared itself neutral, Britain was first surprised and then indignant towards its ally.

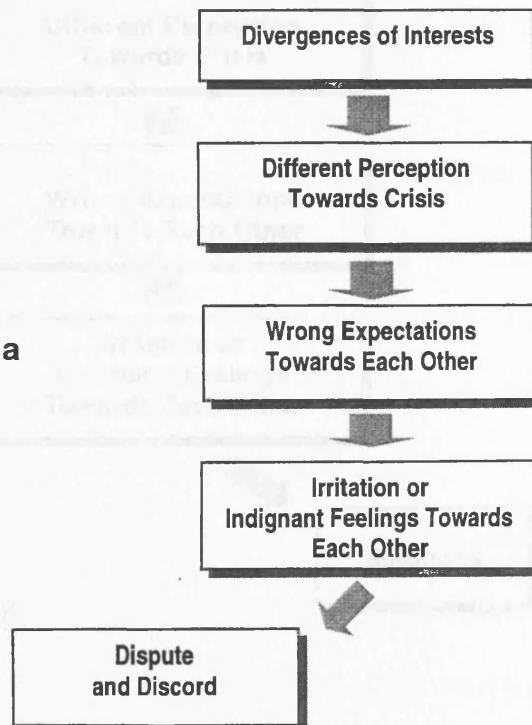
Table 7.1

Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Four Crises

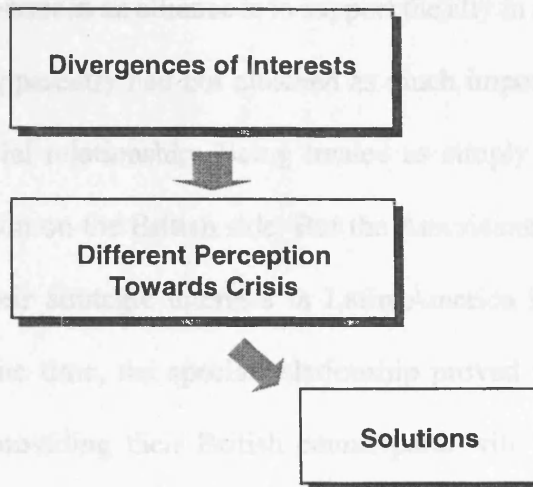


The Falklands War

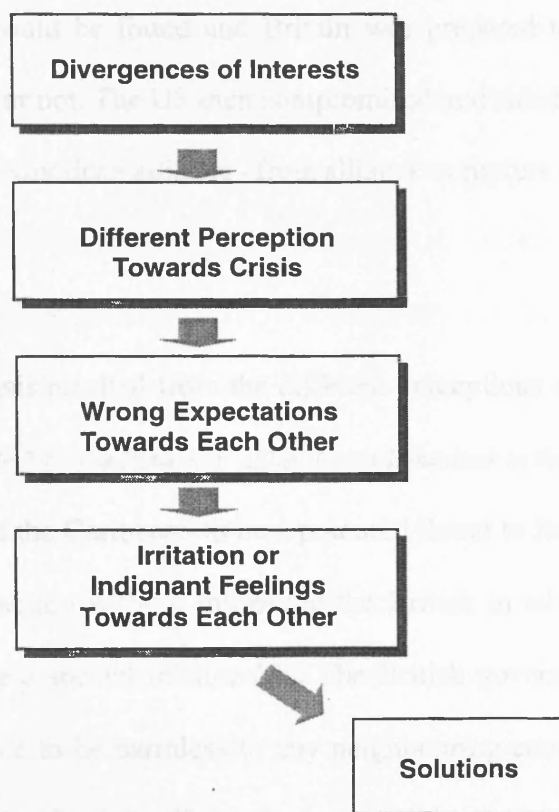
US Invasion of Grenada



US Air Raids on Libya



Reflagging Operation



Of course, one way of showing one's honour in an alliance is to support the ally in a dispute with a third party. The United States apparently had not attached as much importance as Britain to its commitment to the special relationship. Being treated as simply just one among many allies caused huge irritation on the British side. But the Americans also felt discontented, as they believed that their strategic interests in Latin America had been ignored by the British. Yet, at the same time, the special relationship proved its worth because the Pentagon was privately providing their British counterparts with supplies, weapons and intelligence throughout the crisis. Concerning the extent of the US assistance, most interviewees consulted in this study, from both sides of the Atlantic, were convinced that the US would not have done that for any country other than Britain. The crisis came to a turning point because no settlement could be found and Britain was prepared to act whether the US formally supported them or not. The US then compromised and sided with Britain. The transformation of the Anglo-American alliance - from alliance to rupture - was therefore avoided.

Similarly, in the case of Grenada, the crisis resulted from the different perceptions of the two allies towards the situation. (*See Table 7.1 - the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Four Crises*) The US perceived Communism in the Caribbean to be a potential threat to its own national security. It consequently took action without informing the British in advance despite the fact that the two allies share a special relationship. The British government perceived the left-wing Grenadian regime to be harmless to any neighbouring countries and expected to be consulted by their ally. The US officials had assured them on several occasions that nothing would happen without consultation. Since each side was unclear

about the other's interests and intentions, especially when the crisis arose at such short notice, the British thus had the wrong expectation of the Americans' reaction. The US invasion proved that the British Government should not have relied so much on the normal information channels, as the British had been left in the dark about the American intentions and the extent of the United States and Caribbean planning for a military invasion. Once they knew that the invasion had taken place, the British felt betrayed and irritated with the inadequate consultation from the Americans and with their deliberate policy of keeping their closest ally uninformed. The Americans were also disappointed, as they expected Britain to act in accordance with US policy. The process of crisis behaviour thus came to the 'Bargaining or Confrontation Period'. In the end, despite disagreement between the two sides, what happened in this case did not weaken the essential substance of the Anglo-American alliance and the transformation from alliance to rupture did not take place.

The case of Libya showed that, although Britain and the US may share the same interests in Europe, outside Europe there seemed a different position. In this crisis, the US and Britain's interests differed as the two allies had employed a different strategy to deal with Libyan-sponsored terrorism. (*See Table 7.1 - the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Four Crises*) Those divergences of interests resulted in different perceptions between the two sides towards the crisis. The British did not perceive Libya to be serious threat. As a result, they disagreed with the US on how to meet the threat from Libya and with the American policy of military reprisal against terrorism. Britain was faced with the dilemma of whether to act along with its European allies and concentrate on economic sanctions or, for the sake of its reputation of loyalty, to support the American idea of retaliatory strikes. These different

perceptions did not lead to wrong expectations, indignant feelings or confrontation between the two sides as the British thought that since this crisis involved an East-West issue, the US would have been offended if it were deserted by all its allies. Under these circumstances, Britain ultimately decided to come into line with the American action.

The case of the Reflagging Operation also showed the divergence of each side's interests as Britain disagreed with the United States on what tactics to employ in diplomatic and military confrontations, especially when the crisis took place outside the NATO area. (See *Table 7.1 - the Pattern of Allies' Crisis Behaviour in the Four Crises*) Different perceptions towards the crisis then built up between the two countries as Britain was unwilling to be trapped into an uncontrolled escalation, while the United States did not appreciate the British fear of being dragged into the Gulf. The different perceptions then led each side to harbour wrong expectations about the degree of support that the other ally would provide and confirms what Neustadt argues - 'miscommunication between the two allies would be exacerbated by the friendship' between the two governments - as the US was so confident that the British would understand their position that, without probing British opinion first, they made their requests publicly which resulted in an equally public rebuff giving this case a political importance it might otherwise not have had.⁵⁶² Consequently the blunt British rejection of the American request made the US feel indignant and disappointed. Fortunately the situation changed dramatically and a settlement was found when Britain and other European allies decided to accede to the US request to send the minesweepers to the Persian Gulf, thus avoiding weakening the foundation of the Anglo-American alliance.

⁵⁶² Neustadt, R., *Alliance Politics*, p.73.

According to the above analysis, it is clear that the process of two allies' crisis behaviour, distilled from each crisis, is consistent with what is suggested in the Model. Based on these four cases, a '*pattern*' of crisis behaviour between Britain and the US is thus established. In the light of this pattern of crisis behaviour, what are the implications for alliance management? First of all, by looking at these different sorts of crises, it is found that the way the decision-makers '*perceive a threat*' is at the core of both decision-making and behaviour in a crisis. When a threat is perceived, either real or imaginary, the decision-maker will take action. Perception is in this sense important because it is variable and occurs between an event and a reaction in the crisis. It involves not only the estimate of probabilities about a possible solution to the crisis, but also the anticipation of the decision-maker as to what the ally's reaction will be. Although two allies may use the same information, they will have to pick up the same signals from an event if they are to agree on the nature of the threat. Furthermore, even if they noticed the right signals, they still have to interpret them correctly if co-operation is to be maintained. The problem here is that the meaning of events is not usually clear and the way the decision-maker interprets the information inevitably involves many uncontrollable factors, such as the decision-maker's past experience or their own interests in the event. The allies therefore may react very differently to the same event and as a result, seem to overlook the other's interest. As Roberts points out, A may feel threatened by B not because B has issued a real threat but because it has the capability to make an actual threat.⁵⁶³ However, A's allies may not share its perception of threat simply because they are not in the same position. Thus, to prevent

⁵⁶³ See Roberts, J. M., *Decision-Making during International Crises* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) p.53.

the worst from happening, each side must fully inform its ally about its intentions and actions and these messages should be expressed as unambiguously as possible. Furthermore, allies must keep the communication channels as open as possible and the ways of communicating with each other in times of crises also need to be increased.

In the American invasion of Grenada for instance, the danger of the Marxist regime was perceived by the Reagan Administration as a threat to its vital national interests as well as the US hegemony in the region. On the contrary, Britain did not perceive it in the same way at all. The reason why there was a difference in their perception is partly because what Grenada posed at the time was a 'potential' threat which made the Americans feel threatened, simply because Grenada might have the capability to make an actual threat. For instance, as mentioned before, Grenada could be a possible beachhead for the Soviets and Cubans in an extreme situation, with its airport posing a real threat to both regional and US national security. This fact, that Grenada could be a potential threat to American national security, was overlooked by the British government because the threat was not an actual but a potential threat. Under this circumstance, it turned out to be a major source of discord.

The initial friction between Britain and the United States about America's even-handed approach in the Falklands War offers another good example to sustain this argument. In this case, one potential implication of the Argentinian invasion was that Thatcher could have been forced to resign if there had been no response to the seizure of British territory. In this circumstance, the issue involved was obviously very important and for that matter Britain

was prepared to act despite the American's reservation. At the same time, the British thought the US fully understood this and therefore expected to be supported by the US. On the American side, the fact that Thatcher's political fate was tied to the resolution of the crisis had not been taken into consideration, simply because the Americans did not perceive this possibility. This resulted in a misunderstanding between the two sides and showed how different perceptions could impact upon crisis behaviour.

Secondly, as stated before, the dangers of crisis between allies are about the functioning or termination of an alliance, the issue of burden-sharing or dividing gains and risks. Although a crisis between allies is not as severe as a crisis between adversaries, the main objects are similar: to avoid confrontation, settle the crisis peacefully and find a solution which corresponds with mutual interests. In the light of these, how do states control the situation and dampen down the discord, while at the same time, maintaining the friendly relationship between allies? Crises mostly arise suddenly. They involve high intensity and present a threat to the core values of the participants. They also present for policy-makers a surprise and restricts the amount of time available for them to assess the situation and respond quickly and effectively. Moreover, in a crisis situation, since no one decision-maker can fully control events, there is an uncertainty for the decision-makers about what the other's reaction will be. In a situation like this, the decision-makers will have to make decisions under conditions of extreme stress, which might 'lower the quality of decision, cause distorted perceptions or emotional responses' and overlook the other allies' interests.⁵⁶⁴ Although each crisis is unique, it is still possible to identify the similarities

⁵⁶⁴ Quoted in Roberts, *Decision-Making during International Crises*, p. 225.

from independent cases and find a general pattern which may be applicable to some degree for coping with future crises.

The usefulness of the model in looking at the pattern of crisis behaviour is that it considers the complete process of a crisis itself. It gives us a much clearer idea of how a crisis between allies develops, escalates, and de-escalates. By reducing the complicated process into six phases, this model also gives us a much clearer idea so that we can approach a crisis chronologically, see how it developed in terms of the issues and look at how the outcome impacted upon the wider alliance relationship. However, this model inevitably has some weaknesses. First of all, it is based on the four chosen crises in the Anglo-American alliance. Since no other great powers have shared a common culture and same language, this bilateral relationship is not only special but also unique when compared with alliances between other world powers. In this sense, when applying this model established primarily on the distinctive nature of the Anglo-American relationship to crises in the other alliance relationship, it can only be seen as supplementary and its applicability needs to be carefully considered.

Secondly, in regard to the outcome phase of the model (Phase 6), it is found rather difficult to decide whether the outcome of the crisis falls into a particular category as '*Compromise*' and '*Solution*' are sometimes difficult to distinguish. For instance, the outcome of the case of Libya was that, because this crisis involved an East-West issue and that the US would have been offended if it were deserted by all its allies, Britain ultimately decided to come into line with the American action. This could be viewed either as '*compromise*' or

'solution'. As a result, it is felt that either this outcome phase needs more clarity in definition, or the categories of *'compromise'* and *'solution'* can be combined into one as *'solution'*.

II. THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

From the four crises, what then are the lessons for the Anglo-American special relationship in the 1980s and for the Anglo-American special relationship in general?

First of all, in terms of the two allies' reactions towards crises involving different issues, although the desire to maintain the relationship with each other did play a very significant part in the policy-making of the two countries, their reactions towards the crises were dependent on the different issues involved. From the British view, the United States has been Britain's most powerful and significant ally. The two aims of the post-war British foreign policy were to maintain the American commitment of forces, both conventional and nuclear, to Europe and to maximise British influence upon American policy. In order to deepen their relationship with the United States, British policy makers were willing to go to considerable lengths, even risking sacrificing their own interests, to secure these objectives, notwithstanding the fact that the Americans were not mindful of British needs.

The approach the Thatcher government opted for in the 1980s was to show solidarity in public and try to moderate US policy behind closed doors, in order to avoid direct

confrontation with America for matters concerning the East-West relations. It was found that in crises relative to East-West issues, Britain was not prepared to fall out with the US, even if the policy of the US was against what the British felt as the best policy. The British would express their dislike through private channels, instead of criticising the Americans publicly. With regard to crises involving issues outside the East-West context, Britain would make their criticisms publicly.

On the American side, though there was a willingness in the US government to maintain the relationship with Britain, even at the expense of America's interests or broader alliance relationships, as shown in the Falklands war, it also proved to be the case that co-operation with Britain was not allowed in any way to hinder its own core security interests. In regard to any crisis involving East-West issues, the US, as a superpower, was prepared to act whether it had British support or not.

Evidence cited to sustain this argument includes Britain's rejection of involvement in the US intervention of Grenada, and British support for American out-of-area operations in both Libya and the Persian Gulf. In the case of Grenada, the British tried to localise the problem in the Caribbean and did not see it as a threat to either regional security or global order. The Americans approached the crisis from quite a different respect, not as a problem in the Caribbean but as evidence of a much bigger Communist conspiracy and a threat to national security. As a consequence, the US was prepared to act and rode quickly over British sensitivities in that situation. The British felt aggrieved and embarrassed as their interests and views were so plainly neglected in Washington and therefore, they made their

protest publicly. In the cases of Libya and the reflagging operation in the Persian Gulf, even though the British disagreed with the American idea of military retaliation against terrorism or military engagement in the Gulf, these crises obviously involved an East-West dimension and the allies' abandonment of the US in those circumstances could have caused anger and disillusionment in the US. This could have led to the question of burden-sharing and the withdrawal of American ground troops from Europe. In the light of these factors, as well as proving Britain's willingness and sincerity in maintaining relationship with the US, Thatcher decided to accede to the US request for help even when it was politically inconvenient for her to do so.

The reason for adopting such a policy was because, for the British, the East-West issue was vitally important. It related to the American commitment to Europe and was critical in keeping the Western alliance united. This strategy was consistent with the classic post-war British conception of a special relationship, particularly after Suez: the British were afraid that, as Reynolds suggests, American isolationism would have been provoked by blunt criticism or public dissent from its allies.⁵⁶⁵ Thus, on the one hand, the British needed to make sacrifices in order not to damage the linkages with Washington. On the other hand, it was necessary to weigh up the relative balance about how much the British could criticise and be much careful about alienating Americans in crisis situation. In the light of the differences of the two allies' crisis behaviour in relation to different issues, it gave us an idea about the differences of the two countries towards the concept of a special relationship and showed the conditions for, or the hazards of, maintaining this relationship.

⁵⁶⁵ See Reynolds, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations', *International Affairs*, Vol.65, No.1, 1989, pp.97-8.

Secondly, to take the point forward, in terms of the degree of commitment to the alliance, there seems to be a difference in the 'degree' of expectation between the two countries towards their alliance commitments and in their willingness to maintain their relationship due to the inevitable inequality in their relationship. This inequality could best be described as follows, 'the United Kingdom has only one special relationship' whilst the relationship with Britain is only 'one of a number of special relationships for the United States which reflects its superpower status and diversity of interests'.⁵⁶⁶ However, is it really a deeply unequal partnership? On the surface, this might seem to be true, as the British need the US while what Britain could offer the US in return is less clear. The Falklands war is an example to support this argument. Consequently, with its ability to reciprocate within the relationship much diminished, Britain, on the one hand, has sought to emphasise the ideological, such as the anti-Communist stance and intangible links between the two countries. On the other hand, the British government pursued a policy of providing what the US needed most in times of crisis - political and military support - in order to prove Britain's sincerity to be a worthy ally of the US. But were there real occasions when the Americans needed the British? As the cases in Libya and the Persian Gulf have shown, there was a need for the United States to have allied support for its global initiatives. It is not concerned over the contribution of British military power that influences America; rather, it is a question of legitimacy, more that America does not want to be seen as standing alone and to be the only power taking particular actions.

⁵⁶⁶ Quoted in Rees, W., *The Special Relationship*, in Croft (ed.), *British Security Policy. The Thatcher Years and the End of the Cold War*, Chapter 9, pp.143-4.

To return to the question of inequality in the relationship, it should be noted that as Britain's significance in the world declined, the Special Relationship has gradually become less special in terms of 'importance' and this resulted in a difference in the 'degree' of expectation between the two countries towards their alliance commitments. However, even though the inequality of the relationship between Britain and the US is great and it seems no longer special in importance, the relationship between them remains special in 'quality' as the quality of 'need' is closer as the Americans often want the British alongside them.

Thirdly, in terms of the ways the two allies looked at their own roles, it seems the two states both saw themselves having leadership functions within a wider community of states. For the Americans, Britain was seen to be speaking on behalf of the Europeans. For the British, they saw their relationships with both the United States and the Europeans to be complementary and the role of Britain in relation to the United States and Europe was as an intermediary between the two sides, instead of merely acting as Washington's agent to create consensus in the alliance. The evidence of this assumption could be seen in the case of the Gulf operation as Britain was attempting to explain American concerns to Europe and, at the same time, dispelling the impression of weakness and vacillation of the Europeans in Washington.

On the issue of out-of-(NATO) area operations, the British reaction to American policies was conditioned by the time-honoured precept that London and Washington should support one another's endeavours whenever possible. Although there was no formal obligation outside the NATO treaty area to concert policy, NATO's lukewarm response and the degree

of allied support for Washington's global foreign objectives inevitably affected American attitudes toward the alliance. There was, in the interests of allied 'solidarity', a 'moral obligation' not to undermine one's colleagues. Moreover, Thatcher preferred to act independently but in parallel with the United States and was willing to secure Britain's intimate relationship with the United States even at the expense of other allies. On the other hand, British predilection for supporting the United States was dramatically reinforced by the Falklands War as this was seen as creating a debt to the US. The fact that the French, Spanish, and other members of NATO publicly dissociated themselves from the British side of the conflict further strengthened London's inclination to co-ordinate directly with Washington rather than to seek broader allied support.

This increasing need of the United States to have allied support for its global initiatives also raised debates between the two countries. The Reagan Administration was convinced that it was symbolically important to have its NATO allies involved in the defence of common interests beyond the NATO treaty area. The British, along with other European allies, expressed concern that the policy of the Reagan Administration relied too heavily on military solutions instead of diplomatic initiatives, and polarised regional crises by injecting an unnecessary East-West dimension into them. Underlying this concern was the ever-present fear that the United States would drag the Europeans into an unwanted conflict beyond the NATO area or accidentally bring war to Europe. The attitudes of the two countries can be best described as follows: the US, for its part of being a superpower, was prepared to intervene in war situations though it was cautious about being drawn into conflicts where no significant interests were in jeopardy whilst Britain, not having the

resources of a superpower, was reluctant to be drawn into open-ended and costly military commitments. It thus caused an essential 'tension' between Britain and the United States.

The lesson for the Special Relationship in general here is that allies can be influenced or controlled, but that they can also be adventurous if they want to be. Some of the evidence found in the previous chapters backing this argument includes the Falklands War and the US intervention of Grenada. In the two cases, when the issue involved concerned their own core-security issue, the reaction was simply to ignore everyone and do whatever suited their own best interests. On the other hand, both members of the alliance know that the other ally has an interest in defending the alliance but cannot be 100 per cent sure that it will do so if the ally insisted on acting against the advice of the other. This could be seen in the Falklands crisis in which, although the British felt their claim to American friendship was much stronger than Argentina's, when they insisted on sending the Task Force to the South Atlantic, the British were still not sure whether or not the US would support Britain.

Fourthly, in terms of the personal links between the two sides, as was shown in the third chapter, what makes the Anglo-American relationship so special is not only the personal rapport between those in higher levels, such as the close relationship between Reagan and Thatcher, as between Shultz and Howe, Weinberger and Younger; but also more importantly, the contact between officials at the lower operational levels which served as the foundation of the Special Relationship, such as the officials in Ministry of Defence and Pentagon. So how much impact did day-to-day discussions and regular contacts have when there was a crisis?

In the Falklands war, as mentioned before, the inter-service links between the lower level of officials in the two countries certainly played a very important role in damping down the problems. It could be seen on occasions when British officials flew to Washington to talk to their opposite numbers and the officials in the Pentagon did their best to meet the British requests.⁵⁶⁷ These long-standing functional ties between the two militaries also made the Pentagon the most sympathetic part of the Reagan Administration towards the British and, as a result, implemented a policy to support their counterparts before the policy was adopted by the US government.

Similarly, in the case of the Gulf reflagging operation, the initial British rejection of the US request for assistance was reversed after continuous consultation between officials in the Pentagon and the Ministry of Defence. What happened in the case of Grenada was that, because the crisis happened at such short notice and involved national security issues, in order to reduce the possibilities of a leak, the Reagan Administration decided to delay the consultation to Britain and kept the decision-making limited to the highest level.

This shows that, where the crisis is the sort of situation where decision-making gets pushed up to the highest level very quickly and involves Heads of Government or Foreign Ministers, these are the occasions which can undermine the Anglo-American relationship for the very reason that lower level officials, who carry out the day-to-day contacts and build up the trust between each other, are very often excluded. As a result, the normal

⁵⁶⁷ At the higher level, Secretary Weinberger also ordered to reduce the normal course of examining British requests and put all British requests in first priority. For details, see Chapter 3.

dealings between America and Britain are short-circuited by the fact that in times of crisis, everything suddenly gets rushed up to the top level and then the very personal views of the top decision-makers become involved and sometimes cause more tensions. In other words, if these lower level officials had been able to deal with the crisis, perhaps the crisis would have been much reduced and less intense. In the case of Grenada, decision-making was confined within the highest level of the Reagan Administration and these officials were acting under strict instructions to avoid any leaks, whereas these lower level officials who normally were reliable and helpful, were on this occasion not informed.

However, it is not to say that these intimate personal links between the leaders of the two sides have little use in situations of crises. As the case of the Falklands War shows, the close co-operation of the inter-service links between the lower level of officials in the two countries was proceeding under the over-arching framework built by the Defense Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, who was very friendly towards the British. Therefore, the personal rapport did on some occasions counterbalance the two allies' diverging views in dispute.

Lessons can be drawn from the preceding analysis for alliance management in general. In terms of what the Model of Patterns of Allies' Crisis Behaviour has pointed out in times of crisis for the two allies, it should be remembered that the importance of each side's perception should be emphasised and carefully analysed, because in every instance the reason why the decision-makers conjectured wrongly about motives of the other side was due to their failure to read the incentives of the other ally. They misunderstood the stakes of the other ally, acted on wrong assumptions and missed their chances to exert effective

influence on the behaviour of the other side. If an alliance crisis is to be managed successfully, both sides must recognise that they will not be able to achieve their utmost political goals. Attempting the impossible, with each side committed to its own objectives with no concern for each other's position, could ultimately result in the termination of their alliance. As regards the Model of Allies' crisis behaviour, it should be remembered that when applying this model established primarily on the distinctive nature of the Anglo-American relationship to crises in the other alliance relationship, it can only be seen as supplementary and its applicability still needs to be carefully considered.

Moreover, being members of the alliance may generate reciprocal and symmetrical obligations and expectations. Even though the relationship between Britain and the United States became less special due to the inequality of the relationship, their relations remained strong. The principal factor is that while the closeness of a personal relationship between the highest level officials might change, the contact between lower level officers (which underpinned the basic stability of Anglo-American relations) continued regardless. However, it also should be remembered that just because the special relationship has been preserved between the two sides, it does not imply that they will always agree with each other. Each country should not expect its ally always to side with them or rely too much on the special relationship in times of crisis. Each side's influence over the other's decision-making should also not be exaggerated, as what the special relationship provided was the means and the goodwill to convert their differences. But there are still examples where they clearly failed to do so.

Finally, due to the imbalance in power between the United States and Britain, it is difficult for the British to maintain its influence over the United States when their interests seem to diverge in numerous areas. Even so, it is still possible to say, on the basis of the four case studies, that trans-Atlantic conflicts of interests are manageable even among unequal partners provided there is a minimum of shared objectives and provided the will from both sides to resolve their differences exist. Britain could still prove that the special relationship is not one-way traffic and demonstrate its commitment to being an accountable ally for the United States in times of crisis by providing assistance with all the resources at its command in certain limited contexts.

Though the four chapters do not settle what exactly happened at the decision making level between the two countries in times of crisis, and why, they do expose many previously under-emphasised features, probe more deeply into the events, uncover additional insights and thus afford a rich source of hypotheses about the causes of various outcomes. Hopefully this thesis can contribute something toward constructing new modes of thought about the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. Even though what these four crises suggest about the relationship between Britain and the United States may not be sufficient to generate an untarnished pattern about the crises behaviour between allies, they do present a number of differences in emphasis and interpretation and, in some way, explain crisis behaviour between allies.

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MEETINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE

INTERVIEW

- *British*

Major-General Anthony Boam (former Head of Defence Staff and Defence Attaché in British Embassy, Washington) – 25 September 1997, Army and Navy Club, St. James Square, London.

Sir Frank Cooper (former Permanent Under-Secretary of State in Ministry of Defence) – 30 July 1997, the Atheeathen Club, London.

Dr. Noel J. Guckian (Research Analyst in the Middle East and North Africa Research Group, Foreign & Commonwealth Office) – 12 March 1998, London.

Sir Nicholas Henderson (former Ambassador to Washington, 1979-82) – 30 July 1997, the Southeby's, London.

Sir John Nott (former Secretary of State for Defence) – 9 October 1997, telephone interview.

Sir Charles Powell (Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher) – 22 April 1998, Scottish Providence Building, London.

Sir Clive Whitmore (Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher) – 23 September 1997, New Court, London.

Sir Oliver Wright (former Ambassador to Washington, 1982-86) – 22 April 1998, Traveller's Club, Piccadilly Circus, London.

Lord George Younger (former Secretary of State for Defence) – 7 April 1998, The Royal

Bank of Scotland, 138-142 Holborn, London.

- *American*

The Honourable Raymond Seitz (former U.S. Ambassador to London) – 7 April 1998.

Edward Streator (former Minister of U.S. Embassy in London) – 23 April 1998.

The Honourable Caspar Weinberger (former U.S. Secretary of Defence, 1981-87) – 5 March 1998, telephone interview.

Larry Speakes (former White House Spokesman) – 5 March 1998, telephone interview.

CORRESPONDENCE

- *British*

Sir Antony Acland (former Ambassador to the United States of America, 1986-89) – 23 April & 5 May 1998.

Air Vice-Marshal Ronald Dick (former Air Attaché, 1980-83, Head of British Defence Staff, Defence Attaché in Washington Embassy, 1984-88) - 12 & 16 April 1998.

Lord Geoffrey Howe (former Foreign Secretary, 1983-89)- 27 January 1998.

Lord Terrence Lewin (former Admiral of the Fleet) – 10 August 1997.

Sir Henry Leach (former Admiral of the Fleet) – 28 July 1997.

Sir Derek Thomas (former Minister of British Embassy in Washington) – 23 July 1997.

- American

President George Bush (former President of the United States of America) – 9 February 1998.

The Honourable Raymond G.H. Seitz (former U.S. Ambassador to London) – 22 April 1998.

Mr. Robert Sims (former Pentagon Spokesman) – 15 March 1998.

The Honourable Caspar W. Weinberger (former U.S. Secretary of Defense) – 1 April 1998.

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