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**THE ROLE OF JULIAN PAUNCEFOTE
IN THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN *RAPPROCHEMENT*, 1889-1902**

Doctoral Thesis

2002

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INTRODUCTION

Before the days of international conferences and shuttle diplomacy, Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries left the negotiation of treaties and the conduct of international affairs to the diplomats on the spot, which meant that ambassadors possessed real power to make foreign policy and influence events. For twenty years Lord Lyons was the most powerful foreigner in Paris; Lord Odo Russell was the most important ambassador in Berlin ... and Sir Julian Pauncefote was the doyen of the diplomatic corps in Washington, where he negotiated a remarkable series of Anglo-American agreements.

David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (1990).¹

Understandably, the main focus of international histories involving Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tends to be on the rivalries with the European Great Powers, and the explosion of tensions that led to the First World War.² However, as a counterpoint to that story, historians of Anglo-American relations have demonstrated that the process that led Britain and the United States to fight alongside one another in that conflict is not something that can be taken for granted, and it therefore forms a highly significant part of the wider picture.³ The historiography of

¹ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.284.

² A classic example being A. J. P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1954). More recent examples include: John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation, Britain and the Balance of Power 1874-1914* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999); James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Longman, 1984); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism* (London: Allen and Urwin 1980); David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe 1904-14* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

³ Surveys include Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (London: Longmans 1967); Charles S. Campbell Jr., *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865 – 1900* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of Foreign Relations II. The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan. Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); R. G. Neale, *Great Britain and United States*

that period will be considered in more detail in chapter one. The intention of this introduction is to consider the broad historical context in which this thesis is set, and then to outline its purpose and structure.

From the 1890s to 1914 the United States had already begun to assert its power internationally, and Great Britain began to see the necessity of coming to terms with this fact in order to maintain harmony with Washington. This led to the successful resolution of a string of Anglo-American disputes that would, in turn, influence Britain's freedom of action with regard to European powers.⁴ The period 1895-1914 therefore became known as one of *rapprochement* between Britain and the United States. However, the process was not a smooth one. In a series of disputes, British politicians were sometimes slow to recognise the growing confidence of US policymakers, and failed to realise that the reasoned arguments of the Foreign Office were not going to be politely received by a belligerent Congress and vested US business interests.⁵ Further restricting its freedom of manoeuvre with the United States was Britain's imperial relationship with Canada, whose government often felt it was being forced to make concessions that were for the benefit of Anglo-American relations rather than Canadian-American relations.⁶ Added to these difficulties was the historic suspicion felt by many in the United States towards their former colonial ruler.

Tacit acknowledgement of the United States' power manifested itself across a spectrum of opinion in Britain, ranging from the grudging *Realpolitik* of Lord

Expansion, 1898-1900 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966); Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895 – 1914* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969).

⁴ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp. 297- 298.

⁵ For example C. S. Campbell Jr., 'The Anglo – American Crisis in the Bering Sea, 1890 – 91', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, xlviii (1961), pp. 393 – 414, highlights the close connection between business interests and US foreign policy.

⁶ See Norman Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, (1965); Robert C. Brown, *Canada's National Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

Salisbury, to the transatlantic enthusiasm of Joseph Chamberlain.⁷ Not only was the United States' economy growing, but also, by the late 1880s, the country was developing a stronger navy. In 1883, the decision had been made to build a modern battle fleet. In the 1890s, much of the impetus for developing this further came from the influential American Admiral, Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose book, *The Influence of Seapower on History* (1890), was widely read amongst the American political elite.⁸ Mahan drew his inspiration from the success of the British Empire. Seven new warships were commissioned in President Harrison's term of office alone.⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, who became president in 1901, was a disciple of Mahan's, and his ebullient style personified the USA's new found confidence on the world stage. Thus, British politicians, already heavily committed in Asia and Africa, and concerned to preserve the balance of power in Europe, began to recognise that naval vessels stationed on the other side of the Atlantic might be put to better use elsewhere. At the same time, political dealings with the growing power located there were taking on more significance in terms of Britain's future relations with the rest of the world. Likewise, it did not escape the attention of American political commentators that this change in the status quo was having its impact on the Washington diplomatic world - as Henry Adams commented in 1901: 'I am singularly impressed by the change of tone and attitude in our Court. Not only is it now the biggest, most numerous, Court in the world, but there is an eagerness to attract favour such as no one ever saw here...'¹⁰

British politicians' recognition of this growing power across the Atlantic was not yet, however, accompanied by a fear that British power would be eclipsed. However willingly or otherwise they were entered into, the series of compromises and concessions that characterised British policy towards the United States in the 1890s formed part of a strategy aimed at ensuring Britain's place amongst the top three or four

⁷ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, pp. 58-61.

⁸ A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History 1660 - 1783* (Boston: Little, Brown & co., 1890).

⁹ Homer E. Socolofsky and Allan B. Spetter, *The Presidency of Benjamin Harrison* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987), p.102.

¹⁰ W. C. Ford (ed.) *Letters of Henry Adams 1892-1918* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin co., 1938), p.330.

world powers as it went into the twentieth century.¹¹ Salisbury's initiation of the naval 'two power standard' in 1889, Rosebery's support for the Spencer naval building programme in 1894, and Salisbury's assertion in 1898 that Britain was amongst the 'living' and not the 'dying' nations all gave the impression of a nation determined - and able - to stand up to all-comers in the Darwinian world of imperial competition.¹² However, beneath this confident exterior ministers knew that they had to be diplomatically accommodating towards - if not allied with - at least one of the established or emerging Great Powers. The emergence of the United States and Germany as imperial players meant that Britain's position was increasingly one of first amongst equals, and to maintain even this position required co-operation as much as confrontation. Geographical distance, and cultural and racial sympathies, combined with an apparent coincidence of economic interests, made co-operation with the United States more palatable than with other powers.¹³ However, as already suggested, this did not mean that *rapprochement* came easily, and it emerged, sometimes painfully, as a pragmatic response to assertive US diplomacy, rather than through mutual admiration.¹⁴ Indeed, one observer has gone so far as to call 'the special relationship' as a 'desperate measure' and 'a self deception, a hope that world leadership could be exercised by proxy.'¹⁵ Whilst this might be a somewhat extreme view, the foreign policies of the Marquess of Salisbury, Lord Rosebery, the Earl of Kimberley and the Marquess of Lansdowne followed very similar lines in their approach to the United States.¹⁶ The Foreign Office official Eyre Crowe commented upon this similarity with regard to Salisbury and Rosebery saying in 1895 that

¹¹ Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, p.251.

¹² Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury, Victorian Titan* (London: Phoenix, 2000 edn.), pp.539-54; Charmley, *Isolation*, p.229, Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 691-93.

¹³ Alexander E. Campbell *Great Britain and the United States, 1895-1903* (London: Longmans, 1960), p.190.

¹⁴ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 617.

¹⁵ Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914* (London: BT Batsford, 1976). p.202.

¹⁶ Gordon Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy: Rosebery and the Failure of Foreign Policy* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1986).

I don't see what difference it will make to anybody either here or abroad [that Salisbury was again to be foreign secretary]. The talk of Lord Rosebery's policy or Lord Salisbury's policy and their differences, or similarities, is all fiddledidee, they both go on the simple plan of just running on till you knock against something then see whether 'something' is big or small. If big, you scootle, if small you kick. The unfortunate results of the mode of the procedure have been too obvious for many years.¹⁷

Public opinion also had a role to play in this dynamic. British public opinion tended to be inflamed by incidents involving its European neighbours, such as the Kruger telegram controversy of 1896.¹⁸ This meant it was easier to be conciliatory towards the Americans than the Germans or the French. By contrast, for most of this period, the transatlantic relationship with Britain was the most inflammatory foreign policy issue for most Americans. Thus, whilst a crisis such as the Venezuela boundary dispute of 1895 did not exactly fire the public imagination in Britain, it inspired talk of war and a financial panic in the USA. Similarly, whereas the Bering Sea dispute of 1891-2 was regarded as an annoyance by those who had actually heard of it in Britain, it was enough to whip up jingo sentiment in certain quarters of the USA, again to the point of suggesting war. Equally, in the negotiations with Britain that were to pave the way to the Panama Canal, as well as those with Canada over a number of issues, the Americans were to prove staunch defenders of their interests.¹⁹ However, it was the disputes involving Canada that were to provide the thorniest problems, as far as British diplomats were concerned. In the late nineteenth century, Canadians increasingly valued their imperial connection, because of the protection and investment it brought as a bulwark against being subsumed by the United States.²⁰ Yet, at the same time, Canadian representatives ensured that their independent voices were heard in US-Canadian disputes, and suspicion rankled that British diplomacy was selling them short. All this meant that delicate handling and diligence were required if US resentment over

¹⁷ Eyre Crowe, 25 June 1895, Bodleian Library, Crowe papers, MS Eng. e. 3019, f.106.

¹⁸ Matthew S. Seligmann, *Rivalry in Southern Africa: 1893-99 – The Transformation of German Colonial Policy* (Macmillan: London, 1998), pp. 76-78, pp. 85-86.

¹⁹ See Perkins, *Rapprochement*, Campbell Jr., *Transformation*.

²⁰ P. J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000* (Longman: London, 2001 edn.), p.237.

perceived, or real, British arrogance was to be quelled, and at the same time Canada was to be kept happily in the imperial fold. As the USA grew in power, Britain could not afford simply to ride roughshod over her, yet neither could she risk concessions to her that would unhinge Canadian sympathies. This then, was the context within which *rapprochement* took place.

The man most closely and continuously involved with the process of *rapprochement* through its lengthy unfurling was Sir Julian (later Lord) Pauncefote. Pauncefote was appointed Britain's minister at Washington in 1889, and was promoted to the post of ambassador there in 1893, the role in which he served until his death in 1902.²¹ The main aims of this thesis are twofold. Firstly, the intention is to analyse the extent to which he, rather than ministers in London, was responsible for the course of British diplomacy towards the United States during this period. Secondly, it is to assess how effective and successful he was in carrying out his role. By using a wider range of archival sources than the only existing biography of Pauncefote, it is hoped that a more complete picture of his actions and attitudes can be arrived at than R.B. Mowat's somewhat hagiographic 1929 study.²² By focussing on the performance of one individual, the intention is not to deny the larger political and socio-economic forces that shaped the overall transatlantic dynamic. Indeed, it was the very interplay of those forces that served to ensure that an individual diplomat still had a significant part to play in maintaining equilibrium. As argued above, the expansive forces unleashed by the rapid rise in power of the United States set against a British Empire determined to defend its status as a Great Power contained the potential for conflict. Thus, as the longest continually serving diplomat (or politician), on either side of the Atlantic to be concerned with Anglo-American relations in the 1890s, Pauncefote can be regarded as something of a lynchpin in the political dynamic between Britain and the United States in this era. As such an analysis might suggest, a subtext of this thesis is the argument

²¹ Robert B. Mowat, *The Life of Lord Pauncefote* (London: Constable & co., 1929).

²² *ibid.*

that an ambassador did have an important role to play in relations between states, and that he was more than merely a mouthpiece for his government's policy.²³ Thus, this thesis will seek to show that there was more to the job of ambassador to the United States than the analysis of the MP Henry Labouchere who maintained that

As for Washington, a man must be an utter fool, who does not get on with the Americans. This is done by never expressing an opinion on party lines, by occasionally making a speech at a dinner about the language of Shakespeare; by feeding Senators and others; by carrying out instructions like a machine; and by generally professing that if two countries are made to love each other, they are England and America.²⁴

Pauncefote was chosen for the Washington job precisely because there was a growing recognition of the importance of that post, its status being confirmed by its being elevated from a legation to an embassy in 1893.²⁵ Furthermore, the abbreviated careers of his predecessor, Lord Sackville, and his successor but one, Sir Mortimer Durand, demonstrated the continuing sensitivity of the Washington role.²⁶ By contrast, Pauncefote's thirteen years of service underlined the esteem in which the British establishment held him. Pauncefote has been praised by contemporaries and historians alike for his abilities as well as his contribution to the growth of Anglo-American co-operation in this era.²⁷ However, this thesis will also argue that a closer investigation of his actions reveals that he was sometimes slow to recognise potential disputes, had considerable difficulty in coming to terms with the US political system, was inflexible in his approach towards US politicians, and held strong prejudices against Americans

²³ See the section entitled 'diplomacy and diplomats,' chapter one of this thesis, for a broader discussion of this point.

²⁴ Labouchere to Rosebery, 15 Jan. 1893, Rosebery papers, MS10041, f.125.

²⁵ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.490, p.511; Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1914*, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1983), pp.174 – 175.

²⁶ Charles S. Campbell Jr., 'The Dismissal of Lord Sackville,' *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, xlv (Mar. 1958), pp.635-648; Peter Larsen, 'Sir Mortimer Durand in Washington: A Study in Anglo-American Relations in the Era of Theodore Roosevelt,' *Mid – America*, lxvi, (1984), pp. 65-78.

²⁷ Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 177.

themselves. Furthermore, it will be argued that these weaknesses had, at times, diminished his effectiveness as a diplomat.

This thesis is structured both thematically, and, broadly speaking, chronologically. The intention is to focus on the issues that best highlight Pauncefote's strengths and weaknesses as a diplomat during his career in Washington, and his role in the *rapprochement*. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of every piece of business Pauncefote was concerned with during his time in Washington. Thus, such issues as the Open Door notes and the Samoan dispute, which may have been important in terms of the wider international picture, do not get attention here.²⁸ Similarly, economic issues were not something into which Pauncefote had much input, and therefore receive minimal attention.

Chapter one sets the thesis in its historiographical context, both in general terms and on a 'case by case' basis, also paying attention to the role of the diplomat at the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter two examines Pauncefote's pre-Washington career and early relationship with Salisbury, as well as his appointment to Washington and the reasons why the Washington legation was raised to embassy status. The main purpose of the chapter is to assess the esteem in which both Pauncefote and the Washington mission were held by those in power in London. Chapter three examines Pauncefote's role in the Bering Sea dispute. This lasted throughout the 1890s, and therefore provides a useful gauge of his relationships of those in power on either side of the Atlantic during that time. Since it involved Canada, it also provides an insight into the extent to which he was prepared to sacrifice the interests of the dominion in order to maintain good relations with the United States. Chapter four focuses on the Venezuela boundary dispute of 1895-6, and in particular the questions of Pauncefote's ability to lessen the negative impact of the dispute and his influence over Salisbury. Chapter five analyses Pauncefote's views on international arbitration through the examples of the failed Olney-Pauncefote treaty of 1897 and the First Hague Peace Conference of 1899. The

²⁸ On this point, C.S. Campbell is somewhat dismissive of events in the Far East of being of significance for Anglo-American co-operation in any case. C. S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, p. 197.

idea of international arbitration as a means of settling potentially violent disputes was increasingly fashionable during this time, and provides a useful key to Pauncefote's approach to diplomacy. Chapter six looks at Pauncefote's diplomacy during the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Second South African War of 1899-1902. The chapter focuses on the fact that although the Spanish-American War has often been seen as a crystallising moment in improving Anglo-American relations, Pauncefote was, if anything, working against the prevailing mood. Chapter seven examines Pauncefote's close working relationship with John Hay (Secretary of State 1898-1905), and considers the overall impact this had on the larger transatlantic relationship, specifically in terms of the plans for an isthmian canal and the Alaska boundary dispute. Lastly, chapter eight considers Pauncefote's legacy, by comparing his contribution to that of predecessors and successors and by assessing his career in the round.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This chapter will consider the historiography of Anglo-American relations, with its main focus on the era of so-called *rapprochement* at the end of the nineteenth century. The purpose of the chapter is to set this thesis in its historiographical context, and to highlight the fact that Pauncefote's considerable role as minister and then ambassador to the United States from 1889-1902 has not previously been studied as a discrete subject. Some of the more recent studies of the period have been less certain of the conclusive nature of the *rapprochement* heralded by earlier writers, and yet a reappraisal of Pauncefote's role is still missing from the picture. The chapter moves from considering works on the broad sweep of Anglo-American relations, narrowing its focus onto the end of the nineteenth century, and finally works that consider Pauncefote himself.

General surveys

Three works which provide overviews that set *rapprochement* in a broad context are: H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (1954), and Charles S Campbell's two studies *From Revolution to Rapprochement: the United States and Great Britain 1783-1900* (1974) and *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900* (1976). Allen, in his still relevant study, says that the period 1872-1898, 'served a most useful purpose in stabilising the relationship between the two countries' and that it 'allowed a vital change in the relations of the two peoples'.¹ In both his studies, Campbell, probably the most prolific writer on this topic, focuses on how diplomatic conciliation on both sides, combined with cultural and racial ties helped bring about the shift from hostility to co-operation in the latter part of the century. He sums this up by saying that *rapprochement* was in part achieved due to a 'willingness to compromise seldom found

¹ H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (London: Oldhams Press, 1954), p. 518.

in international affairs.² Cultural, as well as social, economic and intellectual factors are very much the theme of Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (eds.), *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (2001). The editors' key point is that 'Without discounting the centrality of economics or diplomacy, we would argue for a variety of mutual influences that were enhanced by independence from and rivalry with the former mother country.'³ The wide scope of the study means that the 1890s receive little specific attention, but Walter L. Arnstein does consider that Queen Victoria had a positive impact on the closeness of the two countries at the end of the nineteenth century.

Most recent general works on Anglo-American relations have tended to concentrate on the period from the First World War and after, thus devoting relatively small sections to turn of the century affairs. These works include Alan P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (1995), Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain. The United States and Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (1996) and Ritchie Owendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (1998). Dobson suggests that adjustment by Britain to the United States' growing power at the turn of the century was one of the most diplomatically important changes in modern times.⁴ He underlines this by claiming that 'there has never been any other comparable peaceful transformation of power roles in the history of the modern world'.⁵ However, he also tempers this by saying that the change was accompanied by a growing friction and aggressive rivalry in the economic role.⁶ Orde takes up the familiar theme that Britain's

² C. S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: the United States and Great Britain 1783-1900* (New York: Wiley, 1974), p. 200.

³ Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (eds.), *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (Andover: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 2-3.

⁴ Alan P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 19.

⁵ *ibid*, p.5

⁶ *ibid*, p.18.

blood and marriage ties eased potentially fraught diplomatic incidents.⁷ She also draws attention to the fact that Britain's naval withdrawal from the Western hemisphere went largely unchallenged domestically.⁸ Ovendale's work is largely a synopsis of earlier works and thus does not reach dramatically different conclusions. When dealing with this era, David Dimbleby and David Reynolds's book, *An Ocean Apart. The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (1988), makes the important point that although Anglo-American relations may have seemed of peripheral importance in London at the turn of the century, in Washington, relations with Britain were the main area of foreign policy.⁹

Surveys which view events in this period from either the British or US perspective include Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan* (1988) which looks at how concern over Britain's supposedly overstretched empire led to decisions which both benefited United States' interests in the Western Hemisphere, and, consequently, Anglo-American relations. Friedberg maintains that a British fear of looming financial disaster led to decisions that proved to be a 'winning gamble'.¹⁰ Kenneth Bourne in *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (1967) looks at the topic covered by Friedberg from a strategic perspective. Bourne notes that the admiralty was the first place within the British establishment tacitly to acknowledge Britain's relative decline vis a vis the United States, as early as the 1880s, thus embarking on decisions which would ultimately enable *rapprochement* to happen.¹¹ However, he describes the overall process of change as 'largely irrational'.¹² J.A.S. Grenville's *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1964) is notable for the lack of space devoted to US affairs - a sign of how relations with Britain's

⁷ Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain. The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1998), pp.11, 29.

⁸ *ibid*, pp.34-35.

⁹ David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (USA: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 32.

¹⁰ Friedberg, *Titan*, pp. 92, 299.

¹¹ Bourne, *Balance*, p.405.

¹² *ibid*, p. 340.

traditional European sparring partners still dominated politicians' (and, understandably, still dominate historians') thoughts in this country. In Andrew Robert's recent biography, *Salisbury, Victorian Titan* (1999) the author puts Anglo-American relations into context, by saying that 'By deflecting friction with America, he [Salisbury] ensured that he could concentrate on more pressing and significant Asian and African questions.'¹³

Ernest R. May's *Imperial Democracy: the Emergence of America as a Great Power* (1961) examines politics from the other side of the Atlantic, and suggests that the United States became an imperial power almost by accident, and with the co-operation of Great Britain, partly because Salisbury saw the two countries' interests coinciding.¹⁴ In *The American Search for Opportunity 1865-1913* (The Cambridge History of Foreign Relations, Vol. 2 (1993)), Walter la Feber concurs with this view of American imperialism saying that McKinley's objective was not a colonial empire, but world markets.¹⁵ David Burton, however maintains that 'William McKinley was an imperialist president'.¹⁶ Richard H. Collin in *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy and Expansion. A New view of American Imperialism* (1985) builds on this theme, by disputing the traditional image of Theodore Roosevelt, saying that he should not 'be encumbered with the label of imperialism or the oversimplified legend of the big stick'.¹⁷ William Tilchin in *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire* (1997) is similarly generous, asserting that 'Roosevelt's diplomacy with regard to the British Empire led compellingly to a very favourable evaluation.'¹⁸ This may help to explain

¹³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.633

¹⁴ Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy: the Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World Inc., 1961), p.225.

¹⁵ La Feber, *Opportunity*, p.156.

¹⁶ Davis H. Burton, *British American Diplomacy, 1895-1915* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing co., 1999), p.28

¹⁷ Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture Diplomacy and Expansion* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), p.198.

¹⁸ William N. Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire* (Basingstoke and London, 1997), p.242.

why British administrations felt able to accommodate American expansion. Samuel Wells Jr., however, in *The Challenges of Power: American Diplomacy 1900-21* (1990) puts this period in context, by contrasting it with the ‘diminished contact and ineffective diplomacy’ of the later Taft and early Wilson administration, which perhaps meant the ‘special relationship’ was still not fully cemented.¹⁹

The Anglo-American *rapprochement*

The historiography of Anglo-American relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century falls into two broad categories. Earlier works on the subject, up to the mid-1960s, emphasise the watershed nature of the years 1895-1898. They tend to depict the period encompassing the Venezuela dispute of 1895-6 and the Spanish-American War of 1898 as a defining one, in terms of crystallising the *rapprochement* between the two countries and laying the groundwork for twentieth century co-operation. Later studies, whilst drawing the same general conclusions about the significance of the period, are, on the whole, more questioning of the supposedly conclusive nature of the changes that took place in the Anglo-American relationship during this time. They point out that co-operation on some matters was not as great as had been made out in the past, and that the embryonic ‘special relationship’ could not be taken for granted, even by 1900. Indeed, W. R. Thompson has convincingly characterised the relationship as a rivalry that continued into the twentieth century.²⁰ Although a considerable historiography exists, recent works on Anglo-American relations in this period, and in particular on Pauncefoot’s role, are not great in number. The most substantial body of work on the subject dates from the 1950s to the early 1970s.

In terms of studies that focus more narrowly on the period in question, Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States 1895-1914* (1968) is a key work, often cited by other writers. This surveys the scene from the Venezuela

¹⁹ Samuel F. Wells Jr., *The Challenges of Power: American Diplomacy, 1900-1921* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1990), p. 67.

²⁰ W. R. Thompson, ‘The Evolution of a Great Power rivalry: The Anglo-American Case,’ in W. R. Thompson (ed.), *Great Power Rivalries*, (Columbia, 1999), pp.201-219.

dispute to the beginning of the First World War. The study aims to show how during this time nearly all the outstanding disputes between Britain and the United States were resolved (mostly to America's advantage) thus enabling a strengthening of Anglo-American ties, which would bear fruit to practical effect in the First World War. Perkins seeks to show how British policy was the 'indispensable' element in achieving this, and how it was a response to the growth of US power.²¹ As well as diplomacy, Perkins observes how cultural ties and US domestic politics impacted on relations. Combining all these strands, he notes that by the time Woodrow Wilson became president, Anglo-American relations 'no longer depended on who was in power,' suggesting a more mature phase had been reached.²² A more recent study that examines a similar timespan is David H. Burton's *British-American Diplomacy 1895-1917: the Early Years of the Special Relationship* (1999). Burton singles out several contributors to the relationship, including Salisbury, Chamberlain, Spring-Rice, John Hay and Theodore Roosevelt, but fails to mention Pauncefoot in this list.²³ He nevertheless concurs with earlier writers on the theme that this was a crucial period for Anglo-American relations, even saying that 'British American diplomacy, 1895-1917 should be thought of as dealing with a watershed period for much of international politics in this century'.²⁴ He does say, however, that the 'great *rapprochement*' only really took place after the issues of the isthmian canal, Alaskan boundary and Venezuelan debts were resolved – thus placing it later than some earlier writers.²⁵

Surveys that study this theme from a narrower time scale than Perkins or Burton, tend to concentrate on the years immediately before and after 1900. They include Lionel Gelber, *The Rise of Anglo-American Friendship, A Study in World Politics 1898-1906* (1938). This is an early example of a study that noted this period as being important for improving Anglo-American relations, and the fact that 'to capture

²¹ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, pp. 8-9.

²² *ibid*, p.294.

²³ Burton, *Diplomacy*, pp.5-6.

²⁴ *ibid*, p.6.

²⁵ *ibid*, p.26.

the goodwill of the United States for its own sake and before it was obtained by others now became an object of British diplomacy'.²⁶ Alexander Campbell's *Great Britain and the United States, 1895-1903* (1960) stresses that the 'myth' of Anglo-Saxon racial unity helped ease potential clashes between the two countries, during this period, enabling British politicians in particular to make concessions to the United States. Like Bourne, he comments that the policy was 'irrational'.²⁷ Meanwhile, Charles S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (1957) covers a narrower timescale and makes detailed use of diplomatic and private correspondence to emphasise how this period was vital in forming the foundations for a long lasting Anglo-American relationship. In a later study, however ('Anglo-American Relations, 1897-1901' in *Essays on the Foreign Policies of William McKinley* (1970)) he maintains that the apparent closeness of Britain and the United States that came about as a result of the Spanish-American War was not as important as some writers maintain. Campbell states that as soon as the 1898 war was over, *rapprochement* began to wane. He argues that it took the Second South African War to break what had become a diplomatic impasse.²⁸ R.G. Neale, in his study of this period, *Great Britain and United States Expansion, 1898-1900* (1966), agrees with this view, concluding that 'the quality of Anglo-American friendship and the effect of the Spanish- American War upon Anglo-American relations have both been greatly exaggerated'.²⁹

There are several studies that focus on cultural, social and other links between the two countries, rather than the purely diplomatic. An example of this is contained in Stuart Anderson's article, 'Racial Anglo-Saxonism and the American response to the Boer War' (*Diplomatic History* vol. 2:3, 1978). This argues that the belief in the innate superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race meant that many Americans saw it as 'a good

²⁶ Lionel Gelber, *The Rise of Anglo-American Friendship, A Study in World Politics 1898-1906* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1938, reprinted 1966), p.7.

²⁷ Charles S. Campbell Jr., *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), p.208.

²⁸ Campbell in Paola Coletta (ed.), 'Anglo-American Relations, 1897-1901' in *Essays on the Foreign Policies of William McKinley* (Jericho, New York: Exposition Press Inc., 1970), pp. 221, 240.

²⁹ Neale, *Expansion*, p.213.

thing' if the 'uncivilised Boers' were defeated in the Second South African War, and thus helped Britain's cause.³⁰ He uses Roosevelt's private correspondence as an example of this, quoting him saying that he wanted a 'a great English speaking commonwealth south of the Zambesi'.³¹ David H. Burton's study 'Theodore Roosevelt and his English Correspondents: A Special Relationship of Friends' (*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 63:2, 1973) continues the theme of transatlantic mutual admiration. It uses Roosevelt's letters to the diplomat Cecil Spring-Rice, the MP and author James Bryce, and others, to show 'how the Anglo-American entente came about and why it endured to become a 'special relationship'.³² On the same theme, but using different material, Israel T. Namaani, in his article 'The Anglo-Saxon Idea and British Public Opinion' (*The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 32: 1, Mar. 1951), examines the phenomenon of 'Anglo-Saxonism' through the warm Anglo-American words of various contemporary newspapers and journals. He also suggests that the logical conclusion of these effusive feelings - a formal Anglo-American alliance - was rejected because there were too many 'constitutional difficulties' in both Great Britain and the United States.³³ Part of Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement* also examines the 'Anglo-Saxon' era stating that 'Where ideology had once driven monarchy and republic apart, the new racist form drew them together'.³⁴ Other studies, such as M. J. Sewell's PhD survey, *Public Sentiment and the Public Man: the Anglo-American Relationship in the Late Nineteenth Century* (1987) have also noted how links of marriage and finance encouraged *rapprochement*, but he was equivocal about the extent to which the relationship between the two countries had changed by the end of the nineteenth century.

³⁰ Stuart Anderson, 'Racial Anglo-Saxonism and the American response to the Boer War,' *Diplomatic History* vol. 2:3 (1978), p. 221-222.

³¹ *ibid*, p. 232.

³² David H. Burton, 'Theodore Roosevelt and his English Correspondents: A Special Relationship of Friends,' *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 63:2 (1973), p. 5.

³³ Israel T. Naamani, 'The Anglo-Saxon Idea and British Public Opinion,' *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 32: 1 (Mar. 1951) pp. 57-58.

³⁴ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 83.

Individual issues

Examining studies on an 'issue by issue' basis, the Bering Sea dispute was the first and longest lasting diplomatic wrangle of the Pauncefote era, but has received less attention than several later incidents concerning the two countries. Charles S. Campbell examines the early stages of these events in 'Anglo-American Crisis in the Bering Sea, 1890-1891' (*Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 48:3, 1961) and the 'The Bering Sea Settlements of 1892' (*Pacific Historical Review*, 32:4, 1963). In these articles he notes in particular the impact that US business interests and elections had on foreign policy. The sense in which some US politicians felt aggrieved by the outcome of the dispute, which was in H.C. Allen's words 'a triumph for all parties except the US and the seals' has been noted as a factor in explaining the more robust US response to later disputes.³⁵ A more recent narrative survey of the whole dispute is carried out in J.T. Gay, *American Fur Seal Diplomacy* (1987), and as its title suggests concentrates on the US side of things. A chapter in R.C. Brown, *Canada's National Policy* (1964), examines the sometimes hostile Canadian attitude towards British diplomacy in the dispute. As far as Pauncefote's own role in the dispute is concerned, historians are generally favourable. R.B. Mowat, in his biography of Pauncefote, is characteristically flattering saying that during the Bering Sea negotiations 'all that could be done ... by methods of honesty and conciliation, he did'.³⁶ Likewise, Albert T. Volwiler, in his article 'Correspondence between Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine 1882-1893' (*Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 14, 1940) notes that Pauncefote 'did much to maintain friendly relations between these two countries during the critical negotiations concerning the Bering Sea...'³⁷

The next major Anglo-American issue to be examined by historians, is the 1895-96 Venezuela boundary dispute. Most studies draw similar conclusions to

³⁵ Allen, *Relations*, p.530.

³⁶ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.138.

³⁷ Albert T. Volwiler, 'Correspondence between Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine 1882-1893,' *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 14 (1940), p.64 (fn.).

Bradford Perkins, that the dispute was ‘an inflated but nevertheless dangerous controversy,’ and that its resolution was aided by the fact that despite the inflammatory rhetoric on the US side, neither side really wanted to get involved in a war over the issue.³⁸ H. C. Allen also sums up the views of other writers, by saying ‘the Venezuela fury was as much the first symptom of American imperialism as the last symptom of Anglo-American discord and dissension.’³⁹ Marshall Bertram, *The Birth of Anglo-American Friendship: the Prime Facet of the Venezuela Boundary Dispute* (1992), like other writers on the subject, describes how, after the initial belligerency, the British were woken up to US Anglophobia, and from then on began to cultivate US friendship carefully. Several observers, including Ritchie Ovendale, have pointed out how the events of the Jameson Raid and the Kruger Telegram concentrated British minds on the need for new allies at this time – and by implication a resolution of the dispute.⁴⁰ Joseph Mathews’ article ‘Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896’ (*Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 50:2, Sep. 1963) points out that although official communication between the two countries was sluggish during the peak of the dispute, unofficial negotiations were going on, partly through the newspaper columns of *The Times*. Mathews maintains that ‘The exclusive use of official channels in the Venezuela crisis almost certainly would have intensified the danger of war’.⁴¹ As a counterpoint to this view, Perkins maintains that Pauncefote was not used enough by London during the problems of 1895-1896, noting that he was only really used in the second half of negotiations.⁴² In handling the dispute, H.C. Allen comments that ‘no two men were better suited to smooth this situation over than Pauncefote and Bayard [US ambassador to Britain 1893-1897].’⁴³ Mowat, and others, also note that Pauncefote’s conversations

³⁸ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, pp. 19-20.

³⁹ Allen, *Relations*, p.532.

⁴⁰ Ritchie Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan 1998), p. 5

⁴¹ Joseph J. Mathews, ‘Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896,’ *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 50:2 (Sep. 1963), p. 212.

⁴² Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 13.

⁴³ Allen, *Relations*, p.534.

with the Liberal leader in the House of Commons, William Harcourt were important in breaking the impasse during 1896.⁴⁴

The failed Olney–Pauncefote Treaty of 1897, has not received a great deal of attention from historians, but is seen by Mowat as a project dear to Pauncefote's heart. He says that the failure of the treaty, intended to set up a permanent system of arbitration between the United States and Great Britain in the wake of the Venezuela affair, was a blow from which he never recovered. Mowat also describes how the treaty was killed off by a jealous Senate, wary of losing control of its powers.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Perkins questions whether the 'silverite' faction, hostile to Britain's gold standard was the important factor here.⁴⁶ The treaty is also examined at some length in Nelson Blake's article 'The Olney-Pauncefote Treaty of 1897' (*American Historical Review*, 50, 1944/5) which also noted the power of the Senate in determining the fate of treaties. The growing popularity of arbitration in general in this period is considered by Richard Langhorne in 'Arbitration: the first phase, 1870-1914,' in Michael Dockrill and Brian McKercher (eds), *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Much has been written about Anglo-American relations during the Spanish-American War of 1898, and as pointed out above, whilst it has been seen as a defining moment in relations between the two countries, more recent studies have questioned the depth of this change in attitude. One of the earliest studies to examine relations in the war in detail, Bertha Ann Reuter's *Anglo American Relations During the Spanish American War* (1924), seeks to show how relations were transformed by the event, and the close level of co-operation between the two countries. The sources of her book are, however, understandably restricted. Bradford Perkins points out how Great Britain made it clear to the United States 'in as many as a dozen statements' that from the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, England would take no action that the US opposed

⁴⁴ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 198, Burton, *Diplomacy*, p.13.

⁴⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp. 169-171.

⁴⁶ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.27.

and that 'no other power took such pains'.⁴⁷ He also maintains that the Spanish-American War had lasting (positive) consequences for Anglo-American relations.⁴⁸ However, R.G. Neale disputes this view, saying that the Spanish-American War was 'not a crucial event' and of more significance for relations was the rejection of British requests for co-operation in the Far East to preserve the 'Open Door'. This, says Neale, led to Britain drawing closer to France, Russia and Japan, and accepting 'spheres of influence' in the 'Far East'. He does, though, comment that Britain showed marked consideration for US interests during the war, despite rejection in the Far East.⁴⁹ In a similar vein, C. S. Campbell says that the positive mood created by the war 'should not be overemphasised,' and that this was demonstrated by the 'cooler temper' which 'became evident when Britain and America tried to take advantage of the wartime mood in order to clear up some remaining issues.'⁵⁰

The diplomacy preceding the Spanish-American war is the area in which Pauncefote has received most criticism, and most attention from historians. Some commentators, such as Lewis Einstein in *British Diplomacy in the Spanish-American War* (1964), say that contrary to the theme of promoting *rapprochement*, Pauncefote was in this case actually at the forefront of those who wished to prevent US intervention in Cuba in 1898. He thereby risked antagonising the United States, by organising diplomatic representations to that effect. R.G. Neale, in his study, *Britain and United States Expansion, 1898-1900* (1966) concurs with this view. In a similar vein, Francis Roy Bridge, in his article 'Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and the Concert of Europe on the Eve of the Spanish American War (*Mitteilung des Osterreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 1996:44) underlines how Pauncefote exceeded his government's guidelines in pursuing such a course.⁵¹ His faithful biographer is one of

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.41.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.63

⁴⁹ Neale, *Expansion*, pp.212-214.

⁵⁰ C.S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, p. 193.

⁵¹ Francis Roy Bridge, 'Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and the Concert of Europe on the Eve of the Spanish American War, *Mitteilung des Osterreichischen Staatsarchivs*, vol.44 (1996), pp. 87-108.

those who staunchly defends Pauncefote over this issue, suggesting he was tricked into supporting views that misrepresented his true stance.⁵²

The United States' relationship with Britain during the Second South African War has largely been regarded by historians as one of 'benevolent neutrality' that mirrored Britain's response to the United States during the Spanish-American War. Most writers on the subject still take their cue from John H. Ferguson's detailed study of the subject, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* (1939). He maintains that despite hostile public opinion within the United States, 'the American government acted throughout the war as if in friendly alliance with England ...'⁵³ Ferguson sees Secretary of State John Hay as the key figure in maintaining a sympathetic approach towards Britain, partly because of his natural Anglophilia, in the face of sometimes stiff internal opposition. Richard B. Mulanax's study, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy* (1994), also attributes Hay with maintaining cordial relations during this potentially difficult period. However, he maintains that it was more to do with Hay's desire to further US interests in areas such as the canal negotiations, and the Alaskan boundary dispute, rather than for sentimental reasons.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in *Britain, Boer and Yankee: the United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (1978), Thomas J. Noer suggests another reason for US friendship towards Britain; the prospect of gaining South African markets when Britain won the war.⁵⁵ Taking yet another slant, Dobson maintains that the Second South African War forced Britain to be conciliatory over the isthmian canal and the Alaskan issue.⁵⁶ In *The International Impact of the Boer War* (2001), William N. Tilchin suggests that it was this conflict, more than the Spanish-American War, that was a 'pivotal event in the history of American foreign relations,'

⁵² Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp. 218-220.

⁵³ John H. Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), p. ix.

⁵⁴ Richard B. Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), pp.199-209.

⁵⁵ Thomas J. Noer, *Britain, Boer and Yankee: the United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1978) p.89.

⁵⁶ Dobson, *Relations*, p.24.

and laid the foundations for Anglo-American co-operation in the twentieth century.⁵⁷ Pauncefote's role in relation to the Second South African War does not feature so heavily in studies as it does in other events, however, his close working relationship with Hay is noted by several writers, implying a contribution to good relations during the war.

The Hague Peace Conference of 1899 is not seen by C. S. Campbell as constituting a particularly significant development for Anglo-American relations.⁵⁸ Neither is it given large coverage by other Anglo-American studies of this period. Unsurprisingly, however, Pauncefote's role in it is given prominence in Mowat's biography, where he describes his 'huge contribution' to setting up a permanent court of arbitration.⁵⁹ Likewise, Calvin de Armond Davis in *The United States and the First Hague Peace Conference* (1962) notes Pauncefote's contributions to proceedings, but concluded that the conference itself was a failure.⁶⁰ However, a more positive assessment of it was made by David D. Caron in 'War and International Adjudication: Reflections on the 1899 Peace Conference,' (*American Journal of International Law*, 94:1, Jan. 2000).

The negotiation of the Hay-Pauncefote Canal Treaty has been dealt with in more depth, by several writers. There is a consensus that Salisbury's attempts to link the canal treaty with concessions over the Alaskan boundary dispute cut little ice in Washington, and the outcome - of basically conceding to US demands - was predictable, given Britain's position. As Perkins says 'Britain surrendered rights she no longer valued highly and was unlikely to be able to maintain except at the unthinkable cost of a very serious clash'.⁶¹ C. S. Campbell puts it similarly: 'it was not the Hay -

⁵⁷ Wilson, Keith M. (ed.). *The International Impact of the Boer War* (Chesham: Acumen, 2001), p. 107, p.119.

⁵⁸ Campbell Jr., *Understanding*, p.48.

⁵⁹ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.244.

⁶⁰ Calvin de Armond Davis, *The United States and the First Hague Peace Conference* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), p.212.

⁶¹ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.184.

Pauncefote Treaty that caused the shifting balance of power in the New World. Britain had no choice but to meet American wishes.⁶²

Despite this apparently inevitable British cave-in over sole American construction and fortification of the canal, Pauncefote is given credit for his final achievements in the long-winded negotiations. A.E. Campbell suggests that Pauncefote had done 'good work.'⁶³ He also credits Pauncefote with the realism to see, perhaps before Salisbury, that there was little point in continually pushing for further concessions on the issue, and for his skills in co-operating with Hay on the drafts.⁶⁴ Likewise David Burton notes that Pauncefote alerted the British government to the fact that any type of deal might be lost if the government did not agree to the Senate's changes.⁶⁵ The rejection of the first treaty, however, brings into focus Pauncefote's troublesome relationship with the Senate. Kenton J. Clymer in *John Hay, The Gentleman as Diplomat* (1975) takes a critical view of Hay and Pauncefote on this point. Partly because of British attempts to link the two issues, the Alaskan boundary dispute was not resolved until after Pauncefote's death. Nevertheless, R. H. Collin notes how 'Diplomats Hay, Pauncefote and Roosevelt worked together to minimise the possibility of a Canadian – American confrontation.'⁶⁶

Diplomacy and diplomats

As well as fitting into the historiography of the *rapprochement*, this thesis also fits into the historiography of works that consider the mechanics and influence of diplomacy and diplomats in this period. Important works in this respect are Zara Steiner *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (1969) and Raymond A. Jones *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1914* (1983). Both these studies note how the

⁶² Campbell Jr., *Understanding*, pp.237-239.

⁶³ Campbell, *Britain*, p.53.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, pp.60-74.

⁶⁵ Burton, *Diplomacy*, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁶ Collin, *Roosevelt*, p.178.

diplomatic service was more socially exclusive than even the Foreign Office, but chart how both were slowly evolving to become more professional organisations by the beginning of the twentieth century. Valerie Cromwell, in *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (1982) nonetheless asserts that the diplomatic service ‘remained the preserve of the landed classes’ until well into the twentieth century.’⁶⁷ On the question of the importance of diplomats, both Jones and Steiner come to the conclusion that by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, the influence of ambassadors was declining, although Steiner is the more equivocal on this point. Keith Neilson, however, in “‘Only a d...d marionette’? The influence of ambassadors on British foreign policy, 1904-1914’ (1996), takes issue with this view and maintains that ambassadors retained influence and were ‘active participants in the *process* of formulating and carrying out foreign policy.’⁶⁸ This view is supported by Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset Vol. I, Britain’s Liberal Empire 1897-1921* (1969) who maintains that in this period ‘the part played by the senior diplomats [in the making of policy] is undeniable.’⁶⁹ It is also a view put forward by D. C. Watt who refers to the ‘crucial and permanent element’ of the personnel of the Foreign Service in the formulation of British foreign policy.⁷⁰

Inevitably, the subject matter of this thesis raises the question of the merits of studying diplomacy in relative isolation from other influences, such as economics, on the relationship between Britain and the United States. On this point, Gordon Martel is of the view that the study of diplomacy is essential to understanding foreign policy in this era. He asserts that ‘Those who made foreign policy in Britain had only the most

⁶⁷ Valerie Cromwell, ‘The Diplomatic Service,’ in Steiner, Zara (ed.). *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (London: Times Books, 1982), p.552.

⁶⁸ Keith Neilson, “‘Only a d...d marionette’? The influence of ambassadors on British foreign policy, 1904-1914,’ in Dockrill, Michael & McKercher, Brian (eds.). *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.77.

⁶⁹ Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset Vol.I, Britain’s Liberal Empire, 1895-1901* (London:Methuen & co., 1969), p.56.

⁷⁰ Watt, Donald Cameron. *Personalities and Policies. Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 4.

rudimentary grasp of economics ... One searches in vain for sophisticated analyses of economic conditions and prospects in the areas of rivalry in the 1890s.' He adds that diplomacy in the time of Rosebery was 'relatively free of domestic constraints.'⁷¹ In a similar vein Edward Ingram eschews the idea that 'money controls everyone: that ambassadors ... are the unacknowledged agents of finance capitalism.' He takes issue with 'monocausal history,' such as the analysis made by Cain and Hopkins of 'gentlemanly capitalism,' saying that 'the precedence of economic issues is taken too much for granted; nor does it allow top people to think of anything other than money.'⁷² Zara Steiner in *Shadow and Substance British Foreign Policy 1895-1914* (1984) earlier put forward a similar (if less strident) view pointing to ambassadors' general dislike for dealing with economic matters and their preference for '*la haute politique*.'⁷³ Whilst conceding that 'the City represented a power which the Foreign Office could not and did not ignore,' she also came to the conclusion that 'the complexities of international trade and finance only marginally impinged on the minds of those brought up in an age when such questions were left for others to resolve.'⁷⁴ With regard to democratic control of foreign policy, Valerie Cromwell, 'The Diplomatic Service,' in *Aspects of Government in Nineteenth Century Britain* (1978) notes the lack of House of Commons control over foreign affairs.⁷⁵ Zara Steiner also points to the 'central role of the Foreign Secretary and his agents in the making of foreign policy,' and how 'few foreign secretaries expected their Cabinet colleagues would concern themselves with the details of foreign policy.'⁷⁶ More specifically, Andrew Roberts refers to Salisbury's habit of 'keeping his Cabinet colleagues slightly in the dark, and Parliament more so, [which] allowed him greater freedom of action than any other Foreign Secretary since the

⁷¹ Martel, *Rosebery*, p.ix.

⁷² Edward Ingram, *The British Empire as a World Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 51-52.

⁷³ Zara Steiner, 'Elitism and Foreign Policy. The Foreign Office before the Great War,' in McKercher, B. J. C. and Moss, D. J. (eds.). *Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy 1895-1939* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), p. 33.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, pp. 35-36.

⁷⁵ Valerie Cromwell, 'The Diplomatic Service,' in *Aspects of Government in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1978), p.48.

⁷⁶ Steiner, 'Elitism,' p.19, p.23.

Congress of Vienna, and far more than any since.’⁷⁷ This view of Salisbury’s policymaking is supported by Lord Strang, *The Foreign Office* (1955), who notes that ‘on occasion [he] kept his transactions with other Governments completely secret from the Foreign Office.’⁷⁸ However, a somewhat different view is taken by David Gillard, ‘Salisbury,’ in Keith Wilson (ed.), *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy from the Crimean War to the First World War* (1987). He maintains that after 1895, because of difficulties with his cabinet and failing health, Salisbury ‘suffered from a perhaps excessive respect for public opinion as a limiting factor in policy-making under the democratic conditions whose evolution he had opposed.’⁷⁹

On the role of diplomacy in the specific case of Anglo-American relations, C. S. Campbell, asserts that after the period of animosity created by the Civil War, it was always likely that there would be a ‘recurrence of relations at least as good as those of the late 1850s.’⁸⁰ However, he qualifies this by stating that this state of affairs would arise ‘given good diplomacy,’ and that the ‘avoidance of a third war [between Britain and the United States] was all-important for the rise of friendship and much of the credit for this must go to the diplomats.’⁸¹

Pauncefote

Because of their wide scope, the above works, like most discussions of Anglo-American relations in this period, do not focus specifically on Pauncefote, but because of his central role in negotiating such agreements as the ‘Hay-Pauncefote Treaty,’ he is a noted figure in several studies. One of the works that makes use of Pauncefote’s correspondence is Charles S. Campbell’s *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903*. Campbell’s focus is on the later period of his time in Washington, and relies most

⁷⁷ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.515.

⁷⁸ Lord Strang, *The Foreign Office*, (London: George Allen &Unwin, 1955), p.147.

⁷⁹ David Gillard, ‘Salisbury,’ in Keith Wilson (ed.), *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy from the Crimean War to the First World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p.121.

⁸⁰ C. S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, p.199.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p.199, p.200.

heavily on Pauncefote's correspondence with Salisbury, but does not examine Anglo-American relations at the First Hague Conference, or during the Second South African War in any great depth. He draws generally positive conclusions about Pauncefote's achievements. Where his achievements are discussed in other works he is portrayed as an able diplomat and negotiator, and one who earned the respect of both British and US politicians. H.C. Allen's comment that 'he proved to be one of the best of Britain's American ambassadors,' is not untypical. Allen also notes how 'Pauncefote arrived in the unpopularity of his predecessor, lived through a long period of maturing Anglo-American friendship, and died at his post amidst widespread grief.'⁸² Zara Steiner in her study *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (1969) similarly comments that 'he was one of the ablest men in the [diplomatic] service.'⁸³ Andrew Roberts joins in the chorus of approval when he says 'Salisbury's capacity for choosing men was exhibited in his appointment of ... Pauncefote, to Washington, and trusting him and supporting him when *en poste*.'⁸⁴ R.G. Neale also comments favourably on Pauncefote, saying 'One reason why Pauncefote was so successful an ambassador in the very difficult Washington post was his ability accurately and realistically to assess both the value of American expressions of goodwill, and the latent dangers of Anglophobia. He was always sceptical of sentimental effusions, but welcomed them as an aid to agreement over vital issues.'⁸⁵ Where David H. Burton comments on Pauncefote, he states that: 'the death of Sir Julian Pauncefote weakened the British position in Washington.'⁸⁶ Indeed, Peter Larsen's study, 'Sir Mortimer Durand in Washington: a study in Anglo-American relations in the era of Theodore Roosevelt' *Mid - America*, 66 (April-July, 1984) demonstrates how this became true, when Anglo-American relations were damaged by Durand's ineffectual diplomacy. By implication Larsen's work shows that the good relations of Britain and the United States had come about through the work of men such as Pauncefote. On the vital question of

⁸² Allen, *Relations*, pp. 521-22

⁸³ Steiner, *Foreign Office*, p.177.

⁸⁴ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 490.

⁸⁵ Neale, *Expansion*, p. 158.

⁸⁶ Burton, *Diplomacy*, p.33.

rapprochement, however, Perkins maintains that Pauncefote ‘made little effort to improve American opinion [of Britain] even senatorial opinion’. He also portrays Pauncefote as someone who was cynical about sentimental feeling between the two countries.⁸⁷

US senators aside, Pauncefote’s relationships with the political elite in both Britain and the United States is described, by all writers who consider him at all, as being good. His relationship with John Hay, Secretary of State, is described by the writer Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907) as being a particularly important one.⁸⁸ According to Robert L. Gale, *John Hay* (1978) ‘Pauncefote revered Hay’ and David H. Burton notes the way the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty was drafted with particularly close co-operation between the two men, and that they were on ‘the best personal terms’.⁸⁹ Again, R. H. Collin notes that Hay and Pauncefote were friends.⁹⁰ Cecil Spring Rice’s biographer, David Burton, *Cecil Spring Rice: A Diplomat’s Life* (1990) also notes that within the British embassy, Pauncefote was ‘a much respected chief’.⁹¹

There are no recent books or theses specifically studying Pauncefote’s role in Washington. The only biography of him is *The Life of Lord Pauncefote, First Ambassador to the United States*, by R. B. Mowat, written in 1929. This is an uncritical assessment of Pauncefote’s career. It emphasises his belief in arbitration and describes his ‘mission’ in Washington as being aimed at creating a ‘natural sentiment of friendship’ between Great Britain and the United States. Mowat describes Pauncefote as having a ‘tolerant international outlook, a solid English character and sound common

⁸⁷ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 13.

⁸⁸ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (London and New York: Penguin, 1907, 1995 edn.), p.356.

⁸⁹ Robert L. Gale, *John Hay* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), p.37, Burton, *Diplomacy*, p.29.

⁹⁰ Collin, *Roosevelt* p.168.

⁹¹ Burton, *Cecil Spring-Rice: A Diplomat’s Life* (Cranbery, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1990), p. 29.

sense.’⁹² He also quotes the US politician J.W. Foster in describing Pauncefote as ‘methodical and attentive to business, a man of sound judgement, he impressed everyone who came into contact with him, with his perfect sincerity and conscientiousness.’⁹³ The work relies on published documents, some correspondence with Lord Salisbury, and secondary sources, but does not clearly reveal where the author obtained other information. Whenever Pauncefote’s reputation was called in to question, Mowat defends him, and does not attempt an analysis of issues that might show him in an unflattering light. The other published work, specifically about Pauncefote, is a chapter in G.W. Smalley’s *Anglo-American Memories* (1912) which is also full of praise for the ambassador, describing him as ‘the greatest Ambassador England ever sent to the United States.’ However, Smalley does note that Pauncefote was unpopular with US senators, saying ‘Senators thought his simplicity and friendly independence a rebuke to their pretensions, and resented it’ and suggests this hindered his efforts at concluding treaties with the United States, although he does not explore this issue in any detail.⁹⁴ Thus, no specific study of Pauncefote has been made since 1929, and there has never been a study focussing exclusively on his Washington career. This gap seems a surprising one, since he played a central role in a significant period in Anglo-American relations, a gap that this thesis seeks to fill.

⁹² Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 5

⁹³ *ibid*, p. 141.

⁹⁴ Smalley, *Anglo-American Memories* (London: Duckworth & co., 1912), p. 178.

Chapter Two

The Appointment of Pauncefote: Background, Context and Initial Reception

... the character of Lord Pauncefote may be said to have been the first stone in the bridge which led America from the Venezuelan dispute to co-operation with us in the First World War.

A L Kennedy, *Old Diplomacy and New, 1876-1922, from Salisbury to Lloyd-George* (1922).¹

Introduction

In this chapter the background to Julian Pauncefote's appointment to Washington and his subsequent elevation to the post of ambassador will be examined. The purpose of this analysis is to emphasise how highly he was regarded by his contemporaries, and how important the Washington legation's role had become in the view of British diplomats and politicians by the 1890s. The first section of the chapter will examine the immediate circumstances surrounding Pauncefote's appointment in order to demonstrate how seriously Salisbury took relations with the United States, and the difficulties facing a new minister to Washington in 1889. Pauncefote's background prior to his Washington appointment will then be considered, highlighting that the nature of his transfer from the Foreign Office was, in some respects, ground breaking. It will also illustrate that he had a positive and well-established professional relationship with the Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, before reaching the United States, a fact that was to prove helpful later in his career. The chapter will then move on to look at how Pauncefote was initially received in the United States, particularly by the press. This was an especially important issue at the time because his predecessor, Lord Sackville (formerly Lionel West, then Sackville West), was dismissed after an indiscretion in this respect. Following this, the question of the status of the Washington legation in the late 1880s and early 1890s will be examined. This section will demonstrate that several contemporary diplomats and politicians considered the

¹ A. L. Kennedy, *Old Diplomacy and New, 1876-1922, from Salisbury to Lloyd-George* (London: John Murray, 1922).

Washington legation to be of greater diplomatic importance than the embassies in Paris, St. Petersburg or Berlin, even before it was formally raised in status to the rank of embassy. After this, the key question of why the Washington mission was changed from legation to embassy status will be examined, and of whether Pauncefote becoming ambassador there was down to his ability or was a mere formality. Lastly, the way in which the embassy operated will briefly be examined.

Sackville, Salisbury and Pauncefote

To understand fully the significance of Pauncefote's appointment to the Washington legation in 1889, it is necessary to examine the circumstances surrounding his predecessor's departure from the post. This is in order to show why the appointment of a new minister to Washington at this time was a particularly sensitive and important task for the British government. Lord Sackville had been British minister to Washington since 1881. A career diplomat, he had apparently enjoyed good relations with his US counterparts, until the events that led to him being ousted from his post.² His ultimate, and bad tempered, dismissal from Washington, which has been well documented, meant that Anglo-American diplomatic relations were at their worst since the immediate post-Civil War period.³ In summary, Sackville was duped into advising a private correspondent, who had written to him under the false name of Charles F. Murchisson, to vote for the Democratic candidate, and president incumbent, Grover Cleveland, in the forthcoming presidential elections, because he considered this would be best for relations with Britain. This letter was then deliberately leaked to a newspaper by the correspondent, who had used a false name in order to obtain Sackville's view on the matter. The President, instead of being flattered by the British endorsement, was angered by it, since he believed that backing from such a quarter would be seen as a sign of weakness on his part by the anti-British section of the electorate, and in particular the Irish voters. Obviously, his position did not endear him to the Republicans either. The ensuing row ended when Sackville was sent his

² Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.112

³ *ibid*, pp.112-115, and CS Campbell, 'Sackville' in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44:4, pp. 635-648.

passports by the Secretary of State, and the British were informed by the US administration that they would no longer recognise his authority. Lord Salisbury's - not untypical - reaction was to wait before appointing a successor. Pauncefote's biographer, R. B. Mowat, concluded that there was no clear reason for such a delay, but it is clear that Salisbury was faced with a finely balanced decision, and that waiting until the forthcoming presidential elections were over before making a new appointment was an understandable stance.⁴

The 'Sackville affair', as it became known, certainly soured relations between the US and Great Britain. It brought to the surface some of the latent anti-British feelings that could still be easily stirred during election campaigns by various factions in the United States, despite years of relative tranquillity in Anglo-American affairs. Antipathy towards Britain had been a natural attitude for many Americans since the War of Independence, and one that had been reinforced, amongst other issues, by the British Government's apparent sympathy for the South in the Civil War of 1861-5.⁵ Since the *Alabama* claims (demanding compensation for losses incurred by the US inflicted by British built ships during the Civil War) had been settled in 1871, Anglo-American relations had not been stirred by any major dispute. However, historic suspicion, coupled with issues such as disputed fishing rights with Canada, Irish-American feeling towards Britain, and trade disputes bubbled under the surface.⁶ At least one historian has noted that there was a rising tide of anti-British in the feeling in the United States, due to Irish problems, during the tenure of Lord Sackville.⁷ Also, during the 1888 election campaign, Cleveland adopted a 'policy of considerable vigour' towards Canada, that had potentially negative implications for the Anglo-American relationship.⁸ It was therefore unsurprising that the Sackville affair attracted considerable press attention on both sides of the Atlantic, and, being election year, the

⁴ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 115.

⁵ Summarised in Ovendale, *Relations*, pp.1-4.

⁶ C. S. Campbell, *Relations*, p.7.

⁷ Allen, *Relations*, p.521.

⁸ *ibid.*

President could not ignore it easily. Sections of the US press were quick to pick up on the mood. *The New York Times* reached the caustic conclusion that ‘Lord Sackville has committed an indiscretion of which nothing in his known antecedents led us to suppose him incapable.’⁹ Such a comment indicated that Americans were still highly sensitive to what they interpreted as interference from the ‘mother country.’ Michael Herbert, serving at the British legation in Washington at the time, described his view of this sensitivity in a letter to Eric Barrington, Salisbury’s private secretary, writing: ‘You must live in America to realise how easily mountains are made out of molehills and how sensitive and ready to take offence their people are...’¹⁰ A *New York World* article, of October 1888, accurately surmised the pressure of public opinion on Sackville and the level of American sensitivity, when it commented that

Minister West will probably discover in due time that as a British diplomatist he has made a mistake in even discussing privately the political affairs of the Government to which he is accredited. He will be pilloried from now until the election.¹¹

The New York Sun swiftly demonstrated the truth of this assertion when it declared the following day that ‘Lord Sackville could no longer be regarded as a welcome personage at Washington. His diplomatic usefulness ends here and he should receive his passports.’¹² This piece of journalism proved to be prescient, whilst Sackville’s own assertion that ‘the real opinion of all respectable Americans is in my favour’ counted for nought, in terms of his diplomatic career.¹³

However, condemnation from the US press was not unanimous, and the *New York Herald’s* attitude signalled an underlying desire for continued good relations with Britain despite the events of the Sackville affair. It commented that

⁹ *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1888, p.7, col. b, quoting a *New York Times* article.

¹⁰ Herbert to Barrington, 14 Dec. 1888, Hatfield House, Salisbury papers, vol. 77, US 1887-90, f.57.

¹¹ *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1888, p. 5, col. a, quoting *The New York World*.

¹² *ibid*, quoting the *New York Sun*.

¹³ Sackville to Salisbury, 28 Oct. 1888, Salisbury papers, vol. 77, USA, 1887-90, f.30.

What we believe the better sense of the American people will conclude is that the President has allowed his temper to get the better of his judgement in this matter, especially in that he has permitted his Secretary of State to bluster, and make mouths at the British Minister as though he were a school boy.

It added, in a sentence that demonstrated Americans did appreciate the supposed subtleties of British diplomacy: ‘Lord Salisbury has by mere silence gained an advantage for his government.’¹⁴

However, Salisbury’s subsequent delay in appointing a successor cannot, in fact, have eased the situation between the two countries. Emphasising the rise in anti – British feeling created by the affair, H. C. Allen took the view that its after effects made the Venezuela dispute of 1895 ‘much more serious.’¹⁵ By implication, it made the job of any new minister to the United States much more difficult. Even the sanguine approach of the *New York Herald*, illustrated above, had quickly turned to frustration at Salisbury’s silence by December 1888, when it commented:

...if Salisbury insists upon ending diplomatic intercourse between England and the United States that is his loss not ours. His determination is only another added to the list of grave blunders which he has lately committed, and will probably accelerate the downfall of his Ministry....Salisbury could have spared himself needless vexation and saved himself and us from this painful experience by promptly sending a more acceptable official. This he should have done.¹⁶

This delay in making an appointment also caused some anxiety at the time amongst British politicians, as the Earl of Dunraven’s comments when speaking in the House of Lords on the matter demonstrate. He commented, quite reasonably, that

... the delay might be taken by the people of the United States as intended as a punishment for what had occurred in the case of the late Minister, or that they might

¹⁴ *The Times*, 1 Nov. 1888, quoting the *New York Herald*.

¹⁵ Allen, *Relations*, p.522.

¹⁶ *New York Herald*, Dec. 1888 (cutting, undated).

retaliate by delaying the appointment of a Minister to London, the result of which would be very much like a suspension of diplomatic relations.¹⁷

The Earl had prefaced these remarks by saying:

Though diplomatically speaking the United States was a foreign country, still our relations with them were quite different from any other foreign countries, and we did not regard the inhabitants as foreign in the ordinary acceptance of the word ... Any ill-feeling or misunderstanding between the two countries would be greatly deplored. It was our bounden duty to do everything that we could, and make any sacrifice that could be made without dishonour, to create and maintain good feeling between the two countries.¹⁸

Although at the time Lord Salisbury refused to comment on any pending appointment, the sentiments expressed by the Earl of Dunraven about maintaining goodwill between the two countries – which went beyond the normal diplomatic niceties - were very similar to those expressed by Pauncefote several times during his career in Washington. It was also a sentiment shared by senior politicians such as Joseph Chamberlain, who made his well-known speech in Birmingham proposing an Anglo-American alliance in 1898.¹⁹ In the same year Chamberlain privately and unofficially discussed the prospect of an Anglo-German alliance with the German Ambassador, Paul Graf von Hatzfeldt. When this initiative rapidly foundered, Salisbury's bluntly commented to his German colleague that 'you demand too much for your friendship.' Despite facing difficulties, it was not a phrase that he chose to use when negotiating with the United States.²⁰ However, as the Sackville incident and subsequent events in the 1890s showed, this did not mean that amicable Anglo-American relations were guaranteed.

¹⁷ *The Times*, 22 Dec. 1888, p. 6, col. c.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England 1830-1902* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 456-457.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 469, Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1992), p. 384.

Although figures such as the Earl of Dunraven urged a swift appointment, a hasty and ill-considered choice could have been damaging, both to Anglo-American relations and to the British diplomatic service's finely tuned sense of protocol. Had Salisbury appointed a 'time server', or, alternatively, a relatively junior member of the service to the post of minister in Washington, American sensibilities, already affronted in some quarters by the supposed high-handedness of Lord Sackville, might have been further offended, making an uneasy situation worse. However, from the British point of view, since the Washington mission did not yet have embassy status (what this meant in practical terms is discussed later in the chapter) someone of ambassadorial rank could not realistically be posted there, since it would have been, in effect, a demotion. Into this consideration also had to be mixed the growing realisation in British circles that the United States was a 'coming power' and good relations with that country could be a useful counterweight to hostility Britain faced in other quarters, particularly over colonial issues. Thus it was that Salisbury arrived at the solution of appointing Pauncefote. The appointment of the permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office to the Washington post can be viewed as an attempt to strike the right balance between going some way to restoring relations with the United States, whilst not upsetting British diplomatic protocol. The less than cordial atmosphere in which he was appointed also highlighted the difficulties involved in the task that Pauncefote had ahead of him. Sackville's own view of the difficulties of operating in the United States was made clear a few years later, when he complained in 1895 about

... the political degradation which avowedly exists in the United States, [and] the difficulties which a British Minister has to contend with in maintaining amicable relations with a Government influenced solely by the 'political necessity' of the moment, and whose action is controlled by a faction hostile to his own country.²¹

²¹ L. Sackville West, *My Mission to the United States: 1881-1889* (Privately published, 1895), p.52.

Pauncefote's pre-Washington career and relationship with Salisbury

The move outlined above was somewhat unorthodox, and since Pauncefote had not followed the usual career path to his post, it was met with some criticism in British circles.²² As Raymond Jones has pointed out, it had never 'been the practice in the Foreign Office for its senior officials to be given, even for temporary periods an overseas posting'.²³ Jones underlines this by saying that 'Pauncefote's move marks a new and significant departure in Foreign Office practice ... this appointment marks the real and continuing process by which the senior positions in the diplomatic service and the Foreign Office came to be regarded as interchangeable.'²⁴ He cites as examples Sir Philip Currie's subsequent appointment to Constantinople, and Sir Francis Bertie's postings to Rome and Paris, both from the Foreign Office, as well as the reverse flow from the diplomatic service after the turn of the century.²⁵ Thus the solution arrived at, in replacing Lord Sackville with Pauncefote, was something of a novel one.

Indeed, Pauncefote had faced a similar situation when he was appointed to the post of permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office in 1882. As Zara Steiner has pointed out, his was 'a rather unexpected appointment' because he was viewed as an outsider, coming as he did from a legal background, having served as first legal assistant secretary at the Colonial Office, and then the Foreign Office.²⁶ However, the Foreign Secretary, Earl Granville considered that Pauncefote possessed 'character and ability,' and that he was also popular.²⁷ Despite his apparent popularity, Jones' study of the nineteenth-century Foreign Office also makes the point that 'Pauncefote's appointment to the Foreign Office post was criticised at the time by those who felt that a career official should have been appointed.' He also asserts that Pauncefote's

²² Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.119.

²³ Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p.187

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Steiner, *Foreign Office*, p.8.

²⁷ Quoted in Raymond Jones *The Nineteenth Century Foreign Office, An Administrative History* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson. 1971), p.76.

background was 'unexceptional'.²⁸ In relative terms this may have been true. Pauncefote's father was an untitled barrister who had inherited a 'small' manor house with several farms in Gloucestershire, which his elder brother inherited in 1843.²⁹ Julian Pauncefote had been educated in various schools in Europe, and subsequently at the then new Marlborough College, before entering the Inner Temple and being called to the Bar in 1854, where he practised as a conveyancing barrister. He went out to Hong Kong in 1863, where he made his early reputation as attorney-general after his appointment in 1866. After a stint as chief justice in the Leeward Isles, he returned to London and took up the post of legal assistant under-secretary at the Colonial Office in 1875. He was then appointed to the same position at the Foreign Office in 1876.³⁰

It was in this job that Pauncefote began what was to be a long professional association with Lord Salisbury. Pauncefote's relationship with Lord Salisbury must rate as the most important of his career. The two men had a particularly strong, and particularly lengthy, working relationship. In various different guises, and with some interruptions, the two had a professional relationship that spanned twenty-two years. When Salisbury first became Foreign Secretary in 1878, Pauncefote was legal assistant under secretary at the Foreign Office. By the time Salisbury became Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in 1885, Pauncefote had already been permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office for three years. Thus, by the time Pauncefote was posted to Washington in 1889, the two were already well acquainted with one another, and Salisbury must have felt he was appointing a well-known quantity to the United States. The extent to which this long relationship helped Pauncefote influence events over the subsequent eleven years will be returned to in subsequent chapters. In general terms, however, a few short extracts from their correspondence give a flavour of their good relations over the years. In February 1886, for example, Pauncefote wrote to Salisbury that 'Your kind minute of yesterday about the Office has given immense

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 76.

²⁹ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp. 1-2.

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 30.

gratification.³¹ Similarly, in a note to Pauncefote over matters in Abyssinia in 1887, Salisbury wrote that ‘Your draft is as good as anything I can suggest.’³² And once Pauncefote was posted to the United States, Salisbury seemed equally pleased with his progress. He commented, for example, in June 1889 that ‘You seem to be getting on admirably with your new function - and to have made the most favourable impression’.³³ Again, in 1890, Salisbury congratulated Pauncefote on his progress writing: ‘I hope you will be as successful in conducting these discussions [on the Bering Sea issue] to a close as you were with respect to the Extradition treaty ... which has been a very great success indeed.’³⁴ Later on, even when Salisbury was out of office, Pauncefote wrote to him saying that ‘I am rejoiced to see ... that you are foremost again in the struggle against the destruction of the Empire. I need not say with what interest I shall follow your Lordship’s chivalrous efforts to avert such a calamity.’³⁵ Positive comments such as this (which also give a rare clue to Pauncefote’s political sympathies) are scattered throughout the two men’s correspondence. Whilst they do not in themselves mean that Pauncefote had influence over Salisbury, they do imply he was in a better position than most to have his ideas considered by the most powerful politician of his era. Indeed, any praise from such a quarter was in itself noteworthy, since, as Karina Urbach has noted: ‘It was not in the culture of the Foreign Office to praise their diplomats.’³⁶ Neither was it in the culture of Lord Salisbury himself, as his son, Lord Edward Cecil once commented. When speaking of his father’s impression of Lord Kitchener he said that ‘My father was much impressed with him. That I clearly remember, for my father was not often impressed.’³⁷ As suggested above, this positive relationship with Salisbury also raises the question of Pauncefote’s political leanings. Despite his apparent ease with, and support for, the Tory statesman,

³¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 5 Feb. 1886, Salisbury papers, Pauncefote correspondence, 1878-86, f.126.

³² Salisbury to Pauncefote 12 Oct. 1887, Salisbury papers, Pauncefote correspondence 1887, f.282.

³³ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 26 June 1889, Salisbury papers, vol. 77, US 1887-90, f.264.

³⁴ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 28 March 1890, *ibid*, fos. 273-4.

³⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 6 June 1893, Salisbury papers vol. 78, US 1891-92, f.377.

³⁶ Karina Urbach, *Bismarck’s Favourite Englishman. Lord Odo Russell’s Mission to Berlin* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p.209.

³⁷ A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury 1830-1903, Portrait of a Statesman* (London: John Murray, 1953), p.280.

most of Pauncefote's other surviving private correspondence is with Liberal politicians. In particular, he corresponded with William Harcourt, Charles Dilke and James Bryce on Anglo-American matters.³⁸ Pauncefote's long running interest in arbitration was also something closer to Liberal than Conservative hearts. Meanwhile, in the United States, Matilda Gresham, wife of the US Secretary of State, Walter Gresham, later maintained that Pauncefote was 'a true Democrat at heart.'³⁹ Pauncefote's biographer's assertion that 'Pauncefote of course had no politics. His interest was in international goodwill' may seem somewhat trite, but he does seem to have made friends on both sides of the political divide, and it is difficult to discern a decisive political allegiance.⁴⁰

Salisbury's satisfaction with Pauncefote can also, to some degree, be gauged by that politician's opinion of his diplomatic contemporaries. Whilst it would be overstating the case to say he was the only high ranking diplomat in whom Salisbury had substantial faith (he rated Sir Frank Lascelles and Sir Philip Currie highly, for example) his comments about some of his colleagues do emphasise the esteem in which he held Pauncefote.⁴¹ Raymond Jones' study of the Royal Archives are revealing on this point. For example, when considering possible candidates for the Paris Embassy in the 1880s Salisbury considered that Lionel West was 'not clever,' Ford was 'not sufficiently polished,' Petre, Rumbold, Corbett and Stuart were 'all stupid,' and Monson had 'not enough ability.'⁴² When some of these candidates were later chosen for other embassies, Salisbury was no more flattering. For example, when Sir Clare Ford was appointed to Constantinople, he was considered 'wanting both in capacity and knowledge;' Salisbury told Queen Victoria that 'the choice of Ford is not ideal but on the whole the best can be made.'⁴³ In a similar vein, when Sir Robert Morier's time at St. Petersburg came to an end, Salisbury took the view that 'he had never been a good

³⁸ Bodleian Library, Harcourt papers dep. 444, 97, 232, 233, 241. British Library, Dilke papers, Add. MS 43882, 1881-1902. Bodleian Library, Bryce papers, MS Bryce 116, MSS Bryce, USA22.

³⁹ Matilda Gresham, *The Life of Walter Quintin Gresham* (Chicago: Rand McNally & co., 1919), p.802.

⁴⁰ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.129.

⁴¹ Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p. 188.

⁴² *ibid*, p. 185

⁴³ *ibid*, p.186.

ambassador there'.⁴⁴ It was not just Salisbury who held such views, however. Rosebery, writing to Queen Victoria in 1893, felt there was a lack of proper candidates for important embassies.⁴⁵ However, it seems that none of Salisbury's immediate contemporaries faced such withering criticism from their political masters as Disraeli meted out to Sir Andrew Buchanan, when ambassador to Vienna in 1876. He considered that

As for Buchanan, he is a hopeless case. He has been a public servant for ½ a century and I knew him almost at the commencement of that time – at Constantinople in 1830. I can therefore testify that it is not age which has enfeebled his intelligence or dimmed his powers. He was and ever has been a hopeless mediocrity.⁴⁶

Pauncefote's name is never mentioned by British politicians when discussing those lacking ability; this lack of criticism would seem to underline how highly they rated him, and, implicitly, the importance of having a particularly reliable official in Washington.

Returning to consider Pauncefote's appointment at the Foreign Office, the post seems to have been a particularly burdensome one for him. He repeatedly complained that he was doing more work than his status suggested, drawing attention to this fact in his correspondence with Salisbury. In a letter of May 1879, for example, he complained that 'The work which devolved on me in this office, for various reasons is far in excess of what was contemplated when my appointment was created three years ago.'⁴⁷ In another letter on the same point he complained that he did the work of 'an able bodied Under Secretary, if not of two, in addition to my legal duties.'⁴⁸ This series of

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.187.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.188.

⁴⁶ Disraeli to Derby 1876, *ibid*, p.179.

⁴⁷ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 19 May, 1879, Salisbury papers, Julian Pauncefote correspondence, 1878-86, f.60.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 26 May 1879, f.64.

complaints culminated in him suggesting that he be appointed to the post of legal under secretary and also demonstrated that he had a high opinion of his own abilities, writing:

I venture to think that my long services abroad and at home give me some claim to this position which would certainly be more in harmony with the high offices I have held in the colonies and with my Professional Standing [sic] ... my functions at the Foreign Office are as important and responsible as those of any Under Secretary. Indeed, as your Lordship is aware, though called an 'assistant' I practically discharge the function of an Under secretary, and all the other Legal Assistant Under Secretaries are junior to me in every sense ... I have never received any special mark of favour from the government – not even the modest CMG ... I trust your Lordship will be disposed to recommend the promotion which I now solicit.⁴⁹

Evidently, Pauncefote's correspondence with Salisbury on this matter is strikingly frank. It demonstrates that from an early stage Pauncefote felt able to express his views openly to the future Prime Minister, and, just as importantly, that his expression of such views were not dismissed as the moans of a 'time server.' By the following April, Pauncefote had been awarded both the CB and the KCMG. In 1882 Pauncefote was promoted to the position of Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office.⁵⁰ Even after he took up this senior position, James Bryce, who had been Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, pointed out that much of the legal work still fell to Pauncefote, as until 1886, he was the 'only lawyer in the office' and 'very able and competent.'⁵¹ Thus, although his hard work was obviously recognised, the burden of it did not appear to lessen with promotion.

This mixture of legal and foreign experience was, as R.B. Mowat has pointed out, to serve him well when sent to Washington, not least because State Department posts were often held by lawyers.⁵² The fact that Pauncefote's appointment was, by late

⁴⁹ *ibid*, 16 Aug. 1879, f.72.

⁵⁰ Mowat, *Pauncefote and the*, p. 39.

⁵¹ British Library, Royal Commission on Civil Establishments, 4th Report, 1890, p.78.

⁵² Robert B. Mowat, *The Diplomatic Relations of Great Britain and the United States* (London: Edward Arnold and co., 1925), and Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.156.

Victorian standards, somewhat untypical, is underlined by looking at the credentials of his successor in the Foreign Office. Sir Philip Currie had been a career clerk in the Foreign Office (as was Sir Thomas Sanderson, his successor), was Eton educated, a cousin of the Earl of Kimberley and friend of Salisbury himself.⁵³ Three quarters of all diplomats appointed between 1860 and 1914 had been to one of the six major public schools; just under three quarters of 'career diplomats' who attained the rank of ambassador between 1860-1914 were aristocrats.⁵⁴ Pauncefote then, was used to following an unorthodox career path. However, whilst the nature of Pauncefote's later move to Washington was therefore out of the ordinary, it was not unprecedented in terms of moving between the different branches of foreign administration. Raymond Jones has pointed out that whilst none of his immediate predecessors had transferred to the diplomatic service, Henry Addington had been appointed permanent under secretary after having been a minister to the United States in the 1820s.⁵⁵ However, the fact that the move was in the reverse direction from Pauncefote's is noteworthy. In the 1820s, Addington's move *from* the developing former colony to the post of permanent under secretary would have been considered a promotion. Even by the 1850s, a posting *to* Washington was still not seen as a step up the career ladder, as Karina Urbach has noted, in charting the rise of Odo Russell towards the Berlin ambassadorship.⁵⁶ However, by 1888, with the Civil War well behind it, the United States was beginning to challenge Great Britain in terms of economic output, and reflecting on the need for greater naval power, Washington was no longer considered a backwater of the diplomatic world. As Norman Rich has commented, it was surprising how long European governments took to recognise this fact.⁵⁷ Karina Urbach has made a similar observation about Britain's relationship with the other new challenger to Britain's pre-eminence, Germany, in the early 1880s. She commented on the 'general indifference' that existed in London where German affairs were concerned.⁵⁸ What is interesting is

⁵³ Jones, *Foreign Office*, p.77.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p.143.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Foreign Office*, p.76.

⁵⁶ Urbach, *Englishman*, p. 31.

⁵⁷ Rich, *Diplomacy*, p. 347.

⁵⁸ Urbach, *Englishman*, pp.209-210.

not only how apparently slow British policy makers were in recognising the coming 'new world order', but also how differently they reacted to the manoeuvres of the two powers concerned. C. J. Bartlett, like others, has argued that 'distance and the current modesty of that power's ambitions outside its own continent facilitated *rapprochement*,' whereas 'Germany was nearer, and her economic power was being translated into more substantial threats ... to perceived British interests.'⁵⁹ Ronald Hyam meanwhile asserted that 'the different reaction to Germany was not so rational,' and that 'Britain had no conflicting interests only because she chose to have none.'⁶⁰ This view is implicitly supported by Zara Steiner, who has pointed out that in this period Britain and Germany had 'nothing concrete to fight over.'⁶¹

Pauncefote, by the late 1880s, had recognised the changing status quo with regard to the United States, and his move to Washington can perhaps be seen as evidence that Salisbury had too. Pauncefote had requested in 1887 that he be considered for the move to Washington, when the post next became available, and Salisbury's response, as we shall see, was apparently favourable.⁶² In a letter marked 'secret' Pauncefote said he was prompted to ask for the post because he had heard that Salisbury was considering making some changes in diplomatic posts; he went as far as mentioning Lionel West by name as somebody who might be moved. As earlier, when complaining about his status as assistant legal under secretary at the Foreign Office, Pauncefote was not overcome with modesty about emphasising his own abilities in his correspondence with Salisbury. Of his suitability for the Washington mission he said that it was a post '... requiring considerable experience of the kind which I have acquired in the course of my career.'⁶³ Whilst he felt sufficiently confident in his standing with Salisbury to make such a request, he was also sufficiently diplomatic to end it by saying: 'I hope you will not think it necessary to answer this letter which I

⁵⁹ C. J. Bartlett, *Defence and Diplomacy: Britain and the Great Powers 1815-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 111-112.

⁶⁰ Hyam, *Imperial Century*, p. 203.

⁶¹ Steiner, quoted in Bartlett, *Defence*, p.111.

⁶² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 11 Oct. 1887, Salisbury papers, Pauncefote correspondence 1878-86, f.278.

⁶³ *ibid.*

have marked secret as it would be very undesirable for many reasons that it should transpire that I have made such a suggestion.’⁶⁴ In giving his reasons for the request, Pauncefote said that he would be glad to wind up his official career with a diplomatic appointment. He magnanimously added that he felt that eleven years service in the upper ranks of the administrative departments was a sufficiently long time, both for the good of the public service and for individuals.⁶⁵ A request such as this, coming from the most senior civil servant in the Foreign Office, who had the full confidence of a powerful Prime Minister, reflected the growing status of the legation in Washington. Despite his assertion that Salisbury need not reply to his request, the Prime Minister obviously did, and in positive terms. His actual reply appears not to have survived, but from Pauncefote’s gushing response to it, it can be surmised that it was only a matter of time before he was to receive the call to Washington. It is also indicative of the esteem with which Salisbury apparently viewed him, as well as Pauncefote’s somewhat cloying style when responding to praise from colleagues. He wrote:

I cannot adequately express to you how grateful I feel for the most kind and flattering manner in which you received the request I ventured to make about Washington – anyone can be proud of even faint praise from such a quarter – but the terms in which you speak of my humble efforts here can never be forgotten and I will do my best to be more deserving of them so long as I have the great honour and privilege of serving under you.⁶⁶

However, the exchange of correspondence is an interesting one, not just because of what it implies about the relationship between Salisbury and Pauncefote, and Britain and the United States, but also its implications for how Salisbury would react to the aforementioned Sackville affair. The letters strongly suggest that a year before the affair broke, Salisbury was already contemplating withdrawing Lionel West from the Washington legation, and replacing him with Pauncefote. This evidence therefore underlines the impression that Salisbury’s delay in appointing West’s successor was

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 14 Oct. 1887, Salisbury papers, Pauncefote correspondence 1887, fols. 293-4.

simply tactical, rather than due to indecision, despite the diplomatic protocol problems referred to earlier in the chapter. The confidence that Salisbury had in Pauncefote meant that the decision over his appointment to the Washington legation had effectively been made, even before West was forced to leave his post.

The response to Pauncefote's appointment to Washington

As to how Pauncefote was received in the United States and those beyond the immediate diplomatic circle, his initial appointment apparently hit the right note. On Pauncefote's arrival in Washington, *The Times* Washington correspondent wrote, on 23 April 1889, that he had made '... an excellent impression, having successfully met the newspaper interviewers, whose questions he answered kindly, but with diplomatic skill.' Considering that it was the newspapers that had led to his predecessor's downfall, hitting the right note with the US press must have been of greater significance to Pauncefote than would normally have been the case with a new diplomatic appointment. An early piece of correspondence from Pauncefote in Washington to Salisbury showed his keen interest in the reports of the press, which did not wane during his entire time in the United States. He commented that 'The Press all over the US (of which I receive myriads of cuttings) continues to be friendly and complimentary to me. I am glad to say that my appointment has given satisfaction on this side.'⁶⁷ It is perhaps significant that one of his first acts on arrival was to meet Whitelaw Reid, owner of the powerful *New York Tribune*.⁶⁸ Their meeting appears to have gone well; Pauncefote described Whitelaw Reid as a 'bright intelligent man' and seems to have been flattered by the fact that he invited him to lunch with 'all the available celebrities in town.'⁶⁹ As will be seen later, however, Pauncefote's satisfaction in his relations with the press soon disappeared, and he became wary and critical of US journalism. However, one US journalist, G. W. Smalley of *The [London] Times*, maintained a high opinion of Pauncefote throughout his time in the United States. Commenting on

⁶⁷ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 10 May 1889, Salisbury papers, Pauncefote correspondence, 1888-90, f.82.

⁶⁸ *The Washington Post*, 24 April 1889, p.1, col. d.

⁶⁹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 3 May 1889, Salisbury papers, Pauncefote correspondence, 1888-90, f.74.

Pauncefote's initial appointment, he wrote a few years later that 'What he [Lord Salisbury] most cared for was to promote a good understanding between his country and ours. He thought Sir Julian the best man fitted for that task, and therefore made him minister. Never was a happier choice; never one which more signally evinced Lord Salisbury's judgement of men.'⁷⁰ *The Times* had called for Sackville's replacement to be 'a diplomatist whose name cannot be dragged, by the utmost perversity or rancour or prejudice, into the party strife of the United States.'⁷¹ Pauncefote, with his reputation for carefully weighed words, seemed to fit this description well.⁷² R.B. Mowat asserts, without evidence, that 'For years, Pauncefote had been wondering how the deplorable, apparently permanent and quite unnecessary friction between Great Britain and the United States could be ended.'⁷³ Mowat also maintains that Pauncefote's personality was a key factor in his success, describing him as 'the representative of the best traditions of British diplomacy: he was hospitable, friendly and of an unruffled temper.'⁷⁴ *The Washington Post*'s initial impression of Pauncefote, on his arrival in the United States in April 1889, confirmed this positive impact, albeit on a superficial level, when its front page report described him as inheriting

the physique for which the English are remarkable. He has a large frame and is some over six feet tall. His round, healthy looking face is framed with gray mutton chop whiskers. His hair is also gray and his forehead broad and high. His voice has a mellow ring, and he talks quite pleasantly.⁷⁵

If this mixture of qualities was recognised by his superiors and US counterparts in 1888, then they would have quickly realised that he was a very good match for the post to which he was to be appointed. Andrew Roberts, in his recent biography of Lord Salisbury, agrees that the appointment was a good one, citing it as an example of

⁷⁰ Smalley, *Memories*, p.171.

⁷¹ *The Times*, 29 Oct. 1888, p. 9, col. a.

⁷² Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.120, discusses Pauncefote's cautious nature.

⁷³ *ibid*, p. 119

⁷⁴ Mowat, *Diplomatic Relations*, p.247

⁷⁵ *The Washington Post*, 24 April 1889, p.1, col. d.

Salisbury's 'capacity for choosing men' and includes him in a list of 'trusted confidants' of the Prime Minister.⁷⁶ Since Salisbury was renowned for making foreign policy largely by himself and had a weakness for secret diplomacy, his appointment of Pauncefote to Washington, rather than someone whose views he would have ignored, is evidence that he took the decision seriously. Salisbury's faith in the erstwhile permanent under secretary was fully justified, if the praise of those who worked under him in the United States is anything to go by. Sir Michael Herbert the second secretary at the Washington legation in 1890 said of Pauncefote, after a year of his being the British minister to Washington, that he was '... an excellent chief, who is the right man in the right place and deservedly popular with the Yankees.'⁷⁷

The status of the Washington legation

As discussed above, during the 1890s British politicians began to acknowledge the growing power of the United States. The process may have been a slow one. As Zara Steiner put it: 'Anglo-American relations were taken for granted; America's new demands for recognition underestimated, the ties of race and kinship exaggerated.'⁷⁸ Nonetheless, ample evidence that politicians and diplomats in general were beginning to recognise Washington's growing status, and that Pauncefote was not merely looking for a quiet end to his career, is provided by evidence given to the Royal Commission on Civil Establishments, 4th report, published in 1890. Several contributors, who were being questioned about the workings of the diplomatic service as a whole, stressed the importance they attached to the Washington legation. A striking example of this is Charles Dilke's answer to a question about the relative status of embassies and legations. Dilke was out of Parliament at the time, but had been under secretary for foreign affairs between 1880 and 1882 (where he had served alongside Pauncefote) and

⁷⁶ Roberts, pp. 490, 511.

⁷⁷ Herbert to Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, 5 April 1890, British Library, Hamilton papers, Add. MS48620, f.208.

⁷⁸ Steiner, 'Elitism,' p.47.

was a respected authority on foreign matters. He told the Commission that he could not see

why we should not convert our legation at Washington, which really on the whole is now our most important representation abroad, into an embassy, so as to enable ourselves to treat it as being really, so far as promotion goes, that which in fact it is – about the most important post.⁷⁹

By implication, Pauncefote, who had been at Washington since 1889, was therefore Britain's most important diplomat. Dilke also made it clear that he ranked Washington above the great European capitals, by saying that 'The most important places at the present moment seem to me to be Washington, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, and next to those in order, Paris.'⁸⁰ It is possible that he was also trying to give his former colleague at the Foreign Office a helping hand to promotion. The two seem to have had a particularly good working relationship and to have remained friends and indeed fencing partners, after their professional relationship ended.⁸¹ However, Dilke did not go so far as to name Pauncefote when giving his evidence to the Commission. Significantly, he had also proposed to elevate Washington to embassy status before Pauncefote arrived there, and was by no means alone in his belief in the need to raise the status of the Washington mission.⁸² E.D.V. Fome, for example, who had served in the Washington legation for 'three or four years' agreed that 'it is about the most important diplomatic post that we have.'⁸³ Likewise, James Bryce (another former parliamentary under secretary for foreign affairs, and something of an expert on the United States), came to a similar conclusion, speaking before the Royal Commission, when he commented that

I am not sure whether changes might not be profitably made in the present classification of embassies and legations. There are some posts which are at present

⁷⁹ Royal Commission on Civil Establishments, 4th Report, 1890: minutes of evidence, vol. 2, p.126.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.126.

⁸¹ Pauncefote to Dilke, 27 Dec.1882, Dilke Papers, Add. 43882, f.230 and 7 Nov. 1883 f. 232.

⁸² Royal Commission, p.126.

⁸³ *ibid*, p.151

considered inferior because they are only legations, but in reality are quite as important as some that are ranked as embassies. I say that specifically in reference to Washington.⁸⁴

He again emphasised this point when asked whether Washington, even with only legation status, was not looked on as a very 'high post indeed', to which he replied 'it is, but the salary and titular rank are not in proportion to the real importance of the post.'⁸⁵ Bryce left the Commission in no doubts about his views on Washington, by saying: '... I do not think you can have too able a man at Washington; you ought really to send one of the three best men you possess to Washington, and pay proportionately.'⁸⁶ Dilke, in his evidence went even further on this point, by saying that if the Washington mission was raised to embassy status, it would 'enable you to get the best man from your whole service for Washington.'⁸⁷ In the light of these statements, the fact that Pauncefote was to remain in Washington for over thirteen years first as minister, and then ambassador, again suggests that his political masters rated his abilities very highly indeed. As Raymond Jones points out, the internal Foreign Office debate concerning the stature of the minister at Washington had taken place throughout most of the 1880s.⁸⁸ Despite the impetus given to the debate by the Royal Commission and the United States' burgeoning economic strength, Pauncefote had to wait until 1893 until Washington was finally given embassy status. The reasons for this delay will be examined below.

Raising the Washington legation to embassy status

As has already been made clear, by the early 1890s there was some pressure, both from figures inside the British political establishment and from sheer volume of significant business, for raising the Washington legation to embassy status. The fact that this did not happen until 1893 appears to have been down to a combination of Queen Victoria's

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p. 79.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 79.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 79

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 136

⁸⁸ Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p. 174.

opposition and the question of whether the Americans would raise the status of their own mission in London. Queen Victoria did take a keen personal interest in diplomatic appointments and since the role of an ambassador was personally to represent the sovereign, her views were obviously of great importance.⁸⁹ She had made her distaste for the proliferation of embassies clear. As early as 1876, when discussing whether Italy should be raised to ambassadorial status, Sir Henry Ponsonby, the queen's private secretary commented to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby, that 'Her Majesty is much opposed to any increase of Embassies, indeed Her Majesty thinks that the time for Ambassadors and their pretensions is past.'⁹⁰ Her attitude had evidently not changed by 1893, when Lord Rosebery's letters to the queen noted her 'reluctance' to appoint an ambassador to Washington. This stance appeared not to stem from any personal ill-will towards Pauncefote, but even after approving the post, she told Rosebery that she 'thought it would give rise to trouble'.⁹¹ If her concern was over the potential extravagance and extra expense that an embassy brought, it may have been fully justified. A little over a year after Pauncefote's promotion, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Kimberley, was defending the extra costs incurred to the Treasury, writing that

[Pauncefote] felt it incumbent on him to give entertainments on a larger scale than heretofore, which with the renovation of carriages, the purchase of more horses and harness, new servants liveries and an ambassador's uniform for himself, His Excellency estimates as having cost him more than £500 ... it was only fitting that the British ambassador should take steps to place his establishment on a footing not inferior to that of the other newly appointed ambassadors.

As a result the treasury sanctioned a £500 'outfit allowance'.⁹² The question of the extra expense and outward manifestations of prestige that an embassy brought with it will be further explored later in this chapter.

⁸⁹ Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p. 173 and Royal Commission, p.79

⁹⁰ Jones *Diplomatic Service*, p.173

⁹¹ *ibid* p. 175, quoting from the Royal Archives.

⁹² Kimberley to treasury, Nov. 30, 1894, PRO, FO5/2245.

By all accounts, however, the queen's attitude was out of step with the consensus of opinion amongst the establishment on either side of the Atlantic. The announcement by Sir Edward Grey, then parliamentary under secretary for foreign affairs, that Pauncefote had been made an ambassador was reportedly greeted with cheers in the House of Commons.⁹³ A key example of how the change in status was viewed in Britain is Rosebery's letter to the queen after she finally gave her consent to Pauncefote's promotion:

He [Rosebery] views your Majesty's consent to the nomination of an Ambassador to Washington, in spite of your Majesty's reluctance, as a special act of kindness. He assures your Majesty with the deepest sincerity that he would not press a proposition unwelcome to your Majesty, were he not deeply impressed with its importance to your Majesty's foreign relations. He is convinced that this act of goodwill, coming from one scarcely less venerated in the United States than in her own, cannot fail of the happiest results, and, though a blatant press attempts to excite and distort public opinion in America against Great Britain, he believes that there is a substantial foundation of goodwill which acts like these, imperceptibly or not, strengthen and cement. While, had this opportunity not been taken, he fears that the Ambassador would have come from Washington under very inauspicious circumstances. It is only therefore from the most heartfelt sense of duty to your Majesty and the true interests of the Empire that he has recommended this course ...⁹⁴

This letter, obviously designed to placate the queen, also shows Rosebery's willingness to placate the United States in order to maintain amicable links between the two countries. His reference to the US press demonstrates that the British were still concerned about the issue that had brought down their former minister. Pauncefote's own letter to the state department, on becoming an ambassador unsurprisingly echoed Rosebery's positive sentiments, when he said that

⁹³ *The Times*, 28 March 1893.

⁹⁴ Rosebery to Victoria, 20 March 1893, from G.E. Buckle (ed.) *The Letters of Queen Victoria* (3rd series). *A Selection from her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the years 1886 and 1901* (London: John Murray, 1931), p.240, vol.2.

... this act is intended as fresh proof of the desire of the Queen and her Government still further to cement the bond of blood sympathy and friendship, which should ever unite the two great nations that speak the English tongue, and Her Majesty trusts that it will be so received and regarded by the President, the government, and the people of the United States.⁹⁵

When Lord Lansdowne became Foreign Secretary in 1900, he, too, made his wishes very clear on this point, stating in his initial letter to the British ambassador: 'Of my earnest desire to co-operate with you in maintaining the most cordial relations with the government of the United States you will, I am sure, not be in any doubt.'⁹⁶ This 'exaggerated goodwill', as A.L. Kennedy put it, was to be a constant theme on the British side during Pauncefote's tenure of office⁹⁷. Whilst it is of course the job of an ambassador to try to ensure smooth relations between countries, it is perhaps hard to imagine the same feelings being so consistently held towards, say, Germany or France in this era. Arguments with Germany in particular, over Samoa, the Kruger telegram, the Philippines, the Second South African War and colonial possessions in general made Anglo-German amity difficult, and proximity to Britain made these disputes potentially more serious. Privately, Pauncefote himself later took a more robust view of relations between Britain and United States. He confided in his correspondence with James Bryce that 'There has been too much gush in England, it has given an impression that we are clinging to the US as France does to Russia, for protection and support.'⁹⁸ Indeed, as will be explored in the course of this thesis, his personal attitude towards the United States was not one of particular warmth.

Pauncefote was also dismissive of being made the *doyen*, or senior representative, of the diplomatic corps in 1893. In a letter to Cecil-Spring Rice on the matter, he commented: 'You will have read in the Papers and heard from others all the excitement created by the Ambassador question and my race with the Frenchman for

⁹⁵ Pauncefote to state dept., 21 March 1893, quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.157.

⁹⁶ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, 11 Nov. 1900, Lansdowne papers, PRO, FO800/144, f.10.

⁹⁷ Kennedy, *Diplomacy*, p. 71.

⁹⁸ Pauncefote to Bryce, 24 Jan. 1899, Bryce papers, MS Bryce, f. 178.

the unenviable title of *doyen*.⁹⁹ Despite this nonchalance, one suspects that this apparent indifference was a case of false modesty, since Pauncefote himself had been instrumental in the groundwork necessary to ensure the elevation to ambassadorial status happened swiftly, once it was clear that the Senate would give its approval for the elevation of US representatives abroad. Indeed, Pauncefote had discussed the situation with Secretary of State Walter Gresham on 16 March 1893, thereby enabling Rosebery to make his own appeals to the queen.¹⁰⁰ The reason for the timing for the elevation of the United States' representative in Britain appears to have been down to US domestic politics. Since Pauncefote's predecessor, Lord Sackville had made the mistake of apparently opposing the Republican administration elected in 1888 (in the 'Sackville affair'), it was not likely to be well disposed towards augmenting the status of its representation in London. However, with the election of the Democrat, President Cleveland, in 1892, circumstances changed. The President apparently created the post of ambassador to Britain for Thomas F. Bayard, former US Secretary of State, and a senior figure in the Democratic Party, 'In order to gild the pill of disappointment to Bayard because of his failure to receive a Cabinet appointment...'¹⁰¹ Thus, US domestic concerns coincided with the growing British recognition of the Washington legation's importance to produce the simultaneous raising of status. Doubtless, too, the move on the United States' side was an assertion of its own growing self-confidence. Evidence that Pauncefote was actually keen on his new role comes from Matilda Gresham. She maintained that 'a great rivalry ensued between Sir Julian Pauncefote the British Minister, and M. Jusserand, the French Minister, as to who should become Dean of the Diplomatic Corps ... My husband took the lead in recognising Sir Julian first...'¹⁰² The role of *doyen* apparently mattered greatly to M. Jusserand as well; according to Matilda Gresham he 'was very much disappointed and sulked like a baby' when he was passed over, only later regaining his diplomatic composure.¹⁰³ However,

⁹⁹ Pauncefote to Spring-Rice, 20 Jun. 1893, Churchill Archives, Spring-Rice Papers, CASR1.

¹⁰⁰ C. C. Tansill, *The Foreign Policy of Thomas F Bayard, 1885-1897* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1940, Kraus reprint 1960), p. 654.

¹⁰¹ *ibid* p. 654.

¹⁰² Gresham, *Gresham*, p. 696.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 696

The New York Times reported less of a scramble to become the first ambassador, saying that ‘...the several first class powers had tacitly agreed among themselves that Great Britain should make the first response to the suggestion ... that the United States would receive Ambassadors to this country.’¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the ‘race’ to appoint an ambassador again illustrates Rosebery’s desire to be seen to be doing the right thing in the eyes of the United States. A week before Pauncefote’s promotion, a letter from Rosebery to Queen Victoria had informed her that

... there is a reported intention to send an Ambassador from the United States to the Court of St. James. He [Rosebery] presumes that your Majesty would have no objection to such a course being pursued. So advisable indeed does he consider such a measure to be, that he proposes, if your Majesty approve, to instruct Sir J. Pauncefote to indicate (should occasion offer) your Majesty’s willingness to accredit an Ambassador to Washington.¹⁰⁵

And when, four days later, the Americans had made clear that they were about to appoint an ambassador, he wrote to her:

... now that it is clear that an ambassador would have been proposed whom we should have had to accept without the grace of spontaneity, and that by prompt action we have obtained the position of tendering a compliment, which is sure to be both acceptable and memorable, he [Rosebery] trusts that his persistence may be graciously condoned, if not approved, by your Majesty.¹⁰⁶

Rosebery’s letters, attempting to win the queen over to the idea of a Washington embassy, all concentrate on the benefits of giving the United States a ‘compliment’ by so doing. He did not, apparently, emphasise to her the consequences from the British diplomatic point of view - enabling higher calibre personnel to be appointed to Washington, and rewarded proportionately. Presumably, this was because the issue of pay and funding was a major reason for her objection to the change, as hinted at above,

¹⁰⁴ *New York Times*, 26 March 1893, p.1, col. f.

¹⁰⁵ Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 13 March 1893, quoted in Buckle, *Letters*, p.239.

¹⁰⁶ Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 17 March 1893, *ibid*, p239.

in reference to the Italian legation. Whilst the change in status was a symbolic one, ‘...in order to please the *amour propre* of a particular country,’ as a member of the Royal Commission of 1890 put it, the practical consequences of the change were also significant.¹⁰⁷

Potentially, the two main practical issues that flowed from the change, as far as the diplomatic service was concerned were those of pay and staffing. On the question of pay, E.D.V. Fome, giving evidence to the Royal Commission, on the level of pay for the Washington minister, as it was in 1890, considered that although ‘... L6,000 a year sounds a very good income ... in my opinion there is no place where the salary ought to be so high ... as at Washington.’ This was not only because of its diplomatic importance, but because ‘... of all the posts that I know it is the place where the ministers should be able to receive and entertain in a very large and open-handed way.’¹⁰⁸ Such a statement would perhaps have confirmed Queen Victoria’s fears about the change in status, especially as Fome went on to say ‘If you take an ambassador, an ambassador is put to greater expense in some ways, he has to entertain in a rather more princely style than a minister.’¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Pauncefote’s own despatches to Salisbury on this subject back up the claims about the ‘necessity’ of entertaining, even before he became the ambassador there. For example a letter, written in 1890, made very clear Pauncefote’s belief in the link between entertainments and status:

... the judges and Senators and Officials and all Washington Society came to the feast, to the number of about 600, and appeared much gratified at the portals of this Legation being once more opened to them. The Press was full of the most glowing descriptions, for all other Legations are insignificant in the eyes of Washingtonians, as compared to this one, and I really think they take a pride in the fact that the British Legation is so pre-eminently the chief centre of the diplomatic world here.

¹⁰⁷ Mr. Maclure, a member of the Royal Commission, used the phrase *amour propre* in questioning EDV Fome who was giving evidence, and who agreed with him, p.152.

¹⁰⁸ E.D.V. Fome giving evidence to the Royal Commission, op. cit., p. 151.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

The letter doubtless conveys Pauncefote's own pride in 'being at the centre of the diplomatic world.' To say that Washingtonians thought all other legations 'insignificant' also indicates his own sense of superiority. His later comments in the same letter underline the fact that he was flattered to be in such a position, saying: 'I entertain them as much as possible and do my best to discharge my social obligations in a manner worthy of a British Representative living among countless millionaires.'¹¹⁰ Pauncefote evidently saw such entertainments as an important part of his role, but does not seem to have been the most naturally gregarious of people. It is interesting to observe therefore that one observer took the view that much of his popularity in Washington was 'due to his wife and daughters.'¹¹¹ Later in the same year he again stressed the importance of creating a good impression, and appeared to hint of future aspirations, when justifying requests for extra funding, writing to Salisbury that

The British Legation House in Washington was erected about 20 years ago In Connecticut Ave. and is the most important structure in that fashionable quarter of the city ... [containing] the finest Ball room in the capital ... and state rooms of vast dimensions. They are admirably suited for a first class Embassy House and they were no doubt intended for entertainments on the largest scale. The Building is usually spoken of as 'The Legation' there being no other Legation House in Washington of greater pretensions than an ordinary private residence. Hence much is expected of the British Minister in the way of entertainment, and the salary of an ambassador would not more than suffice to meet all the calls upon him. It is notorious that since the salary of this post was fixed, the cost of living in Washington has doubled owing to the influx of wealthy families from all parts of the Union. It has now become one of the most expensive capitals in the world ... My experience of the last twelve months entirely confirms the evidence lately given before the Royal Commission on Civil Establishments, in relation to this Post, to the effect that owing to the conditions of life in Washington, to the status of the British Legation there, and to the calls on its hospitality, the present salary of Her Majesty's Minister is insufficient for his necessary expenses.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 10 Jan. 1890, Salisbury papers, USA, vol. 77, f.124.

¹¹¹ Beckles Willson, *America's Ambassadors to England, 1785-1928* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1928, Reprinted 1969), p.275.

¹¹² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 12 Oct, 1890, PRO, FO5/2451.

However, such protestations cut little ice with the Treasury at this time who replied to Lord Salisbury's enquiry on this point with the curt response that

My Lords are not prepared to increase in this way the cost of the maintenance of Diplomatic buildings and the Marquis of Salisbury does not need to be reminded of the preference felt by this Department for the system under which, instead of a costly house kept up by the British Government, an allowance is given to the Minister for the time being for his own residence.¹¹³

This exchange of correspondence not only raises the question of the 'need' for embassies to flaunt their importance, but also of Pauncefote's own taste for the trappings of power. As a further example of the entertaining apparently required, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's birthday in 1892, Pauncefote again delighted in writing to Salisbury on the subject of another apparent *tour de force*, asserting that 'Our reception on the Queen's Birthday made quite a sensation ... it is said to have been the finest entertainment given, out of the White House, in Washington.'¹¹⁴ Judging by her earlier comments, it is questionable whether the queen herself would have been impressed by such extravagance indulged upon in her name. Pauncefote's biographer, however, appears to concur with Pauncefote's own view of his entertaining skills, saying that '...everything was extremely well done at the legation and embassy in Pauncefote's time ... his hospitality was unbounded ... a member of his staff attests that he was the most hospitable man he ever knew.' Nonetheless, despite all this apparent extravagance, he qualified these comments by saying: '... he made no attempt to keep up such magnificent state as Lord Lyons for instance, had maintained at Washington.'¹¹⁵ Perhaps bearing this out, Sir Philip Currie (permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office), giving evidence on a similar point to the aforementioned Royal Commission, took a somewhat different view from his colleagues on the matter, saying:

¹¹³ Lords Commissioners of the treasury to Salisbury, 9 Mar. 1891, PRO, FO5/2451.

¹¹⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 26 May 1892, Salisbury papers, vol. 78, 1891-92, f.256.

¹¹⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.253.

I think the necessary scale of living is probably very much less [than in Paris or Berlin]. I have certainly not heard the same complaints from there. I believe it would be more easy for a minister in Washington to live upon his salary, which, I think is L6,000 a year, than for an ambassador at Paris to live on his salary of L9,000 a year, but can only speak by report as I am not a member of the diplomatic service myself.¹¹⁶

Whether or not £6,000 a year was a comfortable sum for the Washington minister to live on, it would seem that Pauncefote, as one of the senior and most respected diplomats in the service, working without the cachet of ambassadorship, was, despite the apparent extravagances, in diplomatic service terms, offering good value for money. According to the *Foreign Office List*, even after being raised to the status of ambassador, Pauncefote's salary was £6,500. This compares to £7,500 for the British ambassador at Berlin, £7,800 for his colleague at St. Petersburg, and a princely £9,000 for the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava at Paris.¹¹⁷ If Washington was indeed the most important diplomatic posting of the day, it had not yet been reflected in remuneration for the position. Those serving below Pauncefote did not apparently receive any increase in pay as a result of the change in status.

In terms of staffing, however, the change in status had consequences, not just for Pauncefote, but for those below him, that clearly demonstrate becoming an embassy was not a purely symbolic matter. A case in point is that of Sir Michael Herbert, secretary of the legation in 1892 but who was then forced to transfer, after the mission became an embassy in 1893, because to remain there would have been considered too big a jump up the career ladder. In a letter to his friend, Sir Edward Hamilton, he made his predicament and his displeasure, clear writing:

I quite understand that it is not possible to promote me here, but on the other hand, I feel it is rather hard luck on me to have to go. This is by far (or rather was) the most significant legation and a transfer to another legation from here simply means a kick downstairs. I had every reason to suppose I should remain here until my time for

¹¹⁶ Sir Philip Currie, Royal Commission, p.125.

¹¹⁷ Sir Edward Hertslett (ed.) *The Foreign Office List 1894* (London: Harrison and Sons (1894)).

promotion as Secretary of Embassy in Europe and had made all my plans accordingly.

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The issue of Herbert's promotion or demotion was considered of sufficient importance to be drawn to the attention of Gladstone and Rosebery by Lady Herbert. Rosebery's response to this, in a letter to Gladstone, gives an insight into the problems caused by the change in status, and the career ladder of diplomatic officials:

She [Lady Herbert] is not accurate in saying that Sir J. Pauncefote was promoted over the heads of several of his colleagues, as he was taken from the FO, where he was Under Secretary, and went to Washington as his first appointment. Herbert knows perfectly well that he cannot stay as Secretary of Embassy and said so at once. Sir J. Pauncefote, who would greatly like to keep him, knows this too.

He was jumped over the heads of I think 16 of his seniors to be made Secretary of Legation and he would have to jump over 13 more to be made Secretary of Embassy. There was a great row about his first leap, and I could not justify the second.¹¹⁹

In a later letter, referring more generally to diplomatic promotions, Rosebery commented that '... [the diplomatic service] is now a service with very slow promotion, and I have no right except under very exceptional circumstances to put anybody in at the top.'¹²⁰ Thus, turning the Washington legation into an embassy can be viewed as involving more than a 'compliment' to the United States, and underlines the fact that, just as Herbert's job had to be given to someone more senior, Pauncefote's promotion was more than just a formality. His unusual career path, and apparent success as minister to Washington enabled him to stay in post, where another diplomatic official, who had followed a more orthodox path might have been replaced. Indeed, in the opinion of the historian Beckles Willson, that Pauncefote 'would ever rise to be Ambassador to the United States, seemed almost fantastically improbable.'¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Michael Herbert to Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, 10 May 1893, Hamilton papers, Add. MS48620, f. 216.

¹¹⁹ Rosebery to Gladstone, 24 May 1893, British Library, Gladstone papers, Add. 44290, f.138.

¹²⁰ Rosebery to Gladstone, 19 Oct. 1893, Gladstone papers, Add. 44290.

¹²¹ Willson, *Friendly Relations*, p. 260.

The running of the embassy

Finally, it is worth considering briefly the practical consequences the change in status had on the way the Washington mission was run, in order to get some sense of the day to day context in which the British ambassador was operating. As Pauncefote had earlier surmised, it did not affect the actual building in which the mission was housed. As minister, and then ambassador, the British representative remained housed on Connecticut Avenue, in the prosperous north west of the city. Britain had been the first country to have a purpose built residence and whilst the chancery was expanded in 1900 from three rooms to seven, plans to re-house the embassy did not take shape until 1925. The original building was, as Pauncefote noted, apparently an impressive one and its siting encouraged other countries to build their legations and embassies in a previously ignored corner of the city.¹²²

For those below the rank of ambassador, the change in status does not appear to have had an immediate impact on the pace of work, although the aforementioned expansion of the chancery does attest to the increase in volume of business by the turn of the century. In terms of the inner workings of Pauncefote's embassy, the fullest account comes from his biographer, R. B. Mowat. The picture he paints is a largely tranquil one. He says that Pauncefote was 'the kindest of chiefs' and that his staff 'dealt so constantly and familiarly with the ambassador that they formed a diplomatic family'. According to Mowat the pace of life for staff there seems to have been a leisurely one. Chancery work 'did not usually begin until 10 or 10.30 in the morning, and it was generally over by lunchtime', they were invited to lunch 'every day' by their chief, and 'to dinner usually twice a week'. In the afternoon tennis foursomes were often arranged, with Theodore Roosevelt being a participant when Michael Herbert was First Secretary.¹²³ Mowat's view of proceedings is backed up by Spring-Rice, writing

¹²² C.F. Browne, *A Short History of the British Embassy at Washington DC* (no publisher attributed, 1930), pp. 9-11.

¹²³ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp.254-55.

to Sir Francis Villiers in 1895: 'I have taken to bicycling, our chief occupation here is fencing, boxing and cycling - Sir Julian having converted the ball room into a sort of 'salle d'armes'.¹²⁴

Pauncefote himself, Mowat notes, did have a somewhat more arduous job. A large amount of the work he did personally, whilst the staff was largely employed in copying. For him there was apparently 'not much time for rest,' whether it be dealing with the weekly diplomatic bag, meetings in the state department, dealing with the 'very heavy' routine business such as copyright questions, immigration law, passports, fishing rules and the like, or coping with the 'enormous files' on such issues as the Bering Sea, or Alaska Boundary Dispute.¹²⁵ The volume of work with which Pauncefote had to deal is evidently borne out by the quantity of surviving material deposited in the Public Records Office and elsewhere. His own private correspondence also attests to the volume of work he had to cope with. His exasperation, for example, is clear in a letter to Cecil Spring-Rice in 1894 in which he comments that '[the Foreign Office] is in the same chronic state of immoveability about reinforcements of Secretaries and attaches. I am sick of hearing that the supply is not equal to the demand ... Bax-Ironside or some other man must be sent out at once!'¹²⁶ Similarly, a letter to Wodehouse, Lord Kimberley's private secretary, indicates the strain he was under: 'You may imagine what a hard time I have had in this sweltering and suffocating heat (up to 102 degrees indoors) and being both one handed [he had sprained his wrist] and short-handed [Spring Rice was ill]'.¹²⁷ With a total complement of eight chancery staff (including Pauncefote and a messenger) illness was obviously something that could be severely disrupting to the mission's work. Considering that Pauncefote died of a heart attack when still in post, his complaints may well have been justified.

¹²⁴ Spring Rice to Villiers, 12 April 1895, Villiers papers, PRO, FO 800/3.

¹²⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.255-56

¹²⁶ Pauncefote to Spring-Rice, 20 July 1894, Spring-Rice papers, CASR1.

¹²⁷ Pauncefote to Wodehouse, 20 July 1894, Bodleian Library, Kimberley Papers, MSS Eng. C.4408, f.26.

Conclusion

From the earlier stages of his career, and the context of his appointment to Washington, some of the key themes that were to follow Pauncefote throughout his time there can be discerned. The fact that he was appointed there in preference to any one else in the diplomatic service was both a sign of the respect in which Lord Salisbury held him, and the importance of the task with which he was confronted. Pauncefote's earlier working relationship with Salisbury would mean that he was able to exert some influence on him when dealing with future matters of policy. Even before arriving in Washington he realised that his key task was to improve the somewhat fragile state of relations with what was beginning to emerge as a significant power across the Atlantic. However, the fate of his predecessor should have demonstrated to him the way in which US domestic politics impinged on foreign policy, something that was not always so obvious in Britain. Relations with the United States would therefore require skilful handling if the somewhat uneasy status quo was not to be upset again by diplomatic blundering. Whilst Pauncefote appeared to have the technical skills and knowledge to rise to the challenge, it remained to be seen how he would adapt to the new political environment, deal with a potentially hostile press, and allay US suspicions of imperious British arrogance.

Chapter Three: Pauncefote and the Bering Sea Dispute

I meet my mates in the morning, a broken scattered band.
 Men shoot us in the water and club us on the land;
 Men drive us to the Salt House like silly sheep and tame,
 And still we sing Lukannon - before the sealers came.

Rudyard Kipling, 'The White Seal,' from *The
 Jungle Book* (1894).¹

Introduction

The object of this chapter is to demonstrate how the Bering Sea dispute, by its long lasting nature, highlights the themes that accompanied Pauncefote's diplomacy throughout his time in Washington. The dispute began before Pauncefote took up his post, and was not permanently resolved at the time of his death. It directly involved Canadian, as well as British and US interests. Thus, Pauncefote's actions during the negotiations on this issue shed a useful light on all the critical relationships he was involved in whilst he was minister and ambassador. The chapter begins with an outline of the dispute, and then examines Pauncefote's relationships with British, US and Canadian politicians and officials, questioning the effectiveness of his diplomacy in relation to each group. Whilst British policy in this period was directed at cultivating good relations with the United States, maintaining the integrity of the Empire was equally important. Furthermore, where economic interests were concerned, whilst the United States may have represented the larger market, British investment in Canada was significant.² Complicating the issue still further, the amiability of neither territory could be taken for granted – jingoistic United States senators fiercely guarded their control over foreign policy, and whilst many Canadians valued their imperial

¹ R. Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (London: Pan Books, 1967 edn., first published 1894) pp.96-97. The subject of seal culling, which was at the centre of the Bering Sea dispute was also dealt with in fiction by Jack London in *The Sea Wolf* (London: Reader's Digest, 1993 edn., first published 1904).

² Cain and Hopkins, pp.228-242.

connection they resented too much interference from London in their affairs.³ Thus, when disputes arose between the two North American neighbours, a British diplomat's role was neither straightforward nor pre-ordained. Working at the fault line between an emerging great power and an imperial dominion required considerable skill. Simply put, in such a case 'Britain's interests' seemed to lie in somehow satisfying both parties, and therefore the role of the diplomat in balancing competing forces was vital.

The Dispute

The Bering Sea dispute essentially concerned who had the right to kill the fur seals which lived in and around the Pribilof islands, in the Bering Sea, off the coast of Alaska. The United States claimed that its sealing business on these islands was being irreversibly harmed by Canadian sealers who carried out their business at sea (so called pelagic sealing). At the end of the 1880s, US revenue cruisers began to seize Canadian sealing vessels in the waters around the Pribilof Islands, something that Great Britain claimed was against international law. After British warships were put on standby in 1890, the United States stopped seizing ships, but still protested their right to do so.⁴ Negotiations from this point on followed two broad paths. One line of negotiation led to arbitration in Paris in 1893, which declared the US actions unlawful.⁵ This ultimately led to compensation from the United States government to the Canadian sealers, who had been prevented from carrying out their business because of the dispute. The other thread of the negotiations, which was also given impetus by the Paris arbitration, involved an acknowledgement by Great Britain, that some form of regulation of the industry was necessary, regardless of territorial claims, if only to answer US concerns about its long-term viability. This led to a series of temporary agreements, placing restrictions on sealing activities (for example in 1894 a sixty mile exclusion zone was

³ Nelson M. Blake, 'The Olney – Pauncefote Treaty of 1897', *The American Historical Review*, vol 50:2, (Jan. 1945), pp. 228-243, Brown, *National Policy*, p.91.

⁴ The early part of this dispute has been examined in C.S. Campbell, 'Bering Sea,' pp.393-414.

⁵ *Fur Seal Arbitration. Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration Convened at Paris* (Washington: US Senate Documents, 53rd Congress, 2nd Session vol.7).

placed around the Pribilof Islands, and a closed season imposed in part of the Bering Sea from 1 May to 31 July).⁶ Neither of these lines of negotiation was straightforward. At first, the Americans effectively claimed territorial rights over the Bering Sea, which they eventually acknowledged they did not have. They later put forward arguments that seals killed in international waters were still US property because they bred on American islands. When this argument failed they said that pelagic sealing, as opposed to the methods used to kill seals on land, would cause the destruction of the entire seal population within a few years. This last claim was the most difficult for the British to refute, and regular monitoring by both British and US Commissions did establish that the seal population was indeed falling. However, they could not agree on whether it was leading to the seals' ultimate destruction, and whether it was the US or Canadian method of killing seals that was the more harmful to the declining numbers. Negotiations over the issue were tortuous; the arguments seemingly going round in circles as each new seal fishing season approached. The series of temporary agreements that were reached, involved such measures as introducing a closed season for certain areas of the Bering Sea, and an exclusion zone around the Pribilof Islands. However, neither side was ever satisfied with the arrangements; the Canadians forever maintained that the restrictions were too harsh and unnecessary, whilst the Americans made it clear that nothing but the complete cessation of pelagic sealing would really satisfy them.⁷

Whilst not always the most prominent issue, it was to be the single most intractable dispute that Britain was to have with the United States during Pauncefoot's time as British representative in Washington. Perhaps the clearest exposition of the motivation behind the US arguments, and which, in turn, helps to explain why the dispute lasted so long, came in an extremely frank despatch from the US negotiator, J.W. Foster, in a letter to the Canadian Premier Wilfred Laurier, on 2 December 1897. In it, Foster said that

⁶ Behring Sea Award Bill, 16 April 1894, PRO BT13/22.

⁷ Summary of dispute drawn from James T. Gay, *American Fur Seal Diplomacy: The Alaskan Fur Seal Controversy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), Campbell, 'Bering Sea', pp. 393 – 414 and PRO FO5/2000 series (Bering Sea).

We seem to have failed to impress upon the Canadian Government ... our view that pelagic sealing ought to be voluntarily given up because it is unneighbourly in that it is destroying a valuable industry of our Government, and inhumane because it is exterminating a noble race of animals useful to the world. We paid Russia a large sum for Alaska and the chief prospective return then visible was the seal industry, which had yielded the Russian government and subjects large profit. We enjoyed the industry undisturbed for about fifteen years, reaping a rich return to the government and the lessees, the estimated revenue to the treasury up to 1891 being over \$11,000,000, a sum much larger than was paid to Russia for the entire territory. Suddenly the pelagic sealers entered upon their work of destruction and they have brought the industry to the point when it is no longer possible.⁸

The quarrel, being between US and Canadian sealing businesses, was not one in which, on the face of it, the vital interests of Great Britain appeared to be involved. Lord Salisbury was even to comment at one point 'that the world would not be perceptibly better or worse off whether the fur seal survives or disappears.'⁹ Unsurprisingly, modern notions of conservation rarely raised their head in the debate. The concern was over preserving enough seals to maintain the industry for the needs of the fashion business. *The Times* newspaper did comment that the American way of clubbing seals to death on land was 'Cruel and unsportsmanlike', preferring the presumably more sportsmanlike Canadian method of chasing them round in boats, and then shooting them. The paper added with all seriousness that 'The operation may not be a pleasant one to contemplate, and to anyone with olfactory nerves it must be a horrible one to carry out; but then ladies must have sealskins, and the natives are not fastidious.'¹⁰

There were, however, more serious interests at stake on the British side. Apart from the sealing business itself, the industry provided employment for over 10,000 workers in London, where the skins were treated before being sold to clothing

⁸ Foster to Laurier, Dec.2 1897, PRO, FO5/2356.

⁹ Salisbury to Lord Stanley, July 1891, quoted in Roberts *Salisbury* p. 491.

manufacturers. The dispute with the United States threatened these jobs, since at one stage punitive tariffs were proposed by the US on any imported sealskins, which would have destroyed the profitability of the London businesses. And, despite Salisbury's apparent indifference, the dispute did raise many issues that cut to the heart of how Anglo-American relations operated. Over time, it revealed how fiercely Americans would guard their rights in their hemisphere and the extent to which business interests influenced US foreign policy. It also showed the extent to which Britain was prepared to antagonise or soothe American nerves, and how far it was prepared to sacrifice Canadian interests in pursuit of these objectives. Thus, a seemingly minor dispute had larger implications. The issue was of sufficient importance for the *Times* newspaper to comment in September 1891 that '...for the past few years no place in the world has played such a prominent part in the diplomatic relations between nations as has the Behring Sea between Great Britain and the United States.'¹¹ Backing up this view, Sir Richard Webster, who was a key British representative at the Bering Sea arbitration in Paris in 1893 was moved to write to Lord Rosebery, the then Foreign Secretary that he considered the questions involved to be of 'the first importance,' and might affect British foreign policy 'most materially in the future.'¹²

Pauncefote's Role in the Dispute

Turning to Pauncefote's role in the dispute, the way in which he operated in relation to four key groups of people will now be examined: the leading members of British and American administrations, the American Congress, and the Canadian government.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 18 Sept. 1891.

¹¹ *ibid.* In the 1890s 'Behring Sea' rather than the modern 'Bering Sea' was more commonly used in despatches, but this was not always consistent, and 'Behring's Sea' also appears. Spellings in quotations will therefore vary.

¹² Webster to Rosebery, 8 June 1893, National Library of Scotland, Rosebery papers, MS10133, f.98.

BRITISH ADMINISTRATIONS

As far as successive British administrations were concerned, Pauncefote's handling of the dispute was considered a success. His judgement seems to have been increasingly relied upon as time went by, and ministers repeatedly congratulated him upon his handling of the issue. In general, his role can be seen as one that pushed a sometimes reluctant British government towards compromise with the Americans.

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary with whom Pauncefote was to have most dealings was Lord Salisbury. Whilst always scrupulous in consulting his boss over his next move, and being respectful towards him, sometimes to the point of sycophancy, he was also not afraid to put forward his own proposals to the man who was such a dominating figure of the late Victorian era. His suggestions were often taken on board, and his assessments of the unfolding situation were usually accurate. Nonetheless, his early despatches do reveal his inexperience. For example, in July 1889, he wrote, somewhat naively, that

... in October I shall be able to open up the subject [of the Bering Sea Dispute] with a view to some scheme of settlement before the next season's fishing operations commence... In the meantime I feel convinced that no more captures of Canadian sealers on the high seas are intended ...¹³

His optimism was to prove badly misplaced on both counts. The seizure of Canadian sealing vessels by American revenue cruisers actually increased, and, far from reaching a settlement, the dispute was to enter its most acrimonious stage. However, as time went on, Pauncefote became more sure footed in his predictions, such as in his despatch to Salisbury of 24 July 1890, when he said that the US position would 'not bear the test of an important inquiry,' and that the matter would probably only be resolved by 'a conference of the Great Powers or by international arbitration.'¹⁴

¹³ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 12 July 1889, Salisbury papers, vol. 77, US 1887-90, fos. 101-103.

¹⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 24 July 1890, PRO, FO5/2109.

This time his judgement proved to be accurate; after three more years of tangled arguments, the dispute did indeed go to arbitration, and the tribunal found largely in Britain's favour. Indeed, as further evidence of his foresight in this matter, it had been Pauncefote himself who had first requested that he be given instructions to propose an International Court of Inquiry into the seals dispute, when he had been in Britain in September 1889.¹⁵

It was when the dispute was at its most dangerous phase, however, that Pauncefote's skills as a diplomat, and as an advocate of compromise, can be most clearly seen. In 1890 and 1891, there was a real potential for an armed clash over the seals issue. The United States had refused the latest British proposals, and sent revenue cruisers North with the intention of seizing Canadian vessels as they had done the previous year. The administration informed the British government that it could not guarantee the safety of Canadian sealers after May 1890. Underlining the potential seriousness of these events, *The Times* commented that 'The order to despatch American cruisers to Behring Sea smacks too much of the methods of the First Napoleon in dealing with weak statesmen, and if the order is executed British men-of-war must follow.'¹⁶

It is clear that by now Salisbury also took the situation seriously, and that he valued Pauncefote's input, when he wrote to him saying:

I confess that the attitude, both at Washington and at Ottawa makes me somewhat apprehensive of the result ... If both sides push their pretensions to an extreme, collision is inevitable ... We shall look with great anxiety to your reports of the progress of negotiations.¹⁷

¹⁵ Sanderson memo on despatch from Blaine to Edwards, 14 Sept. 1889, PRO, FO5/274.

¹⁶ *The Times* 4 June, 1890.

¹⁷ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 28 March 1890, PRO, FO5/2106.

As feared, Pauncefote informed Salisbury in late May 1890, that negotiations had run into severe difficulties. James G. Blaine (US Secretary of State 1889-92) had informed him that 'his government would never admit that the rights of Great Britain in the Bering Sea were equal to their own as regard the seal fishery' and that 'he doubted whether we should ever agree to the form of questions to be submitted [to the proposed arbitration].'¹⁸ As a result, Pauncefote suggested that the time was right for a more robust British response. He telegraphed Salisbury, saying:

I venture to suggest for your Lordship's consideration whether it might not be wise at this juncture to address an official note to the Secretary of State with reference to threatened interference with British vessels by the revenue cruisers in the Bering Sea.¹⁹

Whilst it was not unusual for Pauncefote to offer his boss advice, this suggestion was notable for being possibly the only time in his career when Pauncefote actually asked for a more forceful response from Salisbury, and even here the language is couched diplomatically. However, in a response that demonstrated his faith in his Washington minister, Salisbury took the hint and replied swiftly, with a lengthy response, approved by the queen and the cabinet protesting against

any interference on the part of United States vessels navigating outside the recognized territorial jurisdiction of the United States, and to leave to the United States Government the responsibility of the consequences if that protest is disregarded.²⁰

At the same time, Salisbury decided to put four warships on standby in Victoria. With nudging from Pauncefote, Salisbury had at last resolved to take a firm stand on the issue, something that the Canadians had been demanding for months.

¹⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 22 May 1890, PRO, FO5/2107.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 27 May 1890, PRO, FO5/2107.

Pauncefote then proved his worth to Salisbury by supplying accurate intelligence on the progress of the American vessels, and then by giving his view that once the British ships arrived, the Americans would not actually challenge them. Reporting on a tense meeting with Blaine, he wrote to Salisbury, in July 1890, that he had:

... pressed him as regards interference with British sealers. Although he still refused to give any assurance, I am under a strong impression from his tone, and certain expressions he used, as well as from secret information, that the US government have within the last few days issued sealed orders to their revenue cruisers which will stop any action which might bring them into collision with our men-of-war.²¹

Pauncefote was to be proved right; there were no further seizures of vessels in the 1890 season, and the four warships were released for use elsewhere.

However, the danger of a clash had not abated completely; the two sides had still not even come to a temporary accommodation over the issues dividing them, and there were rumours of a 23-strong armed American fleet preparing to head for the Bering Sea for the 1891 season. As C. S. Campbell observed '... the Anglo-Canadian-American discord continued to present explosive possibilities.'²² It was in this difficult atmosphere that Pauncefote's diplomacy proved to be as timely as had his accurate intelligence of the previous year. Having finally negotiated a temporary compromise with the Americans, which involved a suspension of culling on both sides in the coming seal fishing season, he then had the task of persuading a reluctant Salisbury, and the Canadian government, to agree to it without delay, in order to avoid the possibility of an Anglo-American confrontation re-emerging. The correspondence clearly shows that it was Pauncefote's influence over Salisbury that was decisive in obtaining an agreement. On 13 May 1891, in reply to a telegraph from Pauncefote urging an agreement, Salisbury wrote that he was '... sorry to say that the Canadian

²¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 3 July 1890, PRO, FO5/2109.

²² C. S. Campbell, 'Bering Sea,' p.403.

Government are impracticable. They say that sealing vessels have started and are now beyond recall. The year of grace for the seals cannot at all events be this year.' On the same day, Pauncefote telegraphed a renewed plea for acceptance, saying:

I venture with great deference to obtain consent of Canada in substance to Secretary of State's proposal. Its rejection after the recent agitation on the subject would excite strong popular feeling against us and might lead to serious results. Its acceptance would facilitate the settlement of this and other important questions. The sealing fleet can be communicated with before it enters Bering Sea in July.²³

This telegram, along with others, persuaded Salisbury to consult the Canadians once more, and, ultimately, to sign up to an agreement, which although only temporary, did remove the threat of a serious clash in the Bering Sea. In reviewing the evidence, it is hard to refute C.S. Campbell's judgement that Pauncefote must take the main credit for reaching the agreement that avoided serious complications in the early phase of the dispute. His influence over Salisbury proved decisive at important moments. However, as discussed below, he could be criticised for not exerting that influence earlier on in the dispute, and so perhaps avoiding some of the drawn-out consequences.

In his dealings with other British Foreign Secretaries over the course of the Bering Sea dispute, Pauncefote continued to drip feed suggestions, and to urge compromise at appropriate moments. Lord Rosebery's confidence in him was shown in a letter to Thomas Bayard, the US ambassador to Britain, when in reply to an American proposal to move the Bering Sea negotiations to London, he objected, saying:

I can see no adequate reason which could justify my taking the discussion of the subject away from Sir Julian Pauncefote who has hitherto conducted it with such patience and skill, and who has the advantage of being an English lawyer of eminence, this would be a slight on him ...²⁴

²³ Salisbury to Pauncefote & Pauncefote to Salisbury, 13 May 1891, PRO, FO5/2137.

²⁴ Rosebery to Bayard, 21 Nov 1893, PRO, FO5/2217.

Pauncefote's authority in his dealings with Lord Kimberley was similarly evident. His despatches are full of recommendations which, like most of his communications with Salisbury, edged Kimberley towards agreement with the Americans. Typical of this is a telegram from March 1894, where Pauncefote urged:

In view of the state of public opinion in this country I venture to suggest to Your Lordship that is most important that equal celerity should be displayed in pushing the British bill [regarding new sealing regulations agreed with the US as a result of the Bering Sea Arbitration] through Parliament.²⁵

Kimberley, it seems, was happy to receive, and did indeed act upon, such advice. In a private letter to Pauncefote, the degree to which he was dependent on the British ambassador, was apparent as he wrote in 1894 that

I am ashamed to say that... my work at the India office was more congenial to me... from long habit, than diplomacy. Unravelling knots which tie themselves again as fast as you disentangle them is not a very pleasant occupation however important ... I hope we are in sight of the end of the Behring Sea difficulty ... I must congratulate you on the part you have played in the business.²⁶

And, at the end of one phase of the negotiations, Kimberley wrote to Pauncefote that he took '... much pleasure in informing you that HM Government fully recognize the great tact and resource displayed by Your Excellency in the conduct of these negotiations and entirely approve of your action in the matter.'²⁷

That the other British ministers and officials that Pauncefote dealt with during the dispute held him in high esteem, there can be little doubt. Lord Ripon, colonial secretary in 1894, commented that Pauncefote had '... displayed great tact and resource in the conduct of these negotiations.'²⁸ Those who worked under him were as full of

²⁵ Pauncefote to Rosbery, 22 March 1894, PRO, FO5/2253.

²⁶ Kimberley to Pauncefote, 31 March 1894, Kimberley Papers, MSS Eng.c. 4408, f.84

²⁷ Kimberley to Pauncefote, 8 June 1894, PRO, FO5/2256.

²⁸ Lord Ripon, Colonial Office minute, 30 May 1894, PRO, CO 42/826.

praise as those who worked above him. Underlining this fact, R G Edwardes, First Secretary at the British legation, wrote in a private letter of May 1890 that Sir Julian was ‘... the most patient, sanguine man I have ever met. The whole of this seal question is nothing but one of money and the evident corruption all round is sickening.’²⁹

US ADMINISTRATIONS

When Pauncefote arrived in the United States, ‘twisting the lion’s tale’, as it was known, was still a popular sport, and railing against, or at the very least distancing oneself from, the British Empire was still a well-worn tactic of US election campaigns. During the 1892 presidential campaign, for example, Pauncefote commented that ‘... envy hatred and jealousy of England will continue, I fear, to predominate in the councils of this country whichever Party may triumph.’³⁰ Reflecting this, his correspondence reveals that his relationship with leading members of US administrations was uneasy at various points in the Bering Sea dispute. Despite Pauncefote’s somewhat bland and conciliatory public persona, he was at times fiercely critical and even contemptuous of those he had to deal with in Washington. Whilst he did have good relations with some of those he worked with, such as Secretaries of State Walter Gresham and John Hay, American policy on the Bering Sea often appears to have been influenced more by US domestic concerns than his diplomacy.

Pauncefote’s most awkward negotiations seem to have been with the first Secretary of State that he encountered, James G. Blaine. There were a number of reasons for this. Personality was partly to blame, as one writer has observed: ‘Grave, dignified, meticulous, Pauncefote was not the person to get on famously with the flamboyant, mercurial Blaine.’³¹ Furthermore, Blaine’s relationship with his own leader, President Harrison, was becoming increasingly strained, meaning that policy was not always consistent. Blaine’s age also meant that he was prone to persistent bouts

²⁹ Edwardes to Jervoise (senior Foreign Office clerk) 30 May 1890, PRO FO5/2107.

³⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 26 May 1892, Salisbury papers, vol.78, USA, 1891-92, f.255.

of illness, and had to deal with family tragedy whilst in office. As if these complicating factors were not enough to make negotiations less than straightforward, close colleagues of Blaine had financial interests in the company that ran the sealing operations on the Pribilof Islands, and the treasury department interfered with the policies of the state department.³² (This was still to prove the case when Richard Olney was in office; he once wrote that ‘in all matters relating to seals, the state department in my time was a mere echo of the treasury department’).³³ Over and above these considerations, Blaine’s political outlook did not make him a soft touch as far as international negotiations were concerned. A recent study of him notes his ‘abiding distrust and resentment of Great Britain and the British establishment,’ and asserts that he was ‘obsessed with removing Britain as the leading economic power in the Western hemisphere.’³⁴

Perhaps unaware of all these nuances, Pauncefote began his negotiations on the seals issue optimistically enough. In May 1889, not long after his arrival in Washington, and the inauguration of President Harrison, he wrote in a private despatch to Lord Salisbury that Blaine had shown him ‘... the most unaffected friendship and I sincerely hope that he is earnest in his desire to dispel the idea that he is an Anglo-phobe.’³⁵ He added that he hoped a solution to the Bering Sea dispute could be found within months. Pauncefote’s honeymoon period with Blaine was not to last long. In April 1890, with the Bering Sea dispute in full swing, he wrote to Salisbury saying that Blaine was ‘a very dangerous man to deal with, for he “gushes” one day and backs down the next.’ By June the British minister was declaring that: ‘Either he is knowingly writing rubbish to serve certain political objects or he is neither a lawyer nor a

³¹ C. S. Campbell, ‘The Bering Sea Settlements of 1892,’ *Pacific Historical Review*, 32:4 (1963), p.349.

³² C. S. Campbell, ‘Bering Sea,’ pp. 396-398.

³³ Olney to Henry White, 8 Oct. 1897, Library of Congress (LOC), Olney papers, reel 28.

³⁴ Crapol, Edward P, *James G. Blaine, Architect of Empire* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 2000) p.138.

³⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 10 May 1889, Salisbury papers, vol. 77, USA, 1887-90, f.82.

statesman.’ And by December 1890 he was informing Salisbury of Blaine’s ‘crooked ways.’³⁶

With his now less elevated view of US politicians firmly entrenched, Pauncefote wrote a disdainful private letter to Sir Henry Ponsonby, Queen Victoria’s Private Secretary, in January 1891 saying:

I am still fighting the great battle of the seals, and as Blaine is ‘hors de combat’ I begin to hope that truth will prevail and virtue be triumphant, but the politicians in this country still cultivate as much as ever the arts of lying, cheating and expectorating,³⁷

Pauncefote’s strained relations with Blaine are well illustrated in a despatch to Salisbury of 6 June 1890, in which he recounted his meeting with the Secretary of State informing him that British warships were being sent to the Bering Sea. Blaine, according to Pauncefote, replied:

‘We have known [about] that for some time. We view it as a menace and shall not defer on that account for a single day the departure of our own cutters. It is a violent assertion of a right to share in a fishery which the United States can show an exclusive title for 80 years.’ I replied that on the contrary it was an act of self defence against a violent assertion by the United States of a right to interfere with the British flag on the high seas which could not be tolerated any longer, and would not have been tolerated so long from any other nation. He said we were crying out before we were hurt and that the presence of British ironclads in Behring’s sea would aggravate the difficulties of a friendly settlement.³⁸

Whilst it is clear from such exchanges that Blaine had little time for the British position in the dispute, his correspondence gives little away on his personal views of

³⁶ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 25 April 1890, 6 June 1890, 26 Dec. 1890, Salisbury Papers, vol. 77. f.82, f.226, f.312.

³⁷ Pauncefote to Ponsonby, 26 Jan. 1891, PRO, FO800/3.

³⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 6 June 1890, PRO, FO5/2108.

Pauncefote, although it does at times hint at tension in their relationship, such as when Blaine wrote to President Harrison: 'I can make nothing of him [Pauncefote]. Tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock I will bring him to see you. He is either very stupid or I am, or both of us, which is probably the case.'³⁹

Two letters that Pauncefote wrote in June 1891 to James Bryce reveal further Pauncefote's frustration, and how domestic pressures influenced American administrations' handling of the dispute. It had been exposed that Blaine had suppressed a report showing that US sealing activities were seriously damaging overall seal numbers, and therefore necessitated some kind of agreement with Great Britain. On receipt of this news, Pauncefote wrote to Bryce that Blaine was:

... very glad of an excuse to wash his hands of the Behring Sea business, and there is a pretty general opinion that they want washing. I am assured that when Congress meets there will be a tremendous attack on him for his tricky conduct. Anyhow, I am rejoiced that in spite of his tricks we have put through the modus vivendi [temporary agreement], as that removes all danger of a collision and assures a peaceful termination of the controversy.⁴⁰

But only a week later, upset by the slowness of the next stage of negotiations, he wrote a letter to Bryce that highlights a notable feature of Pauncefote's attitude whenever faced with opposition in his negotiations. In general, he professed good faith in American Presidents and 'the people', but was regularly highly critical of senators and the press:

The President is making me very angry by delaying the resumption of the Behring Sea arbitration negotiations. He has no doubt a set of rascals behind him connected with the seal fishery, and with the electioneering campaign, which trammel

³⁹ Blaine to Harrison, 30 March 1892, quoted in Volwiler, 'Correspondence,' p.253.

⁴⁰ Pauncefote to Bryce, 18 June 1891, Bryce Papers, MS Bryce 116, f.152.

his action – but I still think he means to deal honestly with the question - I hope by the time this reaches your hands the whole affair will be concluded.⁴¹

Meanwhile, Harrison, appears to have been as frustrated as Pauncefote by the slow pace of negotiations, writing to Blaine:

This morning we have a note from Sir Julian ... it is discouraging that they constantly introduce some new condition ... I shall try to bring this matter to conclusion today – for I cannot stand any longer the strain and irritation of this matter.⁴²

When delays continued to dog the negotiations, Pauncefote again pointed the finger at Blaine, saying that he was ‘... trying to set up the dogma that we are impeding the Arbitration by trivial objections and unnecessary delays in order to mask his own obstructive actions.’⁴³ Pauncefote’s discomfort was further aroused by an article in the pro Blaine *New York Tribune* that commented:

There is much complaint, and complaint well founded because of the limited power conferred by Lord Salisbury upon Sir Julian Pauncefote in the negotiations of these matters. Lord Salisbury insists upon having every detail submitted to him. This in itself is a source of much delay.⁴⁴

When more articles of this nature appeared, Pauncefote, ever sensitive to newspaper criticism, wrote to Salisbury defending his own role. He said that such newspaper articles contained ‘singular mis-statements of fact’ and that it was he that had been pushing to speed up the negotiations.⁴⁵ Indeed, although Pauncefote was always sensitive about newspaper criticism, in the case of the *Tribune*, he did have legitimate cause for concern, since the paper was always at pains to put itself at the

⁴¹ Pauncefote to Bryce, 25 June 1891, *ibid*, f.158.

⁴² Harrison to Blaine, 8 June 1891, Volwiler, ‘Correspondence,’ p.159.

⁴³ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 4 Jan. 1892, FO5/2173.

⁴⁴ *New York Tribune*, 6 Jan. 1892.

⁴⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 11 Jan. 1892, PRO, FO5/2173.

service of the Secretary of State. This is illustrated by a letter from the editor of the paper to Blaine, apologising for its criticism of him, in which he wrote:

... I am mortified to learn that anything should have appeared in *The Tribune* which could be construed in any way as offensive to yourself. If the reference to you had been brought to my attention last night...it would, undoubtedly, have been stricken out ... I am quite sure that no slip of this kind is likely to occur again.⁴⁶

However, it was true that Salisbury, whilst allowing himself to be influenced by Pauncefote's judgement, did maintain a hands on approach to diplomacy, that often slowed down the British response. Similarly, it was true that Blaine had little interest in speeding up negotiations, because they would more likely than not result in placing restrictions on the sealing activities in which some of his political allies had a share. Blaine had made clear his own contentment with the slow pace of negotiations and making the British minister suffer from early on, writing to Harrison in July 1890 that

... we are gaining much by coolness and lack of eagerness. Sir Julian is doing the walking - not only metaphorically but actually. I have just telephoned him that I could not have a conference with him this morning. He had notified me that he would be here at 10.⁴⁷

With the coming of the Cleveland administration in 1893, Pauncefote found the negotiations somewhat easier. In the run up to the 1892 elections, some suspected that President Harrison's administration had been adopting an obstructive, and even warlike posture in order to gain popularity.⁴⁸ Now Blaine had gone, and, since it had been agreed that the dispute should go to international arbitration, the threat of any armed collision had receded.⁴⁹ Walter Gresham, Cleveland's Secretary of State in 1893, emphasised this new tone in a despatch to Thomas Bayard, then US ambassador to

⁴⁶ Nicholson to Blaine, 7 Feb. 1891, LOC, Blaine Papers, reel 11.

⁴⁷ Blaine to Harrison, 25 July 1890, Volwiler, 'Correspondence,' pp. 113-114.

⁴⁸ C. S. Campbell, 'Settlements,' pp. 359-60.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p.367.

London, in which he wrote that he thought Pauncefote would ‘... enter upon the negotiations in a spirit of fairness, and that he will not insist upon what is unreasonable.’⁵⁰ His trust in Pauncefote remained high when he again wrote to Bayard a few months later ‘My confidence in his [Pauncefote’s] candor remains unshaken.’ He added the accurate observation that ‘I think he and Lord Salisbury are embarrassed by the Canadians.’⁵¹ In part, Pauncefote’s better relations with US secretaries of state during this period was due to the fact that unlike Blaine, they were not quite so concerned about appeasing the business interests involved in sealing activities. They were, therefore, also more willing to listen to the advice of the top American seals expert, who had also provided Pauncefote with information. Henry W. Elliott’s report on the diminution of seal life on the islands was one that had ultimately forced both sides to see the need for compromise in the early years of the dispute, much to the displeasure of the Canadians. His influence was therefore considerable, and he was full of praise for Pauncefote. In January 1894, Elliott wrote to Walter Gresham, then Secretary of State, saying that he had ‘... a long and pleasant understanding with Sir Julian over the subject of that award of the Bering Sea tribunal... Sir Julian you will find direct and manly.’⁵² Significantly, in the same letter, Elliott added that ‘he knew’ that Pauncefote would persuade the British government to accept further restrictions on pelagic sealing. And, in a letter to Gresham’s successor, Richard Olney, Elliott wrote that he knew Pauncefote ‘... was truthful, and that he really desired to save these seals, and that he had a very poor opinion of the Canadian claim.’⁵³

However, despite the improvement in the climate of the negotiations with respective Secretaries of State, the matter of compensation for Canadian sealers had not been fully resolved and the regulations regarding sealing required constant re-negotiation. In these matters, Congress was to have a significant and obstructive

⁵⁰ Gresham to Bayard, Sept. 29, 1892, US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG M77, reel 89.

⁵¹ Gresham to Bayard, 21 Jan 1894, LOC, Gresham papers, box 42.

⁵² Elliott to Gresham 9 Jan. 1894, LOC, Gresham papers, box 41.

⁵³ Elliott to Olney, 3 March 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 17.

influence, as far as Pauncefote's diplomacy was concerned. To add to these woes, when the McKinley administration came into office in 1897, Pauncefote foresaw that a new round of difficulties was about to erupt over the never-ending seals issue. He wrote to Salisbury, in April 1897, that

... the subject of the fur seals fisheries has engaged the serious attention of the new President and his Cabinet, and ... we may look forward to a recurrence of political excitement on the subject, which the jingoes in Congress and the Jingo Press will hail with delight as opening a new field for the efforts to embitter the relations between the two countries ... the appointment of Mr. JW Foster, Ex-Secretary of State ... to be a Fur Seals Commissioner [responsible for negotiating for the US government on the issue] ... indicates the commencement of a Crusade against Great Britain in relation to pelagic sealing.⁵⁴

This prediction proved to be correct. In a long despatch to the British Government sent via John Hay, American ambassador to London, McKinley's Secretary of State, John Sherman, set out in unusually blunt terms his objections to the British position. In it he accused the British of not upholding the recommendations of the Bering sea arbitration tribunal and, in a key passage of what became known as 'the Sherman despatch', he wrote:

Upon Great Britain must ... rest in the public conscience of mankind, the responsibility for the embarrassment in the relations of the two nations which must result from such conduct. One of the evil results is already indicated in the growing conviction of our people that the refusal of the British Government to carry out the recommendations of that tribunal will needlessly sacrifice an important interest of the United States. This is shown by the proposition seriously made in Congress to abandon negotiations and destroy the seals on the islands, as the speedy end to a dangerous controversy ...⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 9 April 1897, PRO, FO5/2350.

⁵⁵ Sherman to Hay, 10 May, 1897, NARA, RG M77, reel 91.

That such hostile language was still being used six years after the dispute had flared up, and four years after a tribunal had been held to settle the issue is evidence of its capacity to be a thorn in the side of Anglo-American relations throughout the 1890s. Salisbury nonetheless demonstrated that he did not wish to antagonise Sherman when he later agreed to a forceful US request that British patrols enforcing the sealing regulations should not be reduced as the British government had planned.⁵⁶ Relations were further strained in the same year when the US administration organised an international conference to discuss whether steps needed to be taken to halt what some perceived to be a terminal decline in seal stocks.⁵⁷ The British government objected strongly to the way in which the conference was conceived. In part, this was due to the wide terms open to discussion; it appeared the Americans wanted to put aside the whole basis of hard won 1893 arbitration agreements. Britain also objected to the conference because the invitation was extended to Russia and Japan, whom Britain felt the United States would use as a further lever against Canadian sealing operations. This objection prompted an illuminating response from John Hay, at the time US ambassador in London. In a letter to J.W. Foster, he wrote that he ‘...had always thought of English diplomacy as overbearing and pig-headed but ... never imagined it was tricky and tortuous ...’⁵⁸ Emphasising the fact that Hay was solidly behind Foster’s actions, he wrote to him on 2 December 1897 congratulating him on

the splendid result of the expert conference... Our position is now impregnable and if Canada will not listen to reason and England dare not cross her we have only to do what our own judgement prompts as right and proper.⁵⁹

Hay’s comments at this stage of the dispute are interesting for several reasons. At the time he was considered to be a staunch Anglophile. His comment reveals he was not as enamoured with British diplomacy as his image suggested. He was also to

⁵⁶ Villiers to MacGregor, 19 July, 1897, PRO, ADM1/7291.

⁵⁷ Brown, *National Policy*, p.331.

⁵⁸ Hay to Foster, 18 Oct., 1897, LOC, JW Foster papers

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 2 Dec., 1897.

become Secretary of State in the following year. The seals dispute thus provides a useful snapshot of his and Pauncefote's attitudes shortly before they were to work together. Pauncefote had taken a markedly different attitude to the conference and took a very different view of Foster, which he repeated in January 1898, when sending another gloomy assessment to Salisbury, writing:

We shall not arrive at a settlement so long as General Foster continues to be in charge of negotiations on behalf of the US Government. He is a tricky lawyer, and is playing into the hands of the company ... Foster has made a fiasco of the business and behaved badly ...⁶⁰

And again on 1 March, 1898, he wrote about Foster saying:

I have found him opposed, as it seems to me on insufficient grounds, to every suggestion which has yet been offered for the settlement of the controversy. His aim appears to be to procure either the abandonment of pelagic sealing by Canada without adequate compensation, or the acceptance of new regulations which would deprive their industry of any commercial value.⁶¹

His prediction of further disagreement was to prove correct and provides a notable contrast to Pauncefote's optimism of eight years earlier. The connection between US business interests and US administrations was not one that Pauncefote's diplomacy could break.

⁶⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 21 Jan. 1898, PRO, FO5/2385.

⁶¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 1 March 1898, PRO, FO5/2386.

CONGRESS

Whilst Pauncefote was to find his influence diminished because of these business factors, he was also to find that, when he did reach agreement with an incumbent administration, his efforts were then thwarted by the powerful Senate committee on foreign relations. If anything, his diplomatic influence on this group of people was a negative one.

It was to be a clash with this Committee over the seals dispute that was to lead to one of the biggest personal public attacks on Pauncefote during his time in Washington. After years of difficult negotiation by 1894, the British government, at Pauncefote's urging, had finally agreed to a compensation payment of \$425,000 for the Canadian sealing vessels seized by the American authorities in the Bering Sea in the early years of the dispute. President Cleveland and his Secretary of State, Walter Gresham gave their full backing to the plan. However, the granting of the money lay in the hands of Congress, and key members of that body still failed to acknowledge that the USA had been found at fault by the arbitration tribunal that had taken place in Paris in 1893. They were, therefore, extremely reluctant to grant any compensation to the Canadians. Foremost amongst the objectors was Senator Morgan, chairman of the Senate committee on Foreign Relations. Pauncefote seems to have found Morgan a particularly difficult politician to deal with, and was to find himself at loggerheads with him over a number of issues, the Bering Sea dispute being a prime example. In a despatch to Kimberley in July 1894, he expressed his frustration with Morgan, commenting on his 'obstructive attitude' and describing how the senator was trying to justify the payment of a far smaller amount of compensation than the British government was asking for. In a hint that the British ambassador had become involved in exchanges verging on the undiplomatic, and that showed the Cleveland administration and Congress were out of step on the issue, Pauncefote wrote:

I, of course, repudiated such a contention in as forcible language as could properly be used and I must do Mr. Gresham the justice to say that he did not attempt to support Senator Morgan's views ... the settlement of ... claims was now the last step

in this long controversy. It could not be longer delayed without exciting well founded apprehension and displeasure.⁶²

However, the power of Congress over foreign policy was made abundantly clear over the succeeding months, as the award was rejected by the House of Representatives in February 1895 (by 143-112 votes) and was not finally granted until 1898.⁶³

In his continuing frustration over the delays to the granting of this money, Pauncefote again made clear his disapproval of Congress, and Morgan in particular. He wrote to Kimberley that: 'statements have been made in Congress which entirely misrepresent both the law and the facts of the case' which were 'calculated to prejudice the minds of those Members of Congress who had not taken the trouble to read the... papers on the subject.' And soon after he wrote that that he was not surprised that

... persistent denunciations from [Senator Morgan] against the diplomatic arrangements concluded between the two governments should have prejudiced Congress and the Public against it ... the strong Party feeling, and the political animosities which marked the closing of the session rendered it impossible to obtain a fair and dispassionate consideration of the questions. Much as the delay in the settlement is to be deplored, I have too much confidence in the great American people to doubt that it will be ultimately adjusted on a sound and honorable basis.⁶⁴

Months later, these despatches, and others, which had been published in a British Parliamentary Blue book intended to promote the British side of the case were leaked to the US press, before US politicians had known of their contents, and were responded to by Morgan himself in a speech to the Senate on 6 December, 1895. In a vitriolic address, he not only made his views known on the British handling of the

⁶² Pauncefote to Kimberley, 13 July 1894, PRO, FO5/2257.

⁶³ Pauncefote to Kimberley, 26 Oct. 1895, PRO, FO5/2280, Pauncefote to Salisbury, 16 Jun. 1898, PRO, FO5/2366.

⁶⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 15 March 1895, PRO, FO5/2280.

Bering Sea issue in general, but also launched a long personal attack on the British ambassador. In his speech, Morgan stated:

Sir Julian ... indulges in offensive comment upon matters uttered in debate, and charges [members of the House of Representatives] with ignorance and mistatements of law and facts, and imputes to them discreditable motives and the use of epithets when commenting upon the conduct of American citizens in their unlawful and flagrant violations of duty to their own country, its laws and policy. Under cover of the British flag...he assumes the role of vindicator of the acts and reputation of these men in a gratuitous and insulting manner...

He went on to speak of

... the intrusive arrogance that has induced the British ambassador to attempt to influence our legislation by harsh denunciation of our votes and arguments, and by taking an appeal to our people against the attitude of their representatives in Congress, and supporting it by flattering allusions to their superior sense of fairness and justice...

He concluded by saying:

Sir Julian ... seeks to escape from the direct force of truth justice, and right ... which has grown into a national diplomatic characteristic and is felt in many quarters of the earth among the weaker nations, needs the vigilance of constant question and protest to prevent its crystallisation into determined aggression and assertion of absolute right...The boundaries of the British Empire have thus eaten into the smaller nationalities, until many of them have been absorbed into the realm, and we need to be cautious and alert on sea and land in matters that relate to fur seals and gold .⁶⁵

Pauncefote was understandably anxious to defend his position against such an attack, but was unrepentant when he wrote to Salisbury that 'Senator Morgan's violent and abusive attack on the President and myself has only served to draw more particular

⁶⁵ Extract from Congressional Record, sent in despatch from Pauncefote to Salisbury, 10 Dec. 1895, PRO, FO 5/2286.

attention to those portions of the Blue Book in which his misstatements and foolish contentions are dealt with ...⁶⁶

He also sent Salisbury an extract from the *New York Evening Post*, which was highly critical of Morgan's speech, and defended the principle of arbitration, of which Pauncefote was a firm supporter, saying:

The whole machinery of arbitration bespeaks a high degree of civilisation, and to allow its working to be arrested and nullified by semi-barbarians like Senator Morgan would be a distinct retrogression...it is agents such as he, and not our failure to kill people and destroy property that diminish our weight and influence in the civilised world ... the whole affair [of refusing to approve the compensation] is a national scandal.⁶⁷

The problem for Pauncefote was that whilst Senator Morgan may have had a reputation as a somewhat intemperate and jingoistic senator, his views could not be ignored. His position, as chairman of the Senate committee on foreign relations, carried considerable weight, as he had proved by blocking the agreement over the compensation payment. Morgan's criticisms of Pauncefote are also worth noting because, whilst couched in fiery rhetoric, they were not without a ring of truth. Pauncefote's comment to Salisbury of 14 February 1896, when he wrote that '... at times one would think the Senate had become a lunatic asylum. We must pray for a lucid interval,'⁶⁸ typified his attitude as did his analysis shortly afterwards:

The action of the Senate Committee shows the extreme difficulty of concluding any treaty with the United States . After a treaty has been formally signed it is liable to be entirely changed at the caprice of a committee who cannot be so familiar

⁶⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 27 Dec. 1895, PRO, FO5/2286.

⁶⁷ Extract from *New York Evening Post* sent in despatch from Pauncefote to Salisbury, 13 Dec. 1895, PRO, FO5/2286.

⁶⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 14 Feb. 1896, Salisbury Papers, vol 139, USA 1895-98, f.48.

with the subject as the Secretary of State, and who does not seem to be concerned as to what the other side may have to urge against the changes proposed.⁶⁹

Thus, whilst being well aware of how the US system worked, his indiscreet comments about such figures as Morgan, some of which he seemed quite content to see published, cannot have helped the British cause when faced with the need for Senate approval. He did make genuine efforts to maintain cordial relations with presidents and secretaries of state despite the difficulties he faced, but he seems to have felt that a charm offensive on the likes of Senator Morgan was beneath his dignity. Strictly speaking this may have been beyond his official duties. Nevertheless, when reading Morgan's stinging personal criticisms of Pauncefote, it is worth reflecting on other important measures, which related to Britain, that were frustrated by the committee's power. As well as delaying a resolution of a key aspect of the Bering Sea dispute, the Senate committee was also responsible for the complete rejection of the 1897 Olney-Pauncefote Treaty, which proposed arbitration as a standard method of settling future disputes between the United States and Britain. It also caused considerable delays in passing the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901, which was ultimately to pave the way for the construction of the Panama Canal. It would obviously be an exaggeration to say that in each case it was simply the Senate's personal dislike of Pauncefote, rather than wider factors, that affected the passage of these treaties. However, the British ambassador was closely identified with the drafting of them, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that a more constructive approach by him towards the Senate could have proved more effective in achieving British aims. In Pauncefote's defence, it is worth emphasising that representatives of the US administration felt similarly aggrieved about the situation, and noted, without criticising Pauncefote, its possible impact on the future of arbitration. For example, Thomas Bayard, a man who had long been involved with the seal debacle, first as secretary of state, and later as ambassador to Britain, noted that '... the injury to the cause of voluntary and amicable international arbitration inflicted by a

⁶⁹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 6 March 1896, PRO, FO5/2310.

failure, promptly and fully to comply with an Award, is not easily measurable, and is greatly to be deplored.’⁷⁰ And, in a later letter, he, like Pauncefote, was more specific in apportioning blame, saying that: ‘The course of Mr. Morgan of Alabama in blocking the payment of the sum agreed upon by poor Mr. Gresham and Sir Julian inflicted a serious blow to the practice of arbitration.’⁷¹ Similarly, President Grover Cleveland wrote to Bayard: ‘I am ashamed of the conduct of Congress in that matter [of the Bering Sea] but it is understood how persistent the Administration has been in efforts to have the right thing done.’⁷² On this point, as Hugh Brogan has pointed out, in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the relative power of Congress in relation to the President was at its height.⁷³ In the light of this, Pauncefote’s diplomatic focus could have been spread more widely than it apparently was. His sharply contrasting handling of Congress and presidential administrations points to where his diplomacy failed him.

CANADA

At the other end of the Bering Sea dispute it was Canadian interests that were at stake and this served to complicate Pauncefote’s task. The Canadians were, understandably, much less willing to compromise on the issue than the British government. Whilst Pauncefote showed an appreciation of the need to consult the Canadians, his apparent willingness to push for compromises did not always make him popular with political representatives of the Dominion. His, and the British government’s, willingness to reach agreement raised the legitimate question in some Canadian minds as to whether good relations with the United States were more important than the livelihoods of Canadian sealers.

Canadian frustrations with the way the dispute was being handled by the British government surfaced from an early stage. Illustrative of this is a despatch from the

⁷⁰ Bayard to Uhl (acting sec. of state), NARA, RGM30 6 Jun., 1895.

⁷¹ Bayard to Cleveland, 4 Dec. 1895, LOC, Olney Papers, reel 14.

⁷² Cleveland to Bayard, 29 Dec. 1895, LOC, Olney Papers, reel 15.

⁷³ Brogan, Hugh, *The Pelican History of the United States of America* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 419.

under Secretary of State for the colonies, Robert Herbert, to Lord Salisbury of 27 July 1889. This drew his attention to the fact that the Canadians wanted swift action to request damages for the seizure of sealers in the Bering Sea and the ‘... withdrawal of the claim advanced by the Government of the United States to exclusive jurisdiction over the waters of that Sea.’ He also commented that ‘some irritation has occurred in Canada’ because of the delay.⁷⁴ Importantly, it was these two issues – on which Canada was proved to be emphatically in the right by the tribunal of 1893 – that caused Canadians to become less than co-operative when talks over regulating pelagic sealing began. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was notably more sympathy for this Canadian view in the Colonial Office than the Foreign Office. This was apparent from early on in Pouncefote’s time in Washington. Approximately three months into his posting there, the Colonial Office official, John Anderson, wryly commented that ‘the FO told us that Sir J. Pouncefote was to take the matter up as soon as he got to Washington, but if he did so they have kept it to themselves.’⁷⁵ In a private despatch to Salisbury, Pouncefote explained why he had not done this. He made it clear that he saw no merit in taking up the case so quickly, because he ‘...thought the moment inopportune to approach any burning question requiring a good deal of previous sounding of the public feeling and opinion especially among senators’ and that he thought it would be ‘bad policy’ to ‘stir’ in the matter at that time.⁷⁶ The phrasing of this letter suggests that Pouncefote was given a degree of latitude in whether to raise the issue at this time or not. Indeed, Salisbury’s comment to Lord Knutsford on the matter was that nothing would be done ‘until he [Pouncefote] has had time to examine into the question on the spot.’⁷⁷ In his letter to Stanley in June however, Pouncefote created a slightly different impression stating that ‘the policy of the Home Government ... is at present not to move in the two great questions (Behring Sea and the Fisheries) but to await a movement on the other

⁷⁴ Herbert to Salisbury, 27 Jul. 1889, PRO, FO5/2073.

⁷⁵ Anderson minute, 12 June 1889, quoted in Brown, *National Policy*, p.100.

⁷⁶ Pouncefote to Salisbury, 12 July 1889, Salisbury papers, Pouncefote correspondence, 1888-90, fos. 100-103.

⁷⁷ Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 18 April 1889, quoted in Brown, *National Policy* p.100.

side.⁷⁸ Although Pauncefote made the excuse that Congress was not sitting at that time, it was in session when he initially arrived in the United States. Other evidence suggests that he may have been preoccupied with more personal matters. In a letter to the permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Thomas Sanderson, the First Secretary at the Washington embassy, H.G. Edwardes, wrote that

He [Pauncefote] has not troubled you much with despatches. I dare say he is right, and I scribbled a great deal more than was necessary. He is naturally much occupied with setting the House back in order which is absolutely necessary.⁷⁹

It may also have been that opening negotiations on the issue would have upset his plans to return to London from July to October.⁸⁰ It was in these months that a further seizure of a Canadian sealer occurred, a situation that was to inflame the negotiations when they finally resumed later in the year. Arguably then, Pauncefote's deliberate delay over the seals issue in 1889, which was not dictated to him by Salisbury, not only contributed to a more dangerous situation in 1890, but also ensured that the list of Canadian vessels claiming compensation would grow longer.

The Canadian agitation was made clearer when Charles Tupper, Canadian minister for marine and fisheries, wrote to Lord Knutsford at the Colonial Office on 2 August 1889, urging the government to send a British warship into the Bering Sea to prevent further seizures.⁸¹ In June 1889, Salisbury had written to Pauncefote saying such action was not necessary at this stage.⁸² On 9 August 1889, Lord Stanley, Governor General of Canada wrote to Lord Knutsford saying that it was his 'earnest hope that an early assurance will be given the British subjects peacefully pursuing their

⁷⁸ Macdonald to Stanley, 28 June 1889, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Edwardes to Sanderson, undated, April 1889, FO5/2054.

⁸⁰ Pauncefote to Sanderson, 31 May 1889, FO5/2054.

⁸¹ Tupper to Knutsford, 2 Aug. 1889, PRO, FO5/2074.

⁸² Salisbury to Pauncefote, 7 June 1889, FO5/2073.

lawful occupations on the high seas will be protected'⁸³. By 9 September, Charles Tupper was putting the Canadian case even more strongly, writing to Lord Stanley that he

... fails to appreciate not merely any reason for the long delay in obtaining satisfaction from the aggressive and hostile action exercised against British ships and British property by the United States, but also for the wanton continuance of this treatment from which so much direct and indirect damage and loss is sustained by one of Her Majesty's colonial possessions. Moreover the undersigned would call attention to the imminent danger of loss of life not to speak of the physical suffering already sustained.⁸⁴

Tupper's disquiet over the British handling of the dispute turned into a personal attack on Pauncefote's diplomacy at their first meeting with the Americans in March 1890. After failing to agree that a closed season was necessary, Tupper commented that Pauncefote was

... in no humour to fight for the Canadian cause with any degree of hope, and seems to cling to the idea that we must give up a large area around the islands for ever ... He is a gentleman but seems to me over anxious to settle all disputes no matter how – simply to settle them!⁸⁵

By the end of the same month he went so far as to say that

It is in my opinion most unfortunate that he has conducted negotiations in such a way that Mr. Blaine has been able to learn all that he personally was willing to do. The consequence is that he fights now for his own reputation and standing before Mr. Blaine ... having informally told Mr. Blaine of his intended and very handsome concessions he dare not retreat

⁸³ Stanley to Knutsford, 9 Aug. 1889, PRO, FO5/274.

⁸⁴ Tupper to Stanley, 9 Sept. 1889, PRO, FO5/274.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Brown, *National Policy*, pp.106-107.

It may be out of place for me to say it, but I cannot refrain from urging that in future negotiations with the United States no British minister at Washington should act for us.⁸⁶

Whilst not revealing the full strength of Tupper's feelings, Lord Stanley wrote to Pauncefote stating that the 'Minister of marine represents the unanimous feeling of his Government but I am sure he will do his best to help you.'⁸⁷

Salisbury, unaware of the personal attack on his minister, and in any case unmoved at that stage by calls for firmer action did not put the requested ships on standby until the end of May 1890, ten months after Tupper's original request. Judging by the way the United States did apparently back down faced with the real prospect of British armed force, it is probable that had he acted more promptly, a number of seizures would not have happened. Pauncefote apparently agreed with Salisbury's earlier stance. As has been shown earlier, he was continually optimistic about his negotiations bearing fruit quite rapidly in the early phase of the dispute, and was conciliatory in his approach. It is true that it was Pauncefote who eventually persuaded Salisbury to take a firmer line but it had been his initially dilatory diplomacy allowed the Americans to continue to harass Canadian shipping. Had he thrown his weight behind the Canadian idea of protecting vessels at an earlier stage, the idea may have been considered more urgently by Salisbury, and the lengthy subsequent wrangling over arbitration and compensation would have been significantly reduced.

Nonetheless, it is evident that the three-way nature of the dispute did complicate diplomatic discussions. Michael Herbert, Second Secretary at the British legation, summed up the difficulties of handling the triangular negotiations early on in the dispute. Writing about Pauncefote in April 1890, he said that

⁸⁶ Tupper to Macdonald, 11 April, 1890, quoted in Brown, *National Policy*, p.110.

⁸⁷ Stanley to Pauncefote, 11 April, 1890, *ibid.*

... if he gets through the Bering Sea negotiation satisfactorily, he will have achieved what no other Englishman could have done. Any arrangement between Canada and the United States satisfactory to both parties is well nigh impossible, and what with Blaine pulling one way and Tupper [the Canadian Fisheries Minister] the other, Sir Julian has a very rough time of it.⁸⁸

To British politicians and officials the necessity of consulting with the Canadians on the matter at all, seems to have been something of a chore, and their attitude to Canadian ministers was at times as condescending as that held towards the Americans. Memoranda written by various Foreign Office officials talked of Charles Tupper, as being 'slightly unhinged' and described his criticisms of the British stance as being 'particularly ungracious and Canadian.'⁸⁹ This frustration with the Canadians was not just confined to officials; in a comment that reflected well on the Washington ambassador, Rosebery at one point apparently commented that 'Sir Julian had the Canadians somewhat in hand and he [Rosebery] could not get along with them.'⁹⁰ The main British complaint seems to have been the Canadians' lack of willingness to compromise. Ministers and officials disliked the Canadian stance that was articulated in an editorial of the Canadian paper, the *Victoria News* from September 1892, which said:

England would not go to war for the sake of a few seals ... If seals and vessels are not worth fighting for, perhaps men are ... History furnishes numerous ... instances where not the slightest hesitation was shown in demanding that the rights and liberties of British subjects should not be encroached upon... A British subject from this province is surely as worthy of protection, as one from any other part of the Empire.⁹¹

Faced with these competing tensions, Pauncefote did give some show of sensitivity towards Canadian feelings. Early on in the negotiations he wrote to

⁸⁸ Herbert to Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, April 5 1890, Hamilton papers, Add. MS48620, f.208.

⁸⁹ Marginal note 3 Nov.1894, PRO, FO5/2258.

⁹⁰ Gresham to Bayard, 29 Oct. 1893, reporting on Henry White's conversation with Rosebery, LOC, Gresham papers, vol. 39.

⁹¹ Sent in despatch from Pauncefote to Salisbury, 9 Sept. 1892, PRO, FO5/2180.

Salisbury: 'I need hardly say how anxious I am to give the utmost effect to the views and wishes of the Dominion Government in this negotiation.'⁹² And in a letter to Salisbury's Private Secretary, Eric Barrington of 6th June 1890 he wrote that '... whatever the decision of the Imperial Government may be, the sealers will abide by it. At the same time there is a very strong feeling that in every encounter with the US we have been worsted.'⁹³ Pauncefote himself was to experience the force of these 'strong' feelings, after he agreed the initial *modus vivendi*, which restricted pelagic sealing, with the United States. In a letter to Lord Stanley, Charles Tupper outlined his reservations about the agreement. In particular, he disliked the fact that Pauncefote failed to get plans for a joint commission to investigate seal numbers included in the *modus*, and was concerned that American wishes were still allowed to predominate, even though no compensation had yet been received by Canadian sealers for the earlier seizures. He concluded by saying that therefore '... the terms of the convention submitted cannot therefore be considered satisfactory to Your Excellency's advisers.'⁹⁴ Thus, in adopting such a stance, Pauncefote had inflamed the passions of the Canadians against the British actions. In the face of this hostility, showing support for Pauncefote and his dislike of the Canadian minister's comments in this letter, Salisbury wrote a stiff rebuke to the Colonial Office:

The tone of the ... Report from the Minister of Marine and Fisheries... is one of sharp and not very friendly criticism of the manner in which the negotiations have been conducted by Her Majesty's Government and by HM Minister at Washington and of the conclusion to which they have been brought ... the objections made have been proved by the event to be of small practical importance ...⁹⁵

Nonetheless, Tupper was right in his contention that Pauncefote had urged the *modus* to be signed without the written guarantee that Salisbury had initially wanted. Whilst it can be argued that Pauncefote's main priority was the avoidance of the

⁹² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 11 April 1890, PRO, FO5/2080.

⁹³ Pauncefote to Barrington, 6 June 1890, PRO, FO5/2108.

⁹⁴ Tupper to Stanley, 27 June 1891, PRO, FO5/2141.

situation in the Bering Sea spiralling out of control, and that Tupper's objection could not be seen as central to achieving this, it is a good example of how Pauncefote appeared at times more willing to be conciliatory to the United States than to the Canadians. Indeed, this tendency was noted by a Colonial Office official, who commented on Pauncefote's willingness to take advice from Henry Elliott, the American seal expert, writing:

It is not very wise I think of HM's Minister at Washington to take such a determined foe of Canadian sealing as Mr. Elliott as his confidential adviser on this question, and I really think he should get a hint to that effect. It is impossible that the Canadians should put faith in Sir J.P. when they know that this gentleman is always at his elbow, and more than half suspect that not a little of the bitterness of some of the recent communications from Canada is due to the fact that they think that their interests are being sacrificed on the advice of Mr. Elliott...I have no doubt that the Commissioners will make short work of this hysterical gentleman to whom Sir J. Pauncefote lends such a credulous ear.⁹⁶

Colonial Office disapproval of some of Pauncefote's actions were not confined to this issue, they also later remarked on his willingness to expand the area covered by the *modus vivendi*. For example, remarking on this in March 1894, John Anderson commented that

I cannot understand why Sir J. Pauncefote who had it in instructions to suggest a renewal of the old *modus vivendi* confined to Bering Sea did not suggest that. He knew Canada would be adverse to any extension of its area and yet he passes over the suggestion in silence. It is unfortunate that he did so, as we have represented so strongly that he has the whole question at his fingers ... and when we suggest an amendment the US will say as they have so often done before, that we do so under pressure from Canada and against our own judgement and feelings.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Salisbury to Colonial Office, 5 Nov. 1891, PRO, FO5/2143.

⁹⁶ Anderson, minute, 13 Aug. 1891, PRO, CO42/809.

⁹⁷ Anderson, minute, 12 March 1894, PRO, CO42/826

This criticism echoed that of Tupper in his earlier dealings with Pauncefote, and the colonial secretary, Lord Ripon, fully supported this view in his despatch on the matter to the Foreign Office adding that ‘... it should be proposed to Sir J. Pauncefote that the time has arrived for his requesting the immediate assistance of a Canadian delegate...’⁹⁸ Thus, in adopting such a compromising stance, Pauncefote was again not only inflaming the passions of the Canadians against the British handling of the case, but doing so on his own initiative, going beyond even the conciliatory posture of his own government.

There is also evidence that even Salisbury sometimes found it necessary to slow Pauncefote’s willingness to do deals with the Americans. One such occasion was when, in March 1892, Pauncefote recommended renewing the previous year’s *modus vivendi*, which would again have stopped Canadian sealing for several months of the year. In a despatch that might be viewed as a gentle reminder to Pauncefote about who he was representing, Salisbury wrote:

Your advice is, I think sound from the point of view you take. It must be remembered however that the main difficulty in coming to an agreement is the necessity of consulting with the Dominion. It is the tripartite nature of this negotiation that has made it so anxious and difficult a matter.

Unless HM Govt. were to make a definite promise of compensation to the sealers who would be debarred by the *modus vivendi* from hunting it is not probable that Canada would endure a simple renewal of that agreement and it would be impossible to obtain the authority of the House of Commons for such a promise.⁹⁹

Salisbury was certainly correct in his assessment that the Canadians would object to such a move. On the 24 March, Lord Stanley wrote to the Colonial Office, again emphasising the anxieties of those in the Dominion, writing:

⁹⁸ Ripon to Foreign Office, 15 March, 1894, PRO, CO42/826

⁹⁹ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 11 March 1892, PRO, FO5/2174.

Those concerned had no reason to believe that the *modus vivendi* would be repeated except fear that England would be influenced by threatening tone of the United States Govt. Pressure which Canadians believed was organised, and their articles inspired to produce the result, whilst they thought it incredible that except under pressing necessity a large class of people would be deprived for a second year of their means of livelihood ... And it appears such a repetition is not necessary.¹⁰⁰

Despite this emerging tension, Pauncefote projected the image of being in tune with Canadian feelings, as well as his own self-importance, after visiting Canada to discuss the Bering Sea issue in 1895. Writing to Salisbury on the subject, he said that:

My visit to Canada was, I think very useful and opportune and appears to have given much satisfaction, not only to the Dominion Government, but to the public, who seem to attach great importance to the visit of the British Ambassador as evidencing the personal interest taken by him in Canadian affairs... they evinced in every way their satisfaction at my visit.¹⁰¹

However, as already outlined, at the same time as stating his wish to consult the Canadians, he was constantly supporting compromises that did not meet with their full approval. And, as time wore on, he appears to have found continually consulting the Canadians as trying as ministers in Britain, writing to Bryce in May 1892 that 'the negotiations on the seals issue were rendered all the more difficult and dangerous by the Canadian element mixed up in it.'¹⁰²

As the senior British diplomat in Washington, Pauncefote may legitimately have seen maintaining what he referred to as the *entente cordiale* with the United States as a priority, but this approach continued to leave him open to continuing personal criticisms from Canadians whose interests he was meant to be representing. Illustrative of this is another despatch from Charles Tupper of 30 June 1894, which questioned the

¹⁰⁰ Stanley to Colonial Office, 24 March, 1892, PRO, CO42/811.

¹⁰¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 22 Oct. 1895, PRO, FO5/2285.

¹⁰² Pauncefote to Bryce, 27 May 1892, Bryce papers, MS Bryce 116, f. 159.

way US revenue cutters searched Canadian sealing vessels in their bid to enforce fishing regulations and claimed that ‘... the objections which have been considered unimportant by Her Majesty’s Ambassador are of so serious a nature as to concern very directly the future of Canada and of the Empire.’¹⁰³ A year after Tupper’s complaints on this matter, Pauncefote’s concerns over upsetting the US government meant that the regulations continued to be enforced more strictly than the Canadians would have liked.¹⁰⁴ On other issues too, Tupper continued to show his disapproval of Pauncefote’s handling of negotiations, such as the agreement of compensation for Canadian sealers that he maintained Pauncefote had concluded ‘contrary to the earnest protests’ of the Canadian government.¹⁰⁵ As time went on, Pauncefote grew so weary of taking into account the Canadian minister’s views that at one point, in an ironic echo of Tupper’s own earlier request, he asked that the minister not be sent back to Washington for further negotiations as he would ‘destroy all the good work we did.’¹⁰⁶ Pauncefote’s request was turned down, as the Foreign Office grudgingly noted that: ‘he knows more of the subject than any other Canadian Minister.’¹⁰⁷

In Pauncefote’s defence, the despatches do show that Tupper was a particularly virulent critic of British policy on the Bering Sea. However, they also show that he did seem to have reasonable cause to feel that his input was undervalued. It is also noteworthy that Tupper’s successors, John Costigan and Louis Davies were equally critical of the British handling of the dispute. Costigan complained at one point that ‘it is discouraging to observe the contrast in the treatment of the wishes and representations of the Government of the United States upon this subject.’ In the same despatch, in an echo of Tupper, he objected to regulations being over-zealously enforced when compensation had still not been received for the original, illegal,

¹⁰³ Tupper, Report of Committee of Canadian Privy Council, 30 June 1894, PRO, FO5/2257.

¹⁰⁴ Sanderson to Admiralty, 17 June, 1895, PRO, ADM125/130.

¹⁰⁵ Tupper to Pauncefote, 4 Sept. 1894, PRO, FO5/2258.

¹⁰⁶ Pauncefote to Kimberley, 28 March 1895, Kimberley papers, MSS Eng.c.4408, f.60.

¹⁰⁷ Sir Robert Meade to Kimberley, 8 April 1895, Kimberley papers, *ibid*, f.64

seizures of Canadian vessels.¹⁰⁸ Later, Davies, on turning down yet another proposal for a *modus vivendi* that would have stopped pelagic sealing for a year remarked that ‘... it is equally the duty of Your Excellency’s government to safeguard the interests of Her Majesty’s subjects in Canada in a reasonable participation in an important industry expressly sanctioned and regulated by international arbitration.’¹⁰⁹ In the same year a Canadian government report had objected to the ‘unfriendly and extreme interpretation placed upon the Paris regulations by the United States.’¹¹⁰

The fact that it was the lack of progress over compensation that had been fuelling Canadian objection is underlined by the change of tone in the Canadians attitude, once payment was finally made in 1898. By the end of the 1890s, at least some of those in authority in Canada recognised the need for concessions on the issue of pelagic sealing. Canadian Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier acknowledged in January 1899 that pelagic sealing would lead to a gradual destruction of the herds.¹¹¹ This attitude prevailed amongst the Canadian negotiating team, when the Canadians proved surprisingly willing to do a deal on sealing during the abortive discussions of the Joint Commission, set up to settle a range of US-Canadian issues which sat from 23 August 1898 until 20 February 1899. This would have resulted in a permanent suspension of pelagic sealing in return for a percentage of profits from the US land catch. In the event the commission collapsed because of disagreement over other issues.¹¹²

The wish to accommodate the United States, and the lack of faith in politicians from a distant dominion, meant that whilst Pauncefoot and the British government did consult Canada on their views, they did not always wait for a reply before acting. From

¹⁰⁸ John Costigan, Canadian minister of marine and fisheries, Report to Canadian Privy Council, 18 Feb. 1895, CO42/827.

¹⁰⁹ Davies to Canadian governor general, 4 May 1897, PRO, FO5/2352.

¹¹⁰ Robert Venning, *The Behring Sea Question, Embracing the Fur Sealing Industry of the North Pacific Ocean, 1896* (Ottawa: Government Print, 1897), p.57.

¹¹¹ Gay, *Seal Diplomacy*, p.108.

¹¹² See Gay, *Seal Diplomacy*, pp.104 -115.

a Canadian perspective, the slowness to send British warships to protect Canadian vessels, and the subsequent slow progress towards a series of compromises was damaging to a valuable industry, whilst those whose vessels had been unlawfully seized by the United States had to wait nearly ten years for compensation. Whilst it has been pointed out that after the 1893 tribunal, pelagic sealing actually increased for a number of years, this was in spite of, rather than because of, the new regulations that were introduced through British diplomacy, and therefore is not really relevant to discussion over whether Pauncefote acted in Canada's best interests. It has also been pointed out that Salisbury kept the problem 'submerged' in the interests of Anglo-American understanding.¹¹³ This would appear to be true, but, as stated above, he was also well aware that imperial interests had to be carefully weighed. In this respect, it is instructive to note that at times not only the Canadians, but also some in the Colonial Office, and on occasion, Salisbury himself, had to remind Pauncefote to take more account of the Canadian position. His argument might have been that his prime motivation was to save the seals, and thus save a valuable industry for *both* sides – but as late as 1897, independent sealing experts were not conclusive in their evidence that pelagic sealing was actually destroying the herds.¹¹⁴ Thus, despite his protestations to the contrary, the evidence suggests that Pauncefote's diplomacy did not push the Canadians' interests as far as he might have done, even within the confines of a policy of *rapprochement*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what does the Bering Sea dispute tell us about the success of Pauncefote's diplomacy? In terms of his achievements, his actions at the most serious phase of the dispute do seem to have helped head off a potentially dangerous clash between the two powers, and this should not be undervalued. RB Mowat, his biographer, described the Bering Sea Arbitration, for which Pauncefote worked hard to

¹¹³ Brown, *National Policy*, p.124.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p.331.

achieve, as 'one of the great dates in the history of settlement by peaceful means.'¹¹⁵ He was indeed a patient negotiator who had the ear of his own government and was thus able to put in place a series of compromises into which he had considerable input, even if those compromises were not to the taste of the Canadian sealing industry. However, Canadian charges that those compromises were often made against their wishes do stand up to scrutiny. Had he been more willing to take up their case on his arrival in Washington, and less eager to agree to US stipulations on the various *modus vivendi* once negotiations had begun, much steam could have been taken out of the Canadian objections. They were after all, not totally opposed to *some* form of regulation, but wanted it done within a fair legal framework and with due compensation given to their sealers.¹¹⁶ Also on the negative side, his failure to find a permanent solution to the problem highlights the limits of his influence on US politicians. In part, this was undoubtedly due to domestic factors that were beyond his or the British government's control. However, his evident disapproval of US politicians, and his apparent lack of subtlety in dealing with powerful members of Congress, do suggest that at times he had only himself to blame for the difficulty of his task. Perhaps more importantly, this factor would also make the ratification of any future agreements on this or any other issue more difficult. Overall, the drawn-out nature of the episode served as a stubborn hindrance to the attainment of closer relations between the two countries, something that Pauncefote was apparently so anxious to achieve.

¹¹⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 153.

¹¹⁶ Brown, *National Policy*, pp.108-109.

Chapter Four: Pauncefote and Salisbury - the Venezuela Boundary Dispute

...by far the gravest and by far the most important of all the difficulties with which we are surrounded.

Sir William Harcourt on the Venezuela crisis - speech at Bournemouth, (11 Mar. 1896).¹

Historians of Anglo–American relations in the 1890s have paid a great deal of attention to the Venezuela boundary dispute of 1895.² Despite this attention, some observers have tended to be somewhat dismissive of the significance of the quarrel. H.C. Allen commented on how the Venezuela uproar ‘lasted three days’ and R.B. Mowat wrote that ‘...a dispute that slumbered like this could scarcely be called a crisis at all.’ Similarly, J.S. Grenville viewed it as ‘somewhat synthetic,’ whilst Kenneth Bourne described it as ‘silly,’ although he did acknowledge that both sides did ‘actively consider’ the possibility of war.³ In a narrow sense, these views do have some currency. As Pauncefote himself was quick to realise, the negative impact on the US stock market of President Grover Cleveland’s Venezuela message of December 1895 meant that the threat of all out war quickly became a very distant one.⁴ In Britain, outside a small group of ministers, the dispute barely impinged on public consciousness - before December 1895 even many MPs were unaware that there was a Venezuela dispute, and by January 1896 their attention was already distracted by the Kruger telegram.⁵

¹ Quoted in T. Boyle ‘The Venezuela Crisis and the Liberal Opposition, 1895-96’ *The Journal of Modern History*, 50:3 (Sep.1978), p.D1197.

² A relatively recent synthesis is Marshall Bertram, *The Birth of the Anglo-American Friendship: The Prime Fact of the Venezuela Boundary Dispute. A Study of the Interaction of Diplomacy and Public Opinion* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1992). Earlier key studies include: A. E. Campbell *Great Britain and the United States, 1895-1903*, Ch. 2 ‘The Venezuela Crisis, 1895-1896’ (London: Longmans, 1960), Boyle, ‘Liberal Opposition’, Joseph J. Mathews, ‘Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896.’ *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 50:2 (Sep.1963), pp.195-212.

³ Allen, *Relations*, p.525; Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.196; Bourne, *Balance*, p. 319 (also quotes JS Grenville here).

⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 24 Dec. 1895, PRO, FO420/168.

⁵ Allen, *Relations*, p. 531; Mathews, ‘Informal Diplomacy,’ p. D1191; May, *Imperial Democracy*, p.50.

Nevertheless, the problem created by the coincidence of the South African and Venezuelan disputes was not lost on the British High Commissioner in South Africa who noted that:

... this difficulty coming at the present moment is very unfortunate as it is generally feared that the United States intends to go to war with us and that they will have the support of Russia and France. That is bad enough, but to have Germany likewise against us, would reduce us to have to fight for our very existence.⁶

To focus purely on the brevity of the public drama surrounding the dispute is to miss its wider significance. The bellicose message of Cleveland becomes much more meaningful when seen as the announcement of the United States' arrival as a Great Power on the diplomatic world stage, and the British government's tacit acceptance of this fact. For the first time, Britain unwillingly bowed to US diplomatic pressure in a dispute in which the USA was not directly involved. Britain had long accepted the theoretical implications of the Monroe Doctrine, but never before had to contend with it in practice. In essence, Cleveland's message to Congress of 17 December 1895 demanded that Britain go to arbitration to resolve a long running boundary dispute between British Guiana and Venezuela, or the United States would intervene by 'every means in its power'.⁷ The Venezuelans had asked the United States government for its support in the affair, and hired a former US minister at Caracas, William L. Scrugg to publicise their case in Washington.⁸ Richard Langhorne has observed how the US favoured arbitration on the continent because they 'were both litigious in cast of mind and believed themselves to act in an individual and particularly fair minded way in foreign affairs.'⁹ Boundary claims also 'proved singularly amenable to the process of arbitration.'¹⁰ A reluctant Salisbury eventually acquiesced in the arbitration demand.

⁶ Sir Henry Loch to Sir Henry de Villiers, 3 Jan. 1896, quoted in Seligmann, *Rivalry*, p.61.

⁷ The message is printed in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington DC, 1895, Part I), pp.542-5.

⁸ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.14, C.S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, p.176.

⁹ Langhorne, 'Arbitration,' p.46.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

The fact that the outcome of the arbitration was largely settled in Britain's favour (in 1899) does not alter the significance of the event - merely the fact of accepting arbitration against the British government's initial will was demonstration enough of the relative rise in US power. This was also very much the view taken by A E Campbell.¹¹ Similarly, Ernest May commented that 'It was only after the [Venezuela] note that it began to dawn on people like Salisbury and Chamberlain that the US might have become a Great Power and might have to be treated as such.' He added that 'Britain had been shocked into realising that the USA was a nation, not a myth.'¹² Again underlining the importance of the dispute in terms of future Anglo-American relations, Coral Bell came to the conclusion that 'Perhaps 1896 can be regarded as the date of a firm decision by Britain that the normal sort of power competition between sovereign states must not be the mode of her relationship with the US.'¹³ Apart from its relationship with Great Britain, Joseph Smith also viewed the dispute as an early example of the United States' 'unilateral and arrogant' stance towards Latin America, since although Venezuela had initially asked for help over the matter, once the US administration intervened it did not consult the Venezuelan government over its course of action.¹⁴ More recently, Andrew Roberts has taken the more sanguine view that 'tail twisting' was something that had to be endured, and had Salisbury felt the need, he would have taken a firmer stand over the issue of Venezuela.¹⁵ It is true that Britain's vital interests were not immediately at stake in the dispute. However, Salisbury's initially unyielding stance followed later by complete capitulation to US demands suggest that he received an unusually strong twist of the tail, for which he had not been totally prepared. It is here that the role of Julian Pauncefote comes under scrutiny.

Two key questions emerge as far as Pauncefote's part in the dispute are concerned. The first concerns his role of being the 'eyes and ears' of the British

¹¹ A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, pp. 29-31.

¹² May, *Imperial Democracy*, pp.47- 48, p.55.

¹³ Coral Bell, *The Debatable Alliance: An Essay in Anglo-American Relations* (London, 1964), p.11.

¹⁴ Joseph Smith, *Illusions of Conflict: Anglo-American Diplomacy Toward Latin America, 1865-1896* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), p.208.

¹⁵ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.633.

government in the United States and the extent to which he forewarned Salisbury of trouble ahead over Venezuela. The second question concerns how much Pauncefote's advice encouraged Salisbury to bow to United States' demands that the dispute should go to arbitration once Cleveland had delivered his message. The first question is significant, because even if the dispute did not register high on the British public's list of concerns, it inflamed American opinion towards Britain in a way not seen for many years, thus contributing to a surge in jingoistic feeling that had an impact on national - and international - politics. It is argued in this chapter that because the dispute was allowed to fester - something for which Pauncefote must take partial responsibility - it blew up in an unnecessarily dramatic fashion in December 1895, thus making it harder to resolve without a loss of face on the part of the British government. It is also argued that Pauncefote initially underestimated the depth of disquiet and resolve within the US administration over the issue. As to the second question, once the dispute was in the public domain, Pauncefote appears to have taken a constructive approach to resolving the dispute as soon as Cleveland delivered his message, an approach which ultimately overcame Salisbury's disengaged response. Thus, whilst Pauncefote can be criticised for not attempting to head off the dispute in the first place, he can be given credit for its eventual resolution. In so doing, he helped to ensure that Britain would not stand in the way of the United States' assertion of diplomatic hegemony in South America – a stance that would have important ramifications far into the future.

Could Pauncefote have prevented the dispute ?

One issue that has not been closely considered by historians, but one that is important in considering Pauncefote's effectiveness as a diplomat, is whether he could have played a larger role in stopping the Venezuela dispute becoming a significant issue in Anglo-American relations in the first place. It is a point that is briefly alluded to by A.E. Campbell. He concludes that although Pauncefote was 'shrewd and experienced' he underestimated the 'moral content of the American stand.'¹⁶ By this Campbell appears to mean that Pauncefote tended to view Cleveland's statements on the subject

¹⁶ A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, pp.24-25.

in terms of short term domestic politicking, rather than being rooted in a wider long-term foreign policy paradigm. However his study, like others, does not examine Pauncefote's role *before* December 1895 in communicating American feeling on the subject to his government – surely a crucial aspect in determining the British response. In one respect it might be argued that Pauncefote could be forgiven for not predicting that an obscure 50-year-old boundary dispute between Britain and Venezuela would suddenly figure so dramatically in British relations with the United States. However, it is axiomatic that part of a diplomat's role was (and is) to forewarn his or her home government of the political mood in their host country, in order to avoid possible storms ahead. And, although Salisbury was to express surprise that such an 'insignificant' subject as Venezuela could excite the Americans, Anglo-Venezuelan relations had been delicate for some time.¹⁷ Furthermore, once US Secretary of State Richard Olney had delivered his despatch of 20 July 1895 which made crystal clear the extent of American disquiet on the issue, it should have been evident to Pauncefote, and consequently to Salisbury, that the Americans were impatient to receive a reply from the British government.¹⁸ The subsequent slowness in sending a reply seems to have added to the perception amongst American politicians that Britain was dealing with the dispute in a characteristically high handed – and imperialist – manner. Salisbury's rationale in delaying his response seems to have been that the Americans were in the wrong in demanding arbitration, that their disquiet was not a matter of great concern, and that in any case Venezuela was hardly high on his list of foreign policy concerns.¹⁹ But this attitude missed some crucial points. The most important of these was that by this time the Venezuela issue was near the top of the United States foreign policy list, and should therefore have commanded a swifter response from Britain for this reason alone. Salisbury had appointed Pauncefote to Washington precisely because he recognised that the United States was no longer a diplomatic backwater, and that

¹⁷ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.615; Boyle, 'Liberal Opposition,' pp. D118-9.

¹⁸ *Parliamentary Papers, 1896*, XCVII; State papers, United States No.1, (1896), (C-7926), no. 11.

¹⁹ For a considerations of the rationale behind Salisbury's tardy response to Olney, see A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, pp. 11-15 and Perkins, *Rapprochement*, pp.14-16.

American sensibilities needed careful handling.²⁰ Therefore, leaving the Venezuela problem to fester made little or no diplomatic sense - it would make it that much harder for Britain to deal with the United States on other issues and would limit its room for manoeuvre when faced with European crises. It was the wider aspects of US politics and foreign relations that Pauncefote should have been drawing to the attention of his Prime Minister, and the extent to which he did this is examined below. To ignore the problem in the hope that the 'conflagration will fizzle away' (which seems to have been Salisbury's initial policy) was short sighted.²¹ If the British ambassador had been more keenly aware of the genuine grievances that the US administration had about the issue at an earlier stage, he would have been well placed to prevent it becoming an issue of great public interest at all.

Early warnings

In the months leading up to Olney's July message, Pauncefote did keep his government informed of how press and public opinion regarded British involvement in South America – but he made the assessment that the Cleveland administration was standing firm against jingoism. In a letter to the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Kimberley, in April 1895, he wrote:

For the last few months the American press (with a few exceptions) has been raging against England and betraying the deep seated hatred and envy of us which permeates all classes in this country. The ignorance and arrogance of the newspapers are incredible. The *New York Tribune* which poses as a superior journal is simple [sic] imbecile in its articles on the situation and its issues of today contains more lies than would stock an ordinary newspaper for six months. Cleveland and [Secretary of State] Gresham are denounced and menaced publicly and privately by the "Jingo" Party for their inaction; but they have stood firm, to their great credit. If the Republican Party had been in power there would have been the gravest complications. The Press of this country it is believed by Mr. Gresham, had been subsidised by agents of the South

²⁰ See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

²¹ Salisbury to Goschen, 18 Dec. 1895, quoted in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.617.

American states to blow up an agitation against England on the Monroe Doctrine in order to serve their ends, and they have been supported by the Jingo politicians....²²

In the above letter, Pauncefote not only makes very clear that he is well aware of the strand of anti-British American feeling, but also its connection with the Monroe Doctrine and South America – the very issue that made the Venezuela boundary dispute so potent. However, in political terms, he quite clearly makes the distinction between this and the attitude of the administration itself. Since the somewhat anglophile Walter Quintin Gresham, rather than the more abrasive Richard Olney, was still Secretary of State at this point, this could be seen as a reasonable assessment to make. Pauncefote had written optimistically to Kimberley as early as 16 March 1894 that ‘... I am on excellent terms with the Cleveland administration and I hope before long to have disposed of all questions containing any element of friction between the two governments.’²³ This was also later the assessment of Gresham’s wife, who in her biography of her husband wrote ‘...that sense of justice and fairness in Sir Julian Pauncefote, and the discernment of how to reach it...led Mr. Gresham to believe he could adjust the Venezuela controversy without friction.’²⁴ However, this assumption of Pauncefote’s ‘justice and fairness’ was presumably based on his anticipated support for American ideas about arbitrating the dispute, since the US had twice suggested this to Britain before Gresham’s death in June 1895.²⁵ Also, Pauncefote should have been aware of the possibility that even an apparently emollient Democrat administration might have to bend to the popular mood at some point, especially if ‘all classes’ really were permeated by a ‘deep seated hatred and envy’ of Great Britain. Nevertheless, the British ambassador reiterated his faith in the Cleveland administration in a private letter to James Bryce (then a cabinet minister in Rosebery’s administration) on 25 April, 1895, saying: ‘I think Cleveland deserves great credit for his courage and firmness in resisting the pressure put upon him. If Harrison and Blaine were now in power we

²² Pauncefote to Kimberley, 25 April 1895, Kimberley papers, MSS Eng.c4408, f.73.

²³ Pauncefote to Kimberley, 16 March 1894, MSS Eng. c. 4408, f.5.

²⁴ Gresham, *Gresham*, p.793.

²⁵ These approaches are briefly discussed in Matthews, ‘Liberal Opposition,’ pp.D1189-1190.

should be on the verge of war.’²⁶ Eight months later, even with Cleveland still in power, Britain and America *were* (at least in the eyes of some) on the verge of war. This suggests that rather than railing against anti-British feeling in the press and putting his faith in Cleveland’s ability to hold his ground, Pauncefote would have done better to analyse more closely the foreign policy outlook of Cleveland, (considered below) and to communicate this to his political masters.

Indeed, Pauncefote sometimes seems to have spent more time analysing the views of the press than those in the higher reaches of political power. His letter to Wodehouse (Kimberley’s private secretary) three weeks later typifies this attitude:

The press is ... trying to blow up a row about everything to promote the sale of newspapers and the stream of mendacity and audacity and ignorance and malice and general blackguardism that daily flows from most of them is swallowed by the millions and does infinite mischief. They are now after Bayard’s scalp [US ambassador to Great Britain], simply because he speaks in public as a gentleman and does not treat them to a ‘chink of Americanism’ which means a burst of vulgar boasting braggadacio and abusiveness²⁷

Here Pauncefote again shows himself to be well aware of the strength of feeling within the United States, but views it with contempt, rather than considering how it could be countered by a more proactive British policy. Ultimately, Cleveland was forced to produce his own ‘chink of Americanism’ in the form of the Venezuela message – partly because the lack of British reaction to Olney’s earlier despatch had left him with little option, given the domestic political climate. On 9 May 1895, in an official despatch, Pauncefote did briefly draw Kimberley’s attention to the specific issue of Venezuela, pointing to correspondence that contained:

... a full statement of the Venezuelan case as presented to the government of the United States by the Venezuelan Minister in Washington with the request that the ‘US adopt such a tone in their new representations to Great Britain as may convince

²⁶ Pauncefote to Bryce, 25 April 1895, MS Bryce, 116, f.168.

²⁷ Pauncefote to Wodehouse, 14 May 1895, Kimberley papers, MSS Eng.c.4408, f.79.

her...of the necessity of granting to Venezuela what Venezuela has an undeniable right to demand of her.²⁸

Thus, it cannot be said that Pauncefote left the British government completely in the dark, about the growing agitation in the United States about South America, the Monroe Doctrine in general terms, or about the specific issue of the Venezuela boundary. However, after six years in his post, he could have been emphasising more strongly the increasingly assertive nature of American foreign policy, and the fact that it was not just driven by a jingo minority. Lord Rosebery, Prime Minister until June 1895, does seem to have been more attuned to this fact, commenting in the course of a memo on how ‘...our cousins are extremely acute, and, as we have had woeful experience, do not allow a common blood, language and literature to control their desire to get the best of us by hook or by crook.’²⁹ This seems a more realistic assumption about the American ‘modus operandi’ than Pauncefote’s repeated assertions that he was on good terms with the leading players in Washington DC, which sometimes conveyed the impression that this in itself was enough to stop the US administration pursuing a foreign policy that might be difficult for the British government to accept.

The reponse to Olney’s Message

Whilst Pauncefote’s approach early in 1895 may have done little to ward off burgeoning American discontent over Venezuela, it would be wrong to say his inaction was entirely to blame for provoking the intemperate despatch sent by Richard Olney to the British Government in July 1895. A combination of factors, outside the British ambassador’s control, conspired to make this despatch more forceful than it might otherwise have been, and for the British to be caught out by the vehemence of it. Firstly, the death of Walter Quintin Gresham resulted in Cleveland, perhaps mindful of public opinion, replacing him with the less anglophile Olney as Secretary of State.

²⁸ Pauncefote to Kimberley, 9 May 1895. PRO, FO5/2262,

²⁹ Rosebery memo on arbitration, 25 March 1895, PRO, FO 5/2262.

Secondly, and perhaps crucially, Pauncefote was on leave in Britain whilst Olney was deliberating on his despatch, and therefore unable to get a clear personal sense of the change in tone within the US administration (although his First Secretary, Richard Gough, did inform Salisbury of growing unease over the issue in Congress).³⁰ Thirdly, the change of British administration at the end of June 1895 meant that Salisbury only had a very short time to readjust to the pressures of office before receiving Olney's message. It would, therefore, appear that, at a crucial stage of the dispute, an untimely combination of circumstances on either side of the Atlantic, rather than any failing on the part of Pauncefote, resulted in the stakes being raised so rapidly. Hence, when Salisbury received Olney's message from Thomas Bayard, on 7 August 1895, he was apparently unprepared for what was to come and remarked how surprised he was that an issue as minor as Venezuela had so excited American interest, and that a British reply would not come quickly.³¹

However, once Bayard had delivered Olney's message to Salisbury, Pauncefote should have recognised on his return to Washington (even if he and Salisbury did not see it from London) that a more robust political dynamic was in play in US foreign policy. By invoking the Monroe Doctrine, a proclamation that had such an emotional, if not a practical appeal to American consciousness, Olney was now directly appealing to those very newspaper editors and jingoes that Pauncefote so despised. Returning from leave, in October 1895, Pauncefote indicated this to Salisbury, writing:

The Venezuelan trouble has occupied the Press and the Jingoes almost exclusively, and the most fantastic speculations are indulged in by the 'irresponsible chatterers' as to what may be the outcome of the matter, and as to the time and character of the British reply to what they term 'Olney's ultimatum.'³²

³⁰ Gough to Salisbury, 3 July 1895, PRO FO80/362.

³¹ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.615.

³² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 8 Nov. 1895, Salisbury papers, USA 1895-98, vol. 139, f.5.

However, importantly, Pauncefote also gave an impression that the issue would blow over, as in reality he considered that the Cleveland administration was less concerned about it than the press, writing:

...I think it will begin to quell down a little and that the public are wanting to hear the other side. I enclose a cutting from today's *Washington Post*, a paper second to none in vulgar abuse of England, containing an interesting interview with the US vice consul at Georgetown which will no doubt have a calming effect on its readers³³

He also sent reassuring words to Salisbury on his relations with Richard Olney, telling him that he '...found Mr. Olney a most able, large-minded and honest negotiator...' and that 'perfect harmony' prevailed in negotiations over other matters which was a 'pleasant contrast' to experiences with previous administrations.³⁴ On the Venezuela issue itself he commented that 'I have not spoken to anyone on the subject, and have no intention of so doing.'³⁵ Had he done so, he might have found the reaction of Olney and Cleveland enlightening. Further indication of his lack of concern over the issue is the fact that he did not comment on the Venezuela matter again in his despatches to the Prime Minister until after Cleveland had delivered his December message. He did however take the time to report on such events as the Marlborough-Vanderbilt wedding.³⁶ Since Salisbury was being sent such soothing signals (or no signals at all) by Pauncefote, he could perhaps be forgiven for not seeing a greater urgency in replying to Olney's July despatch. In reality, the distinction that Pauncefote often liked to draw between the attitude of US administrations towards Britain, and popular sentiment as expressed through the press, had become blurred in the way that it had been when Blaine was Secretary of State during the seals dispute. It is clear from Olney's correspondence that his patience with the British government was in fact running out. Illustrative of this is a private despatch from Olney to Thomas Bayard (US ambassador to Britain) of 20 November 1895 in which he wrote:

³³ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 25 Oct. 1895, Salisbury papers vol. 139, f.1.

³⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 8 Nov. 1895, Salisbury papers vol. 139, f.5.

³⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury (telegram), 19 Oct. 1895, PRO, FO80/363.

³⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 8 Nov. 1895, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f.6.

...if the answer of Great Britain to the Venezuela despatch cannot be given within the time asked in the despatch, some reason should be expressly assigned by the British Foreign Office and another time fixed when the answer could be looked for. I sent the telegram in the interests of good relations of the two countries. It certainly would not be regarded as courteous in this country if the British Government should neither answer the despatch before the assembling of Congress nor give any reason for not answering.³⁷

Similarly, Cleveland, also in a private letter to Bayard, appeared to confirm that his view of the Monroe doctrine was rooted in something deeper than an appeal to the popular press, when he wrote:

I am entirely clear that the doctrine is not obsolete, that it should be defended and maintained for its value and importance to our government and welfare, and that its defense and maintenance involve its application when a state of facts arises requiring it.

In this state of mind I am positive that I can never be made to see why the extension of European systems, territory and jurisdiction, on our continent, may not be effected as surely and as unwarrantably under the guise of boundary claims as by invasion or any other means.

In the same letter, he did nonetheless acknowledge the pressures he was under, whilst expressing his dissatisfaction with Britain, continuing:

It would have been exceedingly gratifying and a very handsome thing for Great Britain to do, if, in the midst of all this Administration has had to do in attempts to stem the tide of 'jingoism,' she had yielded or rather conceded something (if she called it so, which I do not) for our sake.³⁸

Had Pauncefoot been attuned to this irritation within the administration he might have specifically recommended that the Foreign Office make a swifter response in order to calm the situation down. The ambassador was not averse to making such

³⁷ Olney to Bayard, 20 Nov. 1895, LOC, Olney papers, reel 14.

³⁸ Cleveland to Bayard, Dec. 29, 1895, LOC, Olney papers, reel 15.

recommendations when he felt it was appropriate, such as during the Bering Sea dispute, but, in the case of Venezuela, he appeared to be agreeing with the 'wait and see' policy of his Prime Minister. By delaying their response, rather than allowing the issue to die down as Salisbury hoped, the British approach allowed unhelpful rumours to circulate in the American press, jingo sentiment to spread, and for the administration itself to become more frustrated by the whole issue. It is Pauncefote's failure to convey to Salisbury this latter point that was perhaps his biggest failing on the issue of Venezuela.

Cleveland's Venezuela message

Thus, in the run up to Cleveland's annual message to Congress, scheduled for December, whilst Pauncefote was informing Salisbury of the febrile atmosphere in some political quarters, he had not communicated to Salisbury the depth of feeling and resolve at the apex of American power. Even when faced with the bold language of Olney's message, Pauncefote still seemed to be of the opinion that the Cleveland administration would hold the line against the 'irresponsible chatters.' When Salisbury's reply finally came, and it did not reach the USA until December, it was utterly uncompromising in its tone. The Prime Minister referred to how Britain respected the American view of the Monroe Doctrine, but that did not imply acceptance of it in the international arena, and said that:

They [the British government] are not prepared to admit that the interests of the United States are necessarily concerned in every frontier dispute which may arise between any two of the States who possess dominion in the Western hemisphere; and still less can they accept that the United States are entitled to claim the process of arbitration shall be applied to any demand for the surrender of any territory which one of those states may make against another.³⁹

By not giving his response in time for the President's annual message, and then replying in such a blunt tone, Salisbury caused Cleveland to devote an entirely separate

³⁹ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 26 Nov. 1895, PRO, FO420/160.

message to Congress on the issue of Venezuela.⁴⁰ This gave the dispute extra attention that it might not have received had it been included in the main body of the annual address amongst other items of foreign affairs, and Cleveland included the forceful rejoinder that the USA would intervene by 'every means in its power' if Great Britain did not respect its views on the issue. As Joseph Smith observed, Cleveland 'now transformed a minor Latin American question into one of pressing domestic importance.'⁴¹

Of course, as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary it was for Salisbury to decide how to respond to Cleveland's gauntlet, and his style always tended towards the 'let sleeping dogs lie' style of government. However, it is reasonable to suppose that had Lord Rosebery still been in office, a swifter and more constructive response would have been forthcoming from the British side once the affair was in the public domain – even without Pauncefote's prompting. Certainly this was the view of G.W. Smalley, *The Times* Washington correspondent, who was involved in the initial informal negotiations over the dispute, had contact with Olney and was regarded by Pauncefote as a reliable source. He wrote to Rosebery in May 1896: 'I heartily wish you were in power for the sake of our Venezuela trouble – it would have been practically settled if you were.'⁴² This does not appear to have been merely wishful thinking; the Liberals were in general much keener on the idea of arbitration than were the Tories. Indeed, Salisbury had considered resigning when arbitration was proposed as a method of settling the *Alabama* dispute in 1866.⁴³ Rosebery privately expressed his disapproval of Salisbury's actions in a letter to Sir William Harcourt, then the Liberal leader in the Commons, which described how the '...angular, bragging tactless words of Salisbury and Chamberlain are largely responsible for our present difficulties.'⁴⁴ It does appear that the Liberal Opposition was (at least after December 1895) more aware of the merit

⁴⁰ Olney to Bayard, 2 Dec. 1895, LOC, Olney papers, reel 14

⁴¹ Smith, *Illusions*, p.207.

⁴² Smalley to Rosebery, 10 May 1896, Rosebery Papers, MS10061, f.122.

⁴³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 632.

⁴⁴ The response of the Liberals is examined in some depth in Boyle, 'Liberal Opposition,' pp. D1185-D1212. Rosebery to Bryce, 28 Jan. 1896, quoted *ibid*, p.D1202.

of obtaining a speedy settlement on the issue than the British government. Rosebery, for example, was of the opinion that ‘...what we need now is concentration on the US...’ - rather than the Armenian question - and suggested to Salisbury that a third power should be ‘...invited to offer its good offices between US and us.’⁴⁵ With this in mind, it is worth reflecting that in the search for a solution, Pauncefote ended up consulting Harcourt, one of the strongest proponents of wide ranging arbitration, and that his ideas contributed significantly to the ultimate solution.⁴⁶

Viewing British foreign policy in a wider context also adds weight to the argument that the Venezuela dispute should have been addressed at an earlier stage. After December 1895, the British government was so embroiled in the Kruger telegram debacle, that in the eyes of some, the Venezuela dispute became an irritating side show – but one that in the new circumstances required even more careful handling. However, as suggested above, had Salisbury been given convincing reasons to respond to Olney’s July message more promptly, the Venezuela issue would have been on its way to being resolved by the time the controversy over the Jameson raid became an international affair. Also, the British government’s foot dragging cannot have been helpful in encouraging Congress to grant the long awaited Bering Sea compensation, which was being debated at the same time.⁴⁷ Similarly the more general ideas that were surfacing at that time about an arbitration treaty between the two countries – of which Pauncefote was a strong supporter – were also hampered by the lack of progress over Venezuela.

How effective was Pauncefote’s reponse in resolving the dispute?

There was a change of approach by Pauncefote once Cleveland had delivered his December message. Although he still played down the gravity of the situation, he was swift to start suggesting his own (unofficial) solutions to the impasse to both Olney and

⁴⁵ Rosebery quoted in Boyle, ‘Liberal Opposition,’ pp. D1193-D1194.

⁴⁶ See A.G. Gardiner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt* (London, Constable & co., 1923), vol II, pp.395-404.

⁴⁷ See Ch. 3 of this thesis

Salisbury. By the time Pauncefote was seriously engaged diplomatically in resolving the dispute, the threat of war that had briefly emerged after Cleveland's message had already receded. Nevertheless, his role was a significant one, in that he helped to broker a deal whereby Salisbury moved his position to accept arbitration over territory that he had previously said was non-negotiable – and in the process acknowledge the practicalities of growing US power in relation to South America. To some extent his belated success in achieving this serves to underline his earlier failure to inform his home government that the problem should not be ignored. What is most instructive in assessing Pauncefote's role after December 1895 is to compare his reaction to Cleveland's message to that of Salisbury, and with the basis on which the dispute was ultimately solved. As the following evidence shows, it was Pauncefote's constructive approach to negotiations, rather than Salisbury's negative one, that prevailed. However, it is worth reiterating that since Pauncefote stressed the lack of real danger or urgency in the dispute, it is perhaps not surprising that Salisbury reacted in the way he did.

Despite the warlike tone of Cleveland's message to Congress on the Venezuela issue and the controversy it aroused, Pauncefote's initial response to it was a surprisingly positive one, suggesting immediately that it '... I think opens the door to a solution of what seems to be a deadlock.' Given the warlike undertones of the message, Cleveland's resolve in pursuing his objectives, and Salisbury's subsequent inaction, Pauncefote must have been almost alone in seeing it as opening the door to a solution. Nevertheless, his attitude serves to emphasise the fact that at the moment of greatest tension, Pauncefote was now looking at ways to resolve the argument, rather than assuming the US would not try to pursue its objectives in the matter.

Whereas before December Pauncefote's interpretation of events may have served to encourage Salisbury in his belief in unhurried diplomacy, and thus inflame American feeling by his inaction, after December Pauncefote's analysis of US affairs could be seen as having somewhat contradictory effects. On the one hand, he supplied Salisbury with lengthy reports on the press and public reaction to the issue. For example, when Cleveland's message was first read he reported that:

It was applauded, although not I am informed very vigorously. Applause is, however, of rare occurrence in the Senate ... A member of my staff, who was the only occupant of the Diplomatic gallery, informs me that the warlike portions of the Message were received with loud and prolonged applause from all sides of the House, especially from the Republican side.⁴⁸

However, he also continued to play down the gravity of the situation in terms of the US administration really being serious about wanting war. This, therefore, ensured that Salisbury did not immediately inflame the issue further by responding in an aggressive manner himself – but it also ensured that Salisbury would continue his policy of obstructive inaction, and thus continue to irritate the US administration. As outlined above, as early as December, Pauncefote himself seems to have been already moving towards a solution similar to the one that was ultimately put in place. Had he been bolder in articulating these ideas to Salisbury, the dispute might still have been curtailed more quickly than it was.

That Salisbury's languid view of events was not altered by Pauncefote's reaction to Cleveland's message is evident from his summary of cabinet proceedings of 19 December 1895, in which he wrote that 'Until United States address some communication to us no further step on our part necessary. My impression is that if we remain quiet this feeling will shortly disappear.'⁴⁹ Reinforcing this evidence of Salisbury's wish to take things as slowly as possible, is his minute on a note from J.R. Roosevelt (of the US Embassy in London) to Francis Bertie at the Foreign Office, asking why the British government did not work through Pauncefote. In reply to this Salisbury wrote 'Obviously then we should have to make proposals – and it is much better to receive them.'⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, Dec. 18 1895, PRO, FO420/160.

⁴⁹ Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 19 Dec. 1895, PRO, CAB 41/23/41.

⁵⁰ Salisbury minute, quoted in A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, p.26.

In his next despatch, however, Pauncefote did make it abundantly clear to Salisbury that Venezuela was causing great excitement in the United States, writing:

The Venezuela crisis which is raging here makes all other questions appear ancient history. Even Behring Sea is forgotten for a while and nothing is heard but the voice of the jingo bellowing out of defiance of England. We must wait until the noise has subsided to judge of the real attitude of the country. Your lordship's most powerful and irrefutable despatch on the Monroe Doctrine has hit the President and the Jingo very hard and its views are supported by all the jurists of eminence, but the public are too busy to study these questions and rely on the "headlines" in the newspapers for their information.⁵¹

It was in this same despatch, that Pauncefote also began to show that he was taking a constructive approach towards solving the problem – to the extent of going beyond what Salisbury had recommended. He reported to the Prime Minister that Olney was very concerned by his response to the Venezuela message, and had asked if it was an absolute refusal to hand the matter to arbitration – the concession to arbitration being the key issue at stake. Pauncefote said he had replied to him that it was apparent from the despatches that this was the case – but officially had no authority to say anything on the question. He also wrote that

I asked Mr. Olney how any addition to the territory of British Guiana could be a menace to the United States; to which he replied that it was the "principle" they were contending for and not the amount of territory claimed.⁵²

This sentence again suggests that British policy makers – including Pauncefote – had not yet taken on board what A.E. Campbell referred to as the 'moral' stance of the American approach. To the United States the Venezuela affair was not just a question of a minor border dispute, but a practical application of the Monroe doctrine, which the administration now felt strong enough to enforce.

⁵¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 20 Dec. 1895, Salisbury Papers, vol. 139 ff.15-23

⁵² *ibid.*

In the course of his discussion with Olney, Pauncefote raised the question of arbitrating the dispute outside the Schomburgk line (the unofficial boundary line of British Guiana surveyed by Robert Schomburgk of the Royal Geographical Society in 1841-3).⁵³ In other words, he suggested that territory within that line was non-negotiable, effectively imbuing it with an official status that was favourable to Britain. This idea was one that Salisbury accepted. Pauncefote reported that:

Mr. Olney asked what would be the attitude of Great Britain if the award should affirm the title of Venezuela to the Schomburgk line and moreover if it should throw doubt on the rights of Great Britain to territory rights within the line. Would Her Majesty's Government in that event agree to arbitration as regards that territory?

Pauncefote's reply to this question opened up a chink of light, which Olney cannot have failed to notice - the British ambassador replied to Olney's question that

I could not of course answer that question, but in the extremely improbable event which he had suggested Her Majesty's Government *might perhaps be willing to reconsider the situation*, while reserving complete freedom of action.⁵⁴ [My italics].

Bearing in mind that Pauncefote was someone with a reputation for being extremely cautious with his words (in his official capacity, at least) and the sometimes opaque nature of diplomatic language, this statement could be read as a potentially significant hint at a concession on the part of Britain, right at the moment of greatest US belligerency. Pauncefote was suggesting that the British government might reconsider its position on arbitration. This appears to exceed what Salisbury was proposing at this time, and whatever pattern the subsequent informal diplomacy took it is likely to have strengthened the US administration's resolve to get its way. Pauncefote went on to say that he had discussed, unofficially, how if the dispute was arbitrated outside the Schomburgk line 'the result would most probably dispose of the whole controversy, and that Olney was 'evidently strongly impressed by what he called my

⁵³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.616.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

‘valuable suggestion.’ Here Pauncefote may have been rather over optimistic in his interpretation of Olney’s response. The British ambassador’s hint that Britain might in future give some ground was more likely to have encouraged the United States to push for wider arbitration, rather than to agree to Salisbury’s firm line. Nevertheless, the despatch shows that from the earliest stages Pauncefote was generating ideas for resolving the dispute – even before Salisbury had given him new suggestions on how to act. The fact that Pauncefote raised the possibility of wider arbitration at this very early stage is also significant, when comparing his response with that of Salisbury. Arbitration was an idea that Salisbury had been cool towards throughout his career, and he had specifically opposed it as a solution to the Venezuela dispute in all but the narrowest terms, as his response to Olney’s despatch on the issue had forcefully demonstrated. In putting forward the idea, even in an unofficial capacity, Pauncefote was moving faster than his boss might have liked.

However, despite signs that Pauncefote was beginning to feel a need for a more constructive approach to the problem from the British side, his correspondence continued to show that he did not regard the affair as seriously threatening diplomatic relations between the two countries. This fact is underlined by the nature of a personal letter he sent to Thomas Bayard only three days after Cleveland had delivered his message to Congress, in which he wrote:

I cannot resist the desire ... to express my most warm and sincere sympathy for you in relation to the odiously unjust attacks which have lately been made against you in the Press of America ... you have had too long and too brilliant a public career to feel anything but passing annoyance at the folly and ingratitude of these ignorant and irresponsible scribblers and chatterers who have attacked you. You are in my opinion far away the most popular Representative of the US that was ever sent to London and you have certainly done more good work there than the whole of your predecessors in the great duty of smoothing international acerbities, by your personal influence and great oratorical talent.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Pauncefote to Bayard, 20 Dec. 1895, LOC, Bayard papers.

The letter reinforces the fact that warlike thoughts were furthest from Pauncefote's mind, whilst again emphasising his aloofness from day-to-day politics.

In his longest despatch to Salisbury on the effects of Cleveland's message, Pauncefote developed his argument that despite the excitement generated, the incident would not turn into something nastier:

The extraordinary state of excitement into which the Congress of the United States and the whole country were thrown by the warlike Message of the President on the occasion of the publication of the Venezuela Boundary correspondence, has given way for the moment to consternation at the financial panic which it has caused.

... Mr. Olney's note to Mr. Bayard was based on the Venezuelan case alone, and owing to its erroneous statements widely disseminated by Venezuelan agents, a popular impression has prevailed that Great Britain had taken advantage of her superior force to wrest from Venezuela her rightful territory, that she was still marching on in this course in defiance of the so-called 'Monroe Doctrine,' with a view to the acquisition of large regions of South America, and that she had refused all proposals of arbitration.

The President's Message of the 17th instant was not calculated to dispel that illusion. Before there was time to read the correspondence the note of war which he sounded had produced in Congress and among the public a condition of mind which can only be described as hysterical.

Very few persons, I believe, have troubled themselves to read the correspondence. The President's bellicose Message was quite enough, and by way of endorsing it both Houses of Congress proceeded at once and unanimously to vote an appropriation of 100,000 dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary for the expense of a Commission to be appointed by the President to investigate and report upon the true divisional line between the Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana.

...In the meanwhile a strong undercurrent has commenced to flow in opposition to the warlike attitude of the President.

The most eminent jurists of the country condemn him, as do also the bishops and clergy, and he naturally meets with no sympathy from the financial world, while several important journals attack him and his policy with considerable vehemence.

There is some reason, therefore to anticipate that a great reaction of feeling and opinion will soon manifest itself in the country, and the President's message may turn out a 'boomerang'.

Pauncefote (correctly) noted that the financial panic caused by the crisis ended any real possibility of war. However, where he misjudged the situation is by assuming that the opposition that he detected to the President's message would somehow grow and 'boomerang' against Cleveland. Subsequent events led to Salisbury, rather than Cleveland, having to give way. In the final part of his despatch, Pauncefote emphasised the correctness of the British position:

There is one consideration which will no doubt appeal to the common sense of the American public, and which should be conclusive against the President's claim to interfere in the boundary dispute, even if it were admitted that the Monroe doctrine had any international force or were applicable to the question.

It is that the United States have stood by for nearly three quarters of a century, since the Monroe doctrine was propounded in 1823, and have seen the Colony of British Guiana peopled and developed up to the Schomburgk line, and so delineated in their own maps as well as in the principal maps of all countries, and without one word of protest until the year 1895!

If the doctrine of 'Estoppel' has any force among nations, appears to me that a stronger case was never presented for its application.⁵⁶

Despite his earlier attempt at suggesting a solution to the problem, here Pauncefote appears to be strongly backing Salisbury's line of no compromise. There are two main reasons for this. The most obvious is that, in contrast to the despatch in which Pauncefote hinted at compromise, this was an official despatch, and as such it was one that could be published in a Blue Book as part of Britain's defence of its case. The second observation is that Pauncefote may have recognised that he was running ahead of Salisbury's wishes in his earlier hint at compromise, and in this later despatch, he was reassuring his Prime Minister that he was once more toeing the official line in negotiations. That Salisbury was not keen on conceding ground on the issue is

⁵⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 24 Dec. 1895, PRO, FO420/168.

underlined by the fact that there was to be an interval of several months before Pauncefote was finally authorised to go ahead with a plan for wider arbitration that he had hinted at in his unofficial despatch at the time of Cleveland's message.

The fact that Salisbury was in no hurry to settle the dispute must have stemmed in part from the fact that Pauncefote continued to send regular reassurance that Anglo-American relations were not as strained as first appearances suggested. For example, on 3 January 1896, he wrote:

I am glad to see that a wave of reason is passing over this country after the extraordinary exhibition of 'dementia' which we have witnessed. The American Commission [that Cleveland had set up to investigate the dispute] is a fine 'safety valve' and it will no doubt keep open as long as the vote of \$100,000 is not exhausted and then apply for an extension of life. In the meantime the common sense of the country will continue to manifest itself as against the jingo crusaders ... I am invited to dinner on the 7th by the Secretary of State 'to meet the President' and there is certainly no strain observable between myself and his ministers.⁵⁷

Reinforcing this sense of a subsiding crisis, Pauncefote wrote on 23 January 1896:

Public feeling in regard to the Venezuelan question is again subsiding, and it is evident that the Administration is anxious to arrive at a friendly settlement by which the Commission would be relieved of its duties and which would be honourable to both parties.⁵⁸

The very fact that Pauncefote was sending such messages seems to have had the effect of encouraging Salisbury to hold out for longer over the question of arbitration, and embark on the period of informal diplomacy that characterised negotiations in the early part of 1896. Soon after Pauncefote's above despatch, Salisbury wrote to Thomas Sanderson, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, that he did 'not agree

⁵⁷ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 3 Jan. 1896, Salisbury papers, vol.139, f.33.

⁵⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, Jan. 23 1896, PRO, FO80/367.

with those who think great haste necessary.’⁵⁹ Thus, a case could be made that by appearing to be all things to all people, Pauncefote was actually prolonging the dispute. On the one hand he made an early hint at compromise to the Americans, whilst on the other he emphasised to Salisbury how the crisis was subsiding. Both sides must therefore have felt there was something to be gained from holding out in negotiations. Salisbury therefore at this stage remained resolute, writing to Pauncefote: ‘... we would not bind ourselves to arbitrate the unsettled districts within the Schomburgk Line, we certainly could not see our way to arbitrate districts that had been long settled.’⁶⁰

What initial negotiation there was on the issue took place through unofficial means, at first through Henry Norman of *The Daily Chronicle*. Pauncefote was dismissive of these efforts, writing to Salisbury that

...he cabled something foolish to London yesterday, which has been published here under the headline of ‘England backs down.’ He brought me a letter from Reginald Brett [the future Viscount Esher] – but I am rather suspicious that he is *anguis in herba* [a snake in the grass].⁶¹

It seems that at this stage Pauncefote was unaware that such negotiations had the tacit approval of the Foreign Office. The actions of Norman, though rather ineffectual, were the start of the period of ‘informal diplomacy’ in the Venezuela crisis, where the usual diplomatic channels were neglected for a month or so. Instead, the two countries’ respective positions were debated in the columns of *The Times*, as well as Britain’s position being advanced, again unofficially, by Lord Playfair who met with Thomas Bayard, the US ambassador in London. In fact, this period of manoeuvring appears to have achieved very little. Interestingly, Norman later made the comment that ‘The stronger our case is, and I believe it is very strong - the readier we ought to be, under the circumstances, to arbitrate...’⁶² Thus he appeared to contradict the official

⁵⁹ Memo from Salisbury to Thomas Sanderson, 6 Jan., 1896, PRO, FO800/1.

⁶⁰ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 7 Feb. 1896, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f.34.

⁶¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 3 Jan. 1896, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f.33.

⁶² Henry Norman: ‘A Peace Mission to America’, *Cosmopolis*, Vol.1 (Mar. 1896), p. 697.

line of the government for whom he was tentatively negotiating. It seems he would therefore have been more in agreement with Cleveland's comment that '...a contention may well be suspected of weakness when its supporters are unwilling to go to arbitration.'⁶³ In his study, Joseph Mathews makes the assertion that 'the exclusive use of official channels in the Venezuela crisis almost certainly would have intensified the danger of war.'⁶⁴ This is a curious claim to make, and one for which he provides little evidence. Indeed, he notes the 'near comic confusion' resulting from informal diplomacy.⁶⁵ As outlined above, it was precisely the *lack* of formal diplomacy that had allowed the situation to escalate in the first place, and threatened to do so again in the weeks after Cleveland's message.

Had Britain taken a more proactive stance in the months after his July message, the drama of the December message might have been avoided. In other words, more diplomacy was needed, rather than the silence that characterised that period. As time went by, Olney's dissatisfaction with the progress of informal diplomacy was evident from his telegrams to Bayard. On 21 February 1896, he wrote that he feared the '... importance of time is not appreciated. Most unfortunate to have matter made party issue in approaching presidential campaign...'⁶⁶ And a week later, he expanded on this theme, saying:

Is the present situation, then, that the Foreign Office takes two positions: First that settlements must be reserved from arbitration, second that it refuses to say what it means by 'settlements.' If so, there would seem to be no occasion for or utility in negotiations. Plain that informal negotiations only retard and confuse. Plain also that negotiations should be conducted here and the British Ambassador instructed accordingly.⁶⁷

⁶³ Grover Cleveland, *Presidential Problems* (New York: The Century co., 1904) p.210.

⁶⁴ Mathews, 'Informal Diplomacy,' p. 212.

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 212.

⁶⁶ Olney to Bayard, 21 Feb. 1896, NARA, M30, reel 172.

⁶⁷ Olney to Bayard, 26 Feb. 1896, LOC, Olney Papers, reel 17.

Reinforcing this sense of continuing American unease, Whitelaw Reid, owner of the *New York Tribune*, noted, in contrast to Pauncefote, how public feeling was still strong in a large part of the US, writing:

This whole nation away from the seaboard is, and for many years has been saturated with hatred of Great Britain...And one of the constant causes of the growing dislike of New York at the West was what they considered New York's Anglo-mania ...The 'war with England cry' is the most seductive and dangerous watchword Mr. Cleveland would give here in the arid Southwest ...The curious thing about it is that the fever lasts. The papers are as hot on the subject now as they were the day after the Message came out ...⁶⁸

Given this atmosphere, it appears that Salisbury would have done better to turn to Pauncefote more quickly, given that he was a known quantity, and a respected figure in Washington. Over this question of delay, Mathews refers to Salisbury's 'mastery of tactics' – again a curious assertion since he initially adopted a position of refusing arbitration from which he was later reluctantly forced to back down. Had Pauncefote been regarded as a 'loose cannon', the assertion that formal diplomacy might have made war more likely would bear some credence. However, Pauncefote's influence over Salisbury, and his preference for arbitration over confrontation are perhaps the two defining characteristics of his ambassadorship. Thus it would seem that the sooner he had become involved, the sooner a serious – and peaceful – solution could have been mapped out. Salisbury's attempts at achieving concessions by a policy of procrastination were fruitless. By ill advisedly delaying his response to Olney and then producing a somewhat uncompromising reply, he presumably felt his dignity prevented him from embarking on immediate formal negotiations: in truth, it was only when formal negotiations resumed that real progress was made.

By the end of February 1896, Salisbury finally came round to the view that more formal negotiations were necessary, commenting that 'this attempt by Smalley to negotiate in print is absurd' even though he had tacitly encouraged such negotiations to

⁶⁸ Whitelaw Reid to Chauncey M. Depew, 23 Jan., 1896, LOC, Whitelaw Reid papers, reel 68.

take place.⁶⁹ Salisbury now wrote to Pauncefote saying that he had ‘...agreed with Bayard that in principle the Venezuelan boundary may be discussed between you and the US government acting as the friend of Venezuela.’ Also at this point Salisbury commented that he told Bayard that whilst he was willing to accept some form of joint commission, he was not prepared to admit unrestricted arbitration in these matters of high political import, also noting that the definition of “settled districts” needed to be established.⁷⁰ Salisbury was unwilling to negotiate over any territory where British subjects had actually settled – in effect he was initially only willing to negotiate over unoccupied land. The reasons why he subsequently changed his mind will be discussed later in this chapter.

Pauncefote himself was now evidently relieved to have been given back control over the negotiations. He commented to Olney ‘... that now that the amateur diplomats had got through, perhaps serious negotiations could be set on foot...’⁷¹ In a letter to Salisbury, Pauncefote also commented on how Olney had felt that the Playfair-Bayard negotiations had ‘muddled things a good deal’ and that ‘all this very forcibly illustrates the views expressed by your Lordship about amateur diplomats.’⁷² Such comments hint that he had actually been somewhat frustrated by Salisbury’s approach all the way along – although loyalty would have precluded him from ever making such a statement to his superior. He may also have been concerned about his own position being undermined had the negotiations been successful. A.E. Campbell comments that after negotiations were transferred to Washington, only ‘relatively minor’ questions were left to be negotiated.⁷³ In a technical sense this is true – but as with the rest of the Venezuela crisis, apparently minor issues still had the potential to cause major friction between Britain and the United States. It is true that Salisbury had moved to the position that some form of arbitration would be necessary, but the dispute over ‘settled

⁶⁹ Salisbury to Chamberlain, 21 Feb. 1896, quoted in Mathews, ‘Informal Diplomacy,’ p.206.

⁷⁰ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 27 Feb. 1896, PRO, FO80/369.

⁷¹ Olney to Cleveland, 6 March 1901, LOC, Olney papers, reel 59.

⁷² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 27 March 1896, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f.71.

⁷³ A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, p.20.

districts' was not an insubstantial one – had Salisbury ultimately not given way on this point, negotiations could have broken down once more. Indeed, Pauncefote's reports of his meetings with Olney in March and April indicate that there was still a considerable gap to be bridged between the two countries' position on the issue. On 22 March, Pauncefote reasserted Britain's uncompromising line, writing:

I had previously informed him [Sec. of State] that his proposal for the settlement of the Venezuelan question...was not acceptable to Her Majesty's Government as it amounted to unrestricted arbitration which in their view could not properly be resorted to in cases involving such large public interests and the territorial integrity of the Nation.⁷⁴

In response to this, according to Pauncefote, Olney was equally uncompromising:

Mr. Olney again declared that the United States would certainly not agree to any arrangement which did not provide for an ultimate and final settlement of the controversy, or which sought to exclude from the consideration of an Arbitral Tribunal, any portion of the territorial claim of Venezuela ...

I pointed out that if the result of a preliminary finding of the facts were to establish that part of the claim of Venezuela was preposterous in the view of International Law, it could hardly be contended that such part should be referred to Arbitration. There must be some limit to the subject matter of Arbitration ... Mr. Olney however was not disposed to pursue the discussion and his tone was one of despondency mixed with irritation.⁷⁵

In the midst of this apparent impasse, Pauncefote once more reverted to his earlier role of constructive negotiator, writing to Olney on 9 April that

It can hardly be said that we have had any negotiation about the Venezuelan Boundary Question. For if both parties, or either of them, assert the position originally taken up and decline to entertain any modification of it, there can be no negotiation. I am

⁷⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 22 March 1896, PRO, FO5/2289.

⁷⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 2 April 1896, PRO, FO5/2290.

anxious to know whether you do not think we should give a chance to the knot to untie itself.⁷⁶

He then put forward new proposals to settle the dispute. It was certainly true that the informal negotiations had made little headway, but in stating this, Pauncefote conveniently side-stepped the issue that much of the reluctance to negotiate over the issue had come from Salisbury, something about which Olney was still frustrated. He, for example, wrote to Pauncefote on 10 April 1896: 'Am I to infer that negotiations upon the Venezuela Boundary dispute are no longer occupying the British Foreign Office?'⁷⁷

From this apparently sticky point onwards, negotiations do seem to have taken a more genuinely constructive turn. There were several apparent reasons for this. Firstly, Pauncefote was once again pushing negotiations forward, offering tentative suggestions that Salisbury had been reluctant to make himself. Secondly, Salisbury faced persistent opposition in the Commons in the shape of Sir William Harcourt, and therefore appears to have been more willing to pursue compromise to gain domestic peace. Lastly (and somewhat speculatively) it must have been evident by now, even to Salisbury, that the United States was not going to back down from its insistence on wide ranging arbitration. With other domestic and international difficulties to face, arbitration may by now have appeared to be a relatively attractive option. As Richard Langhorne has pointed out, the time gained by submitting a disagreement to arbitration 'had an obvious political dividend.'⁷⁸

As well as helping to restart real negotiations, it is apparent that Pauncefote played a key role in shaping the outcome of the final compromise that was acceptable to the Americans. Because Pauncefote was in England for much of these negotiations, and much of the negotiating was done verbally, concrete proof of Pauncefote's leading

⁷⁶ Pauncefote to Olney, 9 April 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 18

⁷⁷ Olney to Pauncefote, 10 April 1896 (quoted in Mathews, 'Informal Diplomacy,' p.209).

⁷⁸ Langhorne, 'Arbitration,' p.50.

role is scarce, but the available evidence does place him at the centre of things. Henry White, for example, second secretary at the US embassy in London, and someone who Olney increasingly relied on for information, was clear on the significance of Pauncefote's role. On 13 June, he wrote to Olney: 'I ... understand that the Cabinet has agreed... on the suggestion of Sir Julian Pauncefote to the submission of the Venezuela question – including even the “settled districts” – to arbitration in this form.'⁷⁹ Thus the Americans had correctly detected that the tide of negotiations was now flowing in their direction, in large measure due to the efforts of Pauncefote in engaging in negotiations that involved concessions from Britain. John Hay, on a visit to Britain, detected an even wider shift of mood, writing to Olney: 'From what I have been able to fathom in conversation I infer that most of the leading men are convinced that Lord Salisbury's tone a year ago was a mistake, and that our attitude, is on the whole, reasonable.'⁸⁰

Whether Pauncefote was one of those who thought Salisbury's stance was a mistake is unclear – he was always fully supportive of his Prime Minister in his correspondence. However, it does not seem unreasonable to infer that his willingness to make new proposals when given the chance, and his apparent disdain for the amateur diplomacy that had taken place, suggest that Pauncefote must have felt at least some irritation at the slowness of the Prime Minister's response to the dispute. Furthermore, the ease with which his proposals, when in England in the summer of 1896, apparently met with the approval of William Harcourt suggest, as we shall see that he may actually have been more in sympathy with the policy of the opposition than that of the government.

Harcourt's approval of Pauncefote's diplomacy is striking for several reasons. It was Harcourt who amongst prominent British politicians had been the most fervent advocate of arbitration all along. The fact that he, as Leader of the Opposition in the Commons, was not only consulting with, but apparently in greater agreement with the government's representative in Washington, than the government itself - and that this

⁷⁹ Henry White to Olney, 13 June 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 59

⁸⁰ 31 July 1896, Hay to Olney, LOC, Olney papers, reel 21.

point of view effectively carried the day - was highly unusual. It was Harcourt's consultations with Pauncefote that ultimately became the basis for Balfour's statement to the Commons on 13 August 1896 expressing how the resolution should go forward.⁸¹ In these consultations, Harcourt again stressed the advantage to be gained by settling the issue earlier rather than later, writing to Balfour '...it is in the highest degree expedient that the Venezuelan question should be settled by the present administration in America...' pointing out that a McKinley administration might prove even more intransigent.⁸²

There is ample evidence that Harcourt fully approved of the way Pauncefote was acting in the negotiations. In August he wrote to John Morley that he

... got what I conceived perfectly satisfactory assurances from Pauncefote on Venezuela. He considered himself instructed to accept the Olney proviso as to settled districts, which he considered would conclude the matter...I learned from Pauncefote that he (Chamberlain) was much annoyed that he (Pauncefote) had seen me before he had interviewed him. So like his petty jealousy - a vice which is the bane of public as well as private life.⁸³

This view of Pauncefote being favoured by Salisbury in the conduct of negotiations in preference to Joseph Chamberlain is further testament to the value the Prime Minister placed on the negotiating skills of his Washington ambassador, and this view was confirmed by Henry White, who wrote to Olney in early September that he

... was quite sure that Lord Salisbury, while glad to avail himself of any modification in your views which Mr. Chamberlain's powers of persuasion might effect would never have commissioned him to settle the question over Sir J. Pauncefote's head, for more reasons than I have space to enumerate.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Boyle, 'Liberal Opposition,' p.D1208.

⁸² Harcourt to Balfour, 2 Aug. 1896, British Library, Balfour Papers, Add. MS49696 ff. 244-248.

⁸³ Harcourt to Morley, 16 Aug. 1896, quoted in Gardiner, *Harcourt*, p.401.

⁸⁴ White to Olney, 7 Sept. 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 59.

Pauncefote's achievement in the summer of 1896 was to broker finally a deal that was acceptable to all sides. His role was a crucial one, since he was in the unique position of having the ear of the Prime Minister, yet at the same time holding a position that was acceptable to the leader of the opposition, and, by implication, the Americans.

Thus it was that James Roosevelt was able to report in August that the vexed question of arbitration of 'settled districts' was on its way to being solved, and to comment to Olney that: 'It would certainly be a great triumph to have them give way on this point.'⁸⁵ Further evidence that Pauncefote's actions were pleasing both to the Parliamentary opposition and to the Americans is Harcourt's note to White saying that he had

... had several conferences with Balfour and Pauncefote. The latter is extremely reasonable and anxious for a settlement on a basis you and I desire. And I finally received assurances which to me were quite satisfactory and Pauncefote informed me that he had received instructions which he had no doubt would lead at once to a final and conclusive arrangement. I hope by this time he has returned to Washington and that everything is in train as we should desire.

I am sure that Pauncefote is as convinced as I am of the reasonableness of Olney's proposal. And will do all he can to put it through.

It is also notable how Harcourt commented on Chamberlain's visit to the United States by saying that he '... should have been better pleased if the matter had been left in Pauncefote's hands,' and asked White to 'let me know what passes between Olney, Pauncefote and Chamberlain, and if the thing sticks, I will give it another shove.'⁸⁶

The evidence also suggests that Pauncefote, rather than just receiving instructions on the matter, was instrumental in making proposals himself, which led to the final resolution of the dispute. His proposal involved finding a way round the impasse over so-called 'settled' districts. As referred to earlier, Salisbury was initially

⁸⁵ James Roosevelt to Olney, 19 Aug. 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 22.

⁸⁶ Harcourt to White, 6 Sept. 1896, LOC, White papers, box 15.

reluctant to let go of the rights and property of British subjects who had settled in the boundary area in 'good faith' and therefore felt that should 'settled districts' should be removed from the scope of arbitration.⁸⁷ The Americans, however, disputed what actually constituted settlement. The disputed question became one of time. For example, Sir Thomas Sanderson, writing to the Attorney General reported that Pauncefote

... had drawn up some suggestions as to the modifications which might be made in Lord Salisbury's draft to meet Mr. Olney's objections. These were discussed on Saturday when he met Lord Salisbury and Chamberlain. The suggestions were modified in certain details – and Sir J. Pauncefote has taken away a copy as the basis on which he is authorised to recommend discussions ... It was agreed that he should send up a draft proposal based on Sir J. Pauncefote's memorandum and your draft with the modifications which I had discussed ... In the end Sir JP left with verbal instructions to endeavour to get Mr. Olney to agree to a prescriptive clause of 30 or 40 years.⁸⁸

On his return to the United States, Pauncefote optimistically reported that 'Mr Olney ... has informed me privately that he anticipates no trouble in agreeing upon such a treaty on the basis upon the memorandum which I have submitted.'⁸⁹ However, two days later he telegraphed to Salisbury 'I regret to report that the Secretary of State cannot be induced to accept your Lordship's proposal ... The counter draft ... only reduces the period of prescription to 50 years. I have in vain used every argument and put the greatest pressure on him to obtain a further reduction. He says he cannot consent in justice to Venezuela ...'⁹⁰ And, in the end, Salisbury gave way even on this final stumbling block. On 10 November 1896, Pauncefote was authorised by Salisbury to sign a treaty accepting 50 years as the period of settlement that would be outside terms of arbitration. Therefore, after months of fraught negotiations, the British

⁸⁷ A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, pp. 27-28.

⁸⁸ Sanderson to Webster, 15 Oct. 1896, PRO, FO8/375.

⁸⁹ Pauncefote to Salisbury 27 Oct 1896.

⁹⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury 29 Oct. 1896.

government had conceded both to arbitration and to terms of arbitration that it had initially fought against accepting.

Pauncefote himself seems to have been unconcerned by the concessions that his government had made over the affair. Indeed, in his letter to Harcourt, informing him of the outcome of the negotiations, he seemed pleased with the results, and trumpeted his own role in the settlement, whilst not being able to resist another dig at the press, writing:

... I hope the arrangement concluded will be as satisfactory to you as it appears to me. It is precisely along the lines which I advocated at the Foreign Office, while in England and which I believed to form the only basis of presenting any chance of success and at the same time sufficiently safeguarding our interests ... Of course the press here have splendid headlines about the 'British back down' and there is much rubbish in the European Press but all that will soon evaporate.⁹¹

Harcourt did indeed appear equally satisfied with the result, taking the time to praise him in the House of Commons saying that Pauncefote was '... a man of unrivalled abilities ... one of the most helpful and accomplished servants of the crown.'⁹²

Conclusion

Unlike the Bering Sea crisis, Pauncefote cannot really be credited with defusing a potential armed clash through his actions. It is true that his early despatches to Salisbury served to lower the diplomatic temperature resulting from the Venezuela affair, but American financial panic, and Salisbury's preoccupation with the Jameson Raid had probably put paid to the prospect of an armed clash before any real diplomatic manoeuvring took place. Added to this was the fact that for the early part (and arguably

⁹¹ Pauncefote to Harcourt, 20 Nov. 1896, Harcourt Papers, MSS Harcourt, Dep. 232, ff. 55-58.

⁹² Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 198, (from Hansard 4th series XLV p.51).

the most dangerous phase) of the dispute, diplomacy took place through informal channels, and Pauncefote's role at that time was minimal. It is also interesting to observe that at the height of the tension Pauncefote found time to address a note to Thomas Bayard, then US ambassador to Britain, to commiserate with him on the way the press had treated a speech he made in Edinburgh. This is hardly indicative of two nations on the brink of war.

However, where Pauncefote's role was most influential, and most relevant in terms of this study, is in the role of pushing Salisbury towards an agreement that went against his initial instincts. Salisbury, when he was finally persuaded of the need for arbitration, was then loath to include in discussions territory that had already been settled by British subjects. Pauncefote's stance in those negotiations is again indicative of just how much Salisbury was prepared to listen to his Washington ambassador, and thus shows how British policy towards Washington was moderated as a result of his actions. The fact that Salisbury soon put the negotiations back in Pauncefote's hands after the initial 'informal' negotiations is further indication of the faith that the Prime Minister had in his Washington ambassador. It is also interesting to consider why Salisbury felt unable to do this from the outset. Perhaps here 'loss of face' was the issue. Salisbury could not immediately be seen to be negotiating on an issue that he had apparently been so keen to take so firm a stand on in his notes to Cleveland.

Not only did the Venezuela dispute show once again Pauncefote's moderating influence on Salisbury, but it also clearly highlighted the differences in their 'modus operandi'. Pauncefote was apparently eager throughout the dispute (or at least after Cleveland's message to Congress in December 1895) to offer constructive suggestions to speed its resolution, whereas Salisbury's approach seems to have been to engage in negotiations as little as possible, until not given any alternative. This might partially be explained by the differing roles of a diplomat and a politician. However, the fact that Pauncefote's solution was close to the one proposed by another politician – William Harcourt – and that his proposal was the one that was finally accepted, suggests that Salisbury did in fact misjudge his handling of the crisis. Perhaps the Prime Minister's

attitude stemmed from the fact that he never really viewed it as a crisis at all – possibly because Pauncefote did not stress adequately the sense of disquiet over the issue inside the US administration itself. Perhaps this feeling, which Pauncefote failed to appreciate explains why the Venezuela dispute *was* a significant one in the first place. It was eloquently summed up in a letter from Olney to Chamberlain in which he wrote:

There is no ... general and rooted hatred by Americans of the English people. On the contrary, if there is anything Americans are proud of, it is their right to describe themselves as of the English race – if there is anything they are attached to it is to ideas and principles and institutions which are distinctively English in their origin and development...and because an injury from a friend has the intensified sting of a poisoned arrow, the seeming if not intentional, contumely with which the statement of our position on the Venezuelan boundary question was received by the British Foreign Office, stirred the American heart as it has not been since the Civil War.⁹³

And President Cleveland himself summed up the wider significance of the dispute for the United States, writing:

I hope there are but few of our fellow citizens who, in retrospect, do not now acknowledge the good that has come to our nation through this episode in our history. It has established the Monroe Doctrine on lasting foundations before the eyes of the world; it has given us a better place of respect and consideration of the people of all nations, and especially Britain; it has again confirmed our confidence in the overwhelming prevalence among our citizens of disinterested devotion to American honor; and last, but by no means least it has taught us where to look in the ranks of our countrymen for the best patriotism.⁹⁴

Had Pauncefote expressed the importance of the dispute as seen through these high ranking American eyes at an earlier stage, Salisbury might have seen the merit in settling it sooner. Thus, over the issue of Venezuela, Pauncefote proved himself to be effective once the dispute had burst into the open, but ineffective in trying to prevent its eruption in the first place.

⁹³ Olney to Chamberlain, Sept. 26, 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 22.

⁹⁴ Grover Cleveland, *Problems*, p. 280.

Chapter Five: Pauncefote and Arbitration: The Olney-Pauncefote Treaty and the First Hague Peace Conference

Although the Olney–Pauncefote Treaty and the First Hague Peace Conference have not received a great deal of attention from historians, many contemporaries considered them to be two of the most potentially far-reaching events of the era.¹ In the case of the Hague Conference in particular, much was written about it in the years immediately following it, but two world wars have understandably changed historians’ perspectives on such an event. Writing in 1962, for example, Calvin de Armond Davis considered that ‘the conference was essentially a failure,’ since he doubted that ‘any of its conventions other than those on the laws of war have ever benefited many people.’² However, whilst the Hague Conference failed to prevent war, it did achieve a lasting legacy in the shape of the permanent court of arbitration. Both events also deserve closer examination because they hold the keys to much of Pauncefote’s thinking during his tenure in Washington, and also show how his ideas fitted into a strong strand of international thought at the time. In the second half of the nineteenth century there was a ‘much increased consciousness of the possible uses of international law.’³ The inspiration for this has been attributed to the upsurge of conflicts in the middle of the century, such as the American Civil War of 1861-65 and the European wars of unification between 1859 and 1870.⁴ The settling of the *Alabama* claims through arbitration in 1871, the foundation of the Institute of International Law in 1873, and the

¹ Contemporary, or near contemporary, accounts of the Hague Conferences include: J.H. Choate, *The Two Hague Conferences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1913); F.W. Holls, *The Peace Conference at the Hague* (New York: Macmillan & co. 1900); Denys P. Myers, ‘The Origin of the Hague Arbitral Courts,’ *American Journal of International Law*, 8:4 (Oct.1914), pp. 769-801. Two post-war studies include: Calvin D. Davis, *The United States and the First Hague Peace Conference*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press (1962). *The United States and the Two Hague Peace Conferences. American Diplomacy and International Organisation 1899-1914*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press (1975).

² Davis, *First Hague Peace Conference*, p.212.

³ Langhorne, ‘Arbitration, p.47.

⁴ Richard Langhorne, ‘The Regulation of Diplomatic Practice: the Beginnings to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961,’ *Review of International Studies*, 18:1, Jan. 1992, p.3.

discussion of the issue in journals and at conferences, all contributed to a momentum in favour of the settlement of international disputes by peaceful, legal means.⁵ As to the specific idea for a permanent system of arbitration, this had also been discussed for some time. In 1873, the US lawyer J. B. Miles had toured Europe with a plan for such a scheme, and an Interparliamentary Conference of 1894 had also drawn up a proposal for a permanent court, upon which the British scheme at the Hague was ultimately based.⁶ Pauncefote, doubtless aided by his lawyer's background, belonged strongly to the school of thought that believed international problems could be solved in this way. In this sense, although a practical man, he could also be described as something of an idealist. At first sight, the failed Olney-Pauncefote Treaty of 1897, an agreement that would have committed Britain and the United States to resolve differences that they could not settle between themselves by arbitration, appears as no more than wishful thinking. Nevertheless, that contemporaries saw the idea as a workable one is illustrated by the fact that a string of similar attempts (defeated by the US Senate) were made by secretaries of state John Hay in 1905, Elihu Root in 1908-09 and by the Taft government in 1911.⁷ Arbitration's apparent lack of practical importance seems to be reinforced when one considers that a tranche of such treaties were signed in the years preceding the First World War by the US Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, and that they proved futile in preventing conflict. Similarly, present day historians (such as Michael Howard) have also been somewhat dismissive of the importance of the Hague Peace Conferences.⁸ Indeed, on one level, it is easy to dismiss such gatherings as what might today be described as no more than public relations exercises. It was evident from the outset that Tsar Nicholas II's call for a reduction in the growth of armaments was never going to be achieved, even though the Great Powers felt obliged to attend such a conference. As the leader of the United States delegation, Andrew D. White put it: 'probably, since the world began, never has so large a body

⁵ Langhorne, 'Arbitration,' pp.47-48.

⁶ F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p.127; F.S.L. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe 1815-1914* (Leyden: A. W. Sythoff, 1963), p. 340.

⁷ See J. P. Campbell, 'Taft, Roosevelt and the Arbitration Treaties of 1911,' *Journal of American History*, 53: 2 (1966).

⁸ Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace* (London: Profile Books, 2001), pp.54-55.

come together in a spirit of more hopeless scepticism as to any good result.⁹ Thus the pre - First World War arms races continued apace with all the grave consequences this entailed. However, to dismiss these events out of hand is to disregard the enormous importance that many other contemporaries attached to them, the fact that some lasting achievements did result from them, and the lasting problems that they were to highlight, as far as US foreign relations were concerned. Also, importantly, from Pauncefote's point of view, they threw into sharp relief the extent and limits of his ability to deliver closer Anglo-American ties.

The Olney-Pauncefote Treaty

Beyond Nelson M. Blake's 1945 journal article, which detailed the genesis of the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty, there are no detailed historical analyses of the event, and even Blake's article says relatively little about Pauncefote's role.¹⁰ This lack of enquiry is somewhat surprising, since there is ample evidence to show that contemporaries regarded the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty as a much more significant event than the neglect it has received since would suggest. Indeed, as indicated above, many people had high hopes for the concept of arbitration in this era, as one historian has put it: 'Arbitration outstripped disarmament in popular repute as the practical solution to civilisation's last great problem.'¹¹ In the United States parallels were drawn with the momentum of the anti-slavery movement in the 1850s.¹² Indicative of this is Richard Olney's comment in a letter to the US journalist, G.W. Smalley, several years after the treaty had failed, in which he wrote that 'the subject [of the Anglo-American general arbitration treaty] seemed to me more important than the Venezuela affair.'¹³ This is a significant comment because the Venezuela affair has received much more attention from historians of Anglo-American relations, and is considered to be something of a

⁹ Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 231.

¹⁰ Blake, 'Olney-Pauncefote,' pp.228-243.

¹¹ J. P. Campbell, 'Taft,' pp.290-291.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 289.

¹³ Olney to Smalley, 7 April 1911, LOC, Olney papers, reel 60.

turning point in Anglo-American relations. It is also significant in terms of this study, since it was Pauncefote who was instrumental in bringing his Prime Minister round to the idea of supporting such a wide ranging arbitration treaty.

As Blake outlined in his article, resolutions favouring negotiations for a general arbitration treaty had been unanimously passed by Congress in 1890 and the House of Commons in 1893, following an initiative begun in 1887 by the MP Randall Cremer. Reservations over the practicalities of such a treaty, and tension over the Venezuela boundary, meant that negotiations over the idea made little headway until it received a groundswell of support on either side of the Atlantic in 1896, as a possible means of solving the Venezuela dispute, and avoiding future war scares.¹⁴ Blake described Pauncefote as ‘a sincere friend’ of the arbitration movement, and the ambassador’s personal enthusiasm for such a treaty is reflected in several pieces of correspondence, and not just those that he wrote himself.¹⁵ Richard Olney was clear about Pauncefote’s support for the project when he wrote to President Cleveland in the summer of 1896: ‘Pauncefote ... will go to London and confer with Lord Salisbury ... he is particularly anxious not to return without accomplishing something in the direction of general arbitration.’ He added that he had already made advances on the British Prime Minister’s original scheme ‘... which he said he brought Lord Salisbury to agree with some considerable difficulty.’¹⁶ Indeed, Salisbury wrote to Pauncefote in July 1896 expressing the view that the US proposal on arbitration seemed ‘far reaching and hazardous.’¹⁷ Only a day later, Olney wrote to Cleveland again, and stressed the connection between Pauncefote’s personal ambition and the domestic political interest in the treaty, saying:

Sir Julian is very anxious to have us accept it at once [the latest plan for a scheme of general arbitration], no doubt on personal grounds, and partly on political grounds. It would help the party in power and be a great feather in Sir Julian’s cap if it

¹⁴ Blake ‘Olney-Pauncefote,’ pp. 228-233.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.233

¹⁶ Olney to Cleveland, 16 July 1896, LOC, Olney papers reel 59.

¹⁷ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 16 Jul. 1896, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f. 105.

could be announced at this time that the two countries had agreed upon the principles of a general arbitration treaty.¹⁸

The first secretary of the US embassy at London, Henry White, who was something of a confidant of Olney's, was also in little doubt about the domestic political importance of any such treaty to the British government, he wrote in August 1896:

I have no doubt that Lord Salisbury is in earnest in his desire and has the intention if it be possible to negotiate a general arbitration Treaty and to prevent his political opponents when they next come into office, from having the opportunity of accomplishing anything so popular as the negotiation of a general arbitration treaty with this country will be in Great Britain ...

However, White also sensed Salisbury's initial lack of enthusiasm for a comprehensive scheme of arbitration, and therefore indirectly pointed to the role that Pauncefote would play in persuading him to accept a more wide ranging agreement, saying in the same letter:

... whether he [Salisbury] believes in the possibility of negotiating any such treaty which will be effective in cases of serious trouble between the two countries ... I am not prepared to say, never having asked him the direct question. But I rather doubt it.¹⁹

White's instincts proved to be correct. When Salisbury had made his first formal proposal on 5 March 1896, it did not include cases involving 'national honour' or territorial claims, and under most circumstances the two governments would not bind themselves to accept the decision of the arbitration tribunal. Informing Queen Victoria of the proposal, he made his prejudices perfectly clear, writing that he wanted '... to obtain the advantages of arbitration without having the risk of putting vital interests of Your Majesty's Empire at the disposal of a foreigner, who may be partial or eccentric in his views.'²⁰ Cleveland, Olney and Pauncefote (although he did not make this

¹⁸ Olney to Cleveland, 17 Jul. 1897, LOC, Olney papers, reel 59.

¹⁹ White to Olney, 29 Aug. 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 59.

²⁰ Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 11 Feb. 1896, PRO, CAB 41/23/46.

explicit to Salisbury in his early despatches on the subject) favoured a more comprehensive scheme. They wanted all disputes to be arbitrable unless Congress or Parliament declared that the issue was one of national honour or integrity. They also wanted the decisions of the arbitral tribunals to be final. Salisbury raised many objections to these ideas. In particular he feared that applying obligatory arbitration to territorial cases would mean that claims would be raised against the British Empire by 'irresponsible' powers in all parts of the world.²¹ However, despite apparently being better disposed towards United States schemes for arbitration than Salisbury, Pauncefote still allowed his prejudices to show when writing to his Prime Minister, commenting on one of Olney's despatches on a possible general treaty of arbitration that

it is quite in the style of the American Journalist [sic] and I am sorry to have to transmit a document in such bad taste and in such bad form. It was probably written by the President sitting in his shirtsleeves between two bottles of whisky, under which conditions he is reported to have penned his famous message about Venezuela²²

Such comments in his private letters to Salisbury may at first sight appear as little more than entertaining asides, especially when considering that he ultimately developed a good working relationship with Olney, and worked in partnership with him to draw up the arbitration treaty that so nearly met with success. However, such comments are symptomatic of Pauncefote's deep-rooted distaste which peppers his correspondence, for what he perceived as US vulgarity and as explored later in this chapter, prevented him from courting a wider base of US support for his diplomatic initiatives. Therefore, whilst in theory he was in favour of closer Anglo-American relations, on a personal level he found the idea difficult to put into practice beyond his dealings with a very narrow range of US politicians.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of the background issues to the arbitration treaty see Blake 'Olney – Pauncefote,' pp.228-243.

²² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 23 May 1896, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f.107.

On leaving Washington for England for further consultation with Salisbury at the beginning of August 1896, Pauncefote, in a private letter to Olney, showed where his sympathies lay, as far as arbitration was concerned, but did not underestimate the task in front of him. He wrote: "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and I shall struggle on towards the desired goal, though I hardly think we shall attain the President's grand plan of arbitrating all disputes that can arise between the two countries.²³ The way this letter is phrased is interesting in that it suggests Pauncefote himself was more in sympathy with the views of the US President, than that of his own Prime Minister at that time. And, indeed, he was instrumental in persuading Lord Salisbury to move to the US point of view. This approach was consistent both with the British ambassador's long held belief in the principle of arbitration, and his conciliatory approach towards Anglo-American relations.

Since much of Pauncefote's negotiations with Salisbury that summer were conducted on an informal basis (as mentioned in the previous chapter, they also involved the Venezuela dispute), there is little official documentation that records them. However, *The New York Herald's* view of Pauncefote's role in bringing Salisbury round to the idea of a fuller arbitration treaty seems to be a credible one, as it chimes with other contemporaries' accounts of what went on. Its version of events states that

Mr. Olney stated his objections to the Salisbury scheme. They were of a pretty sweeping kind, and there seemed no very bright prospect of any good result on the subject. But not long after, the British Ambassador was summoned home ... He made a long stay in England ... the British Ambassador, himself a fervent advocate of arbitration, had not relinquished the hope of either a special treaty about Venezuela or of a general arbitration treaty, and on the latter as well as the former, he held consultations with Lord Salisbury. He returned with full powers to negotiate on both, and he has succeeded in both.²⁴

²³ Pauncefote to Olney, 29 July 1896, LOC, Olney papers, reel 21.

²⁴ Extract from *New York Herald*, 13 Jan. 1897, included in despatch from Pauncefote to Salisbury, 15 Jan. 1897, PRO, FO5/2320.

Salisbury himself was evidently pleased by the result, taking the time to telegraph Pauncefote with his 'hearty congratulations' on signing the treaty that he said the ambassador had 'so skilfully negotiated.'²⁵ The treaty stipulated that a general arbitration agreement should cover all types of controversies and should provide a final decision in most cases. Most matters would be dealt with by a tribunal of three people, apart from territorial issues which would be handled by a tribunal of six.²⁶

Once the treaty was signed, on 11 January 1897, Pauncefote made clear his pleasure in a private letter to James Bryce, and was optimistic about its prospects:

I feel sure that no one at home rejoices more than you do over the settlement of the Venezuela trouble and the signing of the Anglo-American arbitration treaty. No one on this side can rejoice more than I do, or enjoys a greater sense of relief. The press though generally favourable to the treaty predicts opposition in the Senate - but I think it will only come from such men as Morgan and Teller and that the force of public opinion will carry it through.²⁷

In reading the newspaper reports on the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty from both sides of the Atlantic, the expectations raised by the prospect of an agreement are clear. The language used by the newspapers is striking in its use of epochal rhetoric. They were also full of praise for the work of the British ambassador. For example, the *New York Herald* commented that

... both Mr. Olney and Sir Julian Pauncefote, actuated by the same honorable desire to promote arbitration and therefore, friendship, between Great Britain and the United States, addressed themselves to their task with an ability, skill, patience and inexhaustible ingenuity of diplomatic resource ... We cannot doubt that the Senate will ratify the Treaty ... The country hails it – the world hails it – as a new departure in the history of international relations, a new pledge of peace on earth and goodwill among men. It is, as the president says, eminently fitting that the first great attempt toward that

²⁵ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 12 Jan. 1897, PRO, FO 80/379.

²⁶ Blake, 'Olney-Pauncefote,' pp. 233-234.

²⁷ Pauncefote to Bryce, 18 Jan. 1897, Bryce papers, MS Bryce 116, f.172.

great end should be made by two kindred nations in the forefront of civilization, two champions of Christianity.²⁸

In similarly glowing language, the *New York World* of 13 January 1897 described the signing of the treaty as a ‘white letter day’ and called for a ‘grand international and official popular commemoration of the treaty of Arbitration’ declaring that

... such a celebration is necessary to express the feelings and sentiments which the treaty has stirred. This declaration against war, or threat of war and in favour of peace, reason and justice is undoubtedly “the event of the nineteenth century” as the *London Chronicle* says. It does indeed “mark the beginning of a new epoch in civilization” to use the enthusiastic phrase of President Cleveland.

And in a paragraph that now appears heavy with irony, the report went on to say:

Not often do historic events at once arrange themselves in the proper perspective. Usually it is left to future and often distant generations to see what was important and what unimportant in any given epoch. But now and then there is an event of such commanding significance that the peoples who cause and witness it realise its full meaning. This is just such an event. The hundred and millions of people who are directly affected by it cannot let it pass unnoticed.

The *New York Evening Post* joined in the chorus of approval, commenting that

Whatever else may be said for or against this work in hand, the highest praise must be awarded to Mr. Olney and Sir Julian Pauncefote for their admirable grasp of the subject they had to deal with, and for the concise and lucid embodiment of the ideas which they had to express. Not even our Declaration of Independence, Jefferson’s masterpiece in composition surpasses it in lucidity and clearness of diction. It ought to be ratified for its good English alone.²⁹

²⁸ Extract from *New York Herald*, 13 Jan. 1897, included in despatch from Pauncefote to Salisbury, 15 Jan, 1897, PRO, FO5/2320.

²⁹ Extract from *New York Evening Post*, 12 Jan. 1897, *ibid.*

In the United States, praise cannot come much higher than a comparison with the venerated Declaration of Independence, and it is unsurprising to find that Pauncefote, never one to be shy about his achievements, included this clipping in his despatches to Salisbury. Of the British newspapers, it was *The Daily Chronicle* that was the most fulsome in its praise for the arbitration treaty, and Pauncefote in particular, saying:

We must not lose a moment in congratulating Sir Julian Pauncefote on his splendid work. Seldom has any diplomatist had a task which made sterner demands upon all the resources of his art; never has a diplomatist faced difficulties and overcome them with greater skill and persistence. The British people owe him their heartfelt thanks, and we hope that the first occasion will be taken to mark Her Majesty's approval of his conduct. ... With a half convinced Minister on this side, and total popular ignorance of the stages of discussion, more could not have been expected. ...Great Britain and the United States thus present to the civilised world the inspiring example of the greatest effort ever made since the world began to inaugurate the reign of universal peace.³⁰

The Times commented that 'It is ... agreed on all hands that as between Sir Julian Pauncefote and Mr. Olney, this agreement has been a labour of love.' However, it was somewhat more cautious in its praise for the treaty itself, saying:

We must not be too hasty in supposing that, even if the treaty is ratified, it will bring us back straightway to the Golden Age. But if it reduces the occasions of conflict between the two kindred nations and tends to smooth over such controversies as are inevitable, it will deserve all that President Cleveland has said in its praise.³¹

Despite these caveats, the paper nonetheless described the treaty as a 'remarkable and most gratifying achievement.'

It was not just the press that had become enthused with the idea of the treaty. A private letter from Henry White to Richard Olney shows how both Salisbury and

³⁰ *The Daily Chronicle*, 12 Jan. 1897.

³¹ *The Times*, 12 Jan. 1897.

Gladstone, both usually sceptical about arbitration had apparently been won over to the idea. White wrote to Olney:

Pray accept my hearty congratulations upon the future success which has attended your earnest and able efforts in behalf of arbitration between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, or rather the two greatest countries of the world.

...I saw Lady Salisbury ... the day before yesterday and she told me that Lord Salisbury had taken the deepest (interest) in the matter and had, as she expressed it, "worked like a nigger" over it...

Mr. Gladstone ... also referred with satisfaction to the treaty ... I think the treaty as good as it is possible for such an instrument to be; much better than I ever believed possible; and I have no doubt, in view of the growing unwillingness of either country to resort to war, that it will be a potent weapon for the settlement of disputes ... Mr. Gladstone concurred with me in that view, although he is evidently not a believer in any great results from international arbitration or rather has not been until now.³²

With such backing, Pauncefote looked with optimism on the prospects for successful ratification of the treaty, writing to Salisbury: 'the United States Press on the whole, view the Treaty with favour, and as far as I can learn, no senator or person of note has publicly declared himself opposed to it.'³³ It may have been true that the treaty was not being publicly opposed at this stage, but papers such as the New York based *Evening Post* were warning that 'the Washington correspondents continue to report ominous things about the Senate's attitude towards the arbitration treaty. Few senators openly oppose ratification, but there is evidently much carping and prophecy of failure leaking from them in private.'³⁴ Similarly, as Nelson M. Blake has pointed out, there were also several newspapers that attacked the treaty.³⁵ At this stage, however, Pauncefote was still writing to Salisbury that 'the accounts in the press of the difficulties in the way of its ratification are grossly exaggerated.'³⁶

³² White to Olney, 13 Jan. 1897, LOC, Olney Papers, reel 25.

³³ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 18 Jan. 1897, PRO, FO5/2320.

³⁴ *The Evening Post*, 15 Jan. 1897.

³⁵ Blake, 'Olney-Pauncefote,' p. 238.

³⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 5 Feb. 1897, Salisbury papers. vol.139, f.158.

It was not long though, before Pauncefote began to realise that the concerns over opposition in the Senate might be more than a chimera, and his correspondence reflects a growing realisation of this. However, as with other affairs, such as the Venezuela dispute, the fact that he did not pick up on this mood until such a late stage again suggests that his political antennae were not as highly tuned as they might have been. In his letters to Sir William Harcourt, Pauncefote made both his anxieties and his (perhaps naïve) optimism clear, writing:

I hope you approve of the general Arbitration treaty ... there are 90 senators and I cannot believe that there can be 31 among them with souls so base as to oppose its ratification. If so, they will be denounced by the President from the Pulpit, and by the country in general.³⁷

Writing to Salisbury, he could not resist another condescending swipe at the ‘silly objections raised by the Jingoers ... which disturb the untutored minds of senators’³⁸ and in a more anxious private letter to James Bryce, in which he thanked Bryce for his congratulations on the conclusion of Treaty of Arbitration he went on to say:

I wish I could say “conclusion” in every sense. But at the present moment the heathen do furiously rage in the Senate, especially my old friend Senator Morgan of Alabama who is like a mad buffalo after his defeat on the Nicaragua Canal Bill. The US after posing so long as the pioneers and champions of arbitration will hardly allow the Senate to humiliate the nation in the eyes of the civilized world by rejecting the Treaty. They will probably injure it by amendments but I hope we shall be able to accept it in its damaged form sooner than abandon it. Olney tells me that a simple majority suffices to reject the proposed amendments. I hope therefore that the Senate will reject them, and that the final issue will be to accept or decline the treaty as it stands³⁹

³⁷ Pauncefote to Harcourt, 19 Jan. 1897, Harcourt papers, MSS Harcourt Dep.232, f.17.

³⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 22 Jan 1897, Salisbury papers, vol.139, f.155.

³⁹ Pauncefote to Bryce, 9 Feb. 1897, Bryce Papers, MS Bryce 116, ff. 174 -175.

And, in a similar vein, on 12 February 1897, he wrote to Salisbury that ‘The principal opponent of the treaty has been Senator Morgan who maintained that it would deprive the Senate of the treaty making powers devolved upon it by the constitution.’⁴⁰ In another letter to Harcourt, he elaborated on why he thought such opposition persisted:

The Senate jingoes were fortunately unable to lay their clutches on the Anglo-Venezuelan treaty, but they are doing their worst out of pure “cussedness” to spoil the arbitration treaty and will probably succeed in postponing the vote upon it until next session. No objection to it has yet been put forward that will hold water and every amendment proposed is quite unnecessary or positively mischievous. The rage against Olney on the foreign relations Committee for thwarting their Cuban resolution is unlimited and there is no knowing what they will do out of spite.⁴¹

But, despite delays caused by his old foe Morgan and others, Pauncefote was still hopeful about the eventual prospects for the treaty. He wrote to Salisbury on 24 February 1897, saying: ‘... Mr Olney is of opinion that the prospect of its being ratified without injurious amendments is much better than were it to be considered in the present session.’⁴² And he again put his faith in Olney when he wrote to Salisbury a couple of weeks later, reporting that Olney was now out of office ‘... but will return later on to assist in getting the Arbitration Treaty passed without very injurious amendments.’⁴³ The British ambassador was given a further boost when, on 5 March 1897, he reported on McKinley’s inaugural address, in which the President said that ‘the importance and moral influence of the ratification of such a treaty can hardly be overestimated in the course of advancing civilisation ... We want not wars of conquest; we must avoid the temptation of territorial aggression.’⁴⁴ The rising politician,

⁴⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 12 Feb. 1897, PRO, FO5/2320.

⁴¹ Pauncefote to Harcourt, 16. Feb. 1897 Harcourt papers, MSS Harcourt Dep.232, f.41.

⁴² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 24 Feb. 1897, PRO, FO80/380.

⁴³ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 9 March 1897, PRO, FO80/380.

⁴⁴ ‘Arbitration with Great Britain’, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, *Senate Documents*, no. 161 (Washington DC, 1897) pp. 33.

Theodore Roosevelt also added his stamp of approval, commenting to Henry White that: 'I am glad McKinley came out so strongly for the Arbitration Treaty.'⁴⁵

But, despite the backing of Cleveland, Olney, and now McKinley, Pauncefote was accurate in his description of the potentially ruinous tensions between the administration and Congress. Olney's own disapproval of Congress spilled over in a letter to the US minister at St. Petersburg, Clifton Breckinbridge, in which he wrote:

Your comments on the reckless and unintelligent action of Congress respecting our foreign affairs are none too severe. The injurious influence of such action upon the public men of every foreign power with whom we have any relations I fully appreciate. Yet until the people of the United States send better and more discreet men to Congress it is difficult to see what effective remedy can be applied ... the marked disfavour with which the Senate are apt to regard any challenge of their right to be the controlling factor in the matter of our foreign relations.⁴⁶

Whatever Olney may have thought of them, the issue of control over foreign policy, was the key to why so many members of Congress objected to the treaty. Indeed, those who objected to it made a virtue out of the US system of government, compared to the British system of foreign policy making, writing in a report to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations:

This situation brings out the fact, with startling significance, that in making this treaty we are dealing only with the royal and titled classes of Great Britain, and in every step we are to take under it only the will of those classes is to be consulted and only their policies will be permitted to control while speaking in the name of the British people, do not consult them in any diplomatic affairs, and conduct foreign intercourse without their knowledge.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Roosevelt to White, 11 March 1897, LOC, White papers, box 28.

⁴⁶ Olney to Breckinbridge, 25 Jan. 1897, LOC, Olney Papers, reel 26.

⁴⁷ R.Q. Mills and John T. Morgan, 18 March 1897, 'Compilation of Reports of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *US Senate, 1789-1901, Vol. VIII*, pp.417-418.

This comment strikes at the heart of the tension in Anglo-American relations in this period. Whilst the political and diplomatic elite on both sides of the Atlantic may have viewed Congressional power over foreign policy as a nuisance, it was, for better or worse, a more democratic system than the British. The accusation that British foreign policy was conducted without consultation rang true. For twelve years policy towards the United States was conducted largely by an unelected peer (Salisbury) and a diplomat (Pauncefote) who by the end of his term of office was staggering under the weight of titles conferred upon him. The queen and cabinet colleagues were consulted when the occasion demanded, but the formulation and direction of policy was left largely in the hands of two men who were not usually compelled to answer to Parliament for their actions, although parliamentary approval was sometimes needed to ratify treaties. Pauncefote appears to have had great difficulty in allowing for the different circumstances in the United States, and his initiatives seem to have foundered on several occasions because of this.

By 24 March 1897 the Senate had ‘largely emasculated’ the treaty, by injurious amendments, and on 5 May 1897, Olney and Pauncefote’s worst fears were realised, when the agreement was finally rejected by that body.⁴⁸ It failed ratification by three votes, even in a heavily amended form, which amongst other things would have required Senate approval of which matters went to arbitration. This would have totally undermined its comprehensive objective.⁴⁹ In the United States, less so in Britain, public controversy raged for a time on why and whether the treaty should have been defeated. A prominent group amongst opponents of the agreement were the ‘silverites’ (opponents of the gold standard) who opposed more cordial ties with Great Britain.⁵⁰ Once the initial attempt at such a treaty was dead, Pauncefote sent Salisbury a long despatch outlining the reasons he believed it had failed. At the same time, he put up a staunch defence of its merits, and enlisted public opinion (which on other occasions he said was so ill-informed) to its support, writing:

⁴⁸ Blake, ‘Olney-Pauncefote,’ p.240.

⁴⁹ Mills and Morgan, ‘Compilation,’ p.389.

⁵⁰ Blake, ‘Olney–Pauncefote,’ pp. 240-243.

The treaty as it originally stood provided a permanent and automatic system of arbitration ... it defined the questions coming within its scope. It provided the necessary machinery for carrying out the great object of the treaty in all classes of cases. It afforded every guarantee for the attainment of just and impartial awards. It is not surprising therefore that it was received with acclamation all over the country and endorsed by two successive presidents. But the Senate in its jealousy of the executive absolutely disregarded public opinion. It determined to retain absolute control over every case of arbitration, and for that purpose to destroy the treaty by amendments which would reduce it to a mere agreement to arbitrate any dispute, provided it be with the consent of the Senate and on such terms the Senate might choose to prescribe.⁵¹

Despite the rejection by Congress, Pauncefote's hopes were again raised in May 1897, when he wrote to Salisbury that the US government was proposing a new treaty of arbitration, saying that 'they are of the opinion that the Senate would immediately ratify this, and I am inclined to believe that it will be acceptable to your Lordship ... being the nearest approach to the object in view now obtainable.'

Also on 24 May 1897, he analysed more carefully the reasons why the treaty had been rejected:

1. That it tended to dispose of all cases automatically without the Senate being allowed to participate further in them.
2. That questions involving territorial integrity, national honor, and vital political interests were not reserved from compulsory arbitration.
3. That a special bond of union between the two countries as distinguished from all other nations appeared to some to have been created.⁵²

Pauncefote evidently felt if these objections could be addressed, then there was a real chance of success for a new treaty, albeit a watered down one. However, Salisbury was less convinced, and sent Pauncefote back his sober assessment saying that he did not think it worth embarking on a another attempt unless the US government

⁵¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 7 May 1897, PRO, FO80/381.

⁵² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 24 May 1897, PRO, FO80/381.

thought the Senate would accept it.⁵³ On the US side, Olney, though now out of office, put forward his views on the matter in similar fashion, and was evidently anxious about Pauncefote's over-enthusiasm for the project, writing:

That I should be glad to see a general treaty of arbitration between the United States and Great Britain negotiated by the executive goes without saying. At the same time I am clear that Sir Julian makes a tactical mistake in endeavouring to have such a treaty considered at this time – no matter how general or indefinite its provision may be ... the Senate is weary of the subject and would necessarily resent being called upon to consider it again so soon. No treaty that Sir Julian can frame can amount to less than the treaty as amended in the Senate and then rejected. No doubt the present Secretary of State would like to have a treaty consummated. But if Sir Julian is acting upon Secretary Sherman's wishes or assurances in the matter, he is sure to find himself both mistaken and deluded in the end. For the ultimate triumph of arbitration, it is better not to have a second defeat of a treaty at this time. I do not desire to send any message to Sir Julian on the subject. But if you have any conversation with him and the topic comes up naturally, I have no objection to your stating my view of the matter.⁵⁴

But although he thought it would be a mistake to reintroduce the treaty at this stage, Olney was clearly as upset by the loss of the treaty as Pauncefote was, describing its rejection as 'a calamity, not merely of national but of world-wide proportions,'⁵⁵ and writing to Henry White:

The defeat of the General Arbitration Treaty by the Senate is a source to me - as no doubt to you - of infinite disappointment and chagrin. The country, of whose every act and attitude you and I would always like to be proud, seems to me to have been placed in a most humiliating and mortifying position.

There are some of your English friends ... who will be greatly astonished at the unfortunate outcome and who will doubtless be calling upon you for explanations ... I do not want them to feel either that the American people are blind and insensate haters

⁵³ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 3 June, 1897, PRO, FO80/382.

⁵⁴ Olney to W. W. Rockhill, 18 May 1897, LOC Olney papers, reel 28.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.171.

of England or that general arbitration between the two great English speaking countries is a lost cause.⁵⁶

The New York Herald shared this view, commenting that

The Senate is ... responsible for putting Great Britain in a position of humiliation and embarrassment by contemptuously kicking from its doors a treaty which, as finally drawn, went much further than Great Britain was at first willing to go ... the result cannot but be disadvantageous to the United States in our future relations not only with Great Britain, but with every other nation ... Its rejection may be attributed to the jingo spirit which characterises the doings of the Senate ...⁵⁷

By now, Pauncefote was beginning to realise that the chances for achieving any kind of treaty in the near future were diminishing. On 4 June 1897, he wrote to Salisbury enclosing a letter from the Secretary of State, John Sherman, saying that he would have liked to sign the treaty now, but could not submit it to Congress until September – thus effectively putting it on the back burner of political priorities. Confirming this, on 18 October 1897, Pauncefote sent Salisbury a newspaper cutting that indicated that prospects for a treaty were now all but dead, and were made worse by other Anglo-American matters, it stated that

Unless the British Foreign Office presses the negotiations in connection with a general arbitration treaty, State Department officials assure me, the matter will not again be taken up by this government ... The authorities are apparently much chagrined over England's action in the Bering Sea matter ... the negotiations of a general arbitration treaty might be considered by Canadians as indicative of a desire of the Salisbury government to play into the hands of the United States.⁵⁸

The treaty was not to be revived during Pauncefote's time as ambassador, although the topic of the United States' isolation from international affairs, which

⁵⁶ Olney to White, 8 May 1897, LOC, Olney papers, reel 28.

⁵⁷ *The New York Herald*, 6 May, 1897.

⁵⁸ Untitled newspaper extract 18 Oct. 1897, included in despatch from Pauncefote to Salisbury, PRO, FO 80/383.

Congress was so keen to preserve, remained a relevant one. In an article in *Atlantic Monthly*, in 1898, which Pauncefote brought approvingly to the attention of Salisbury, Richard Olney bemoaned US isolationism, in terms that still resonate in the twenty first century, saying: 'A nation is as much a member of society as an individual. Its membership ... involves duties which call for something more than mere abstentions from violations of positive law.' And, in a passage that alluded to the arbitration treaty he said:

... the English and American peoples, both by precept and example have done more during the last century to do away with war and to substitute peaceful and civilized methods of settling international controversies, than all the other nations of the world combined have done during all the world's history. It is not too much to hope, let us trust, that the near future will show them making even more marked advances in the same direction ...⁵⁹

However, such prospects were of little comfort to Pauncefote, who had once again suffered a setback at the hands of the US Senate. The US journalist, G.W. Smalley described the personal impact of the rejection of the arbitration treaty upon Pauncefote in dramatic terms: he considered that '... from the final blow struck by the Senate, a blow below the belt, Lord Pauncefote never recovered. It shattered his most cherished ideals. It shortened his life.'⁶⁰ It is difficult to assess precisely whether the claim that the rejection of the treaty 'shortened Pauncefote's life' is an exaggeration. Pauncefote had suffered from health problems (gout in particular) well before the rejection of the treaty, and he lived an active life for another five years. Similar claims were made about the effects on him of the controversy surrounding his actions in the run-up to the Spanish-American War. These have more force, since he died within weeks of the controversy surfacing in 1902. Nevertheless, it is certainly hard to disagree with Smalley's contention that the failure of the treaty was a blow to Pauncefote's most cherished ideals. This also explains why he was evidently so proud

⁵⁹ Richard Olney, 'International Isolation of the United States,' *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 81, No.487 (May 1898).

⁶⁰ Smalley, *Memories*, p.177.

of the scheme for a permanent court of arbitration that he was later to initiate at the Hague Peace Conference – it was to prove, in effect, a consolation for his earlier defeat.

In reviewing the arbitration treaty failure, Smalley also touched on the important issue that has received little attention from historians of the period. He acknowledged that Pauncefote ‘...was to a certain extent personally unpopular with senators,’ would do nothing to win their favour, and that they resented his ‘friendly independence.’ Crucially, Smalley added that ‘... they created an atmosphere in that august chamber the breathing of which did not make for the easy ratification of treaties which bore Lord P.’s signature.’⁶¹ Bradford Perkins also commented that Pauncefote ‘made little effort to improve American opinion, even senatorial opinion.’⁶² As emphasised throughout this study, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Smalley’s assessment was an accurate one, and this lack of rapport with Congress was something of an Achilles heel in Pauncefote’s diplomacy.

Thus, the high hopes for success, and the subsequent failure, of this treaty clearly illustrate Pauncefote’s aspirations, successes and failures as a diplomat throughout his time in Washington. The drafting of such a treaty fitted perfectly both with his desire for permanently cordial Anglo-American relations, and his love of applying the legal process to problems the two countries faced. The fact that the treaty was smoothly formulated bears witness both to his relatively good working relationship with Richard Olney, and his influence over Lord Salisbury, who was not initially enthusiastic about such a wide ranging agreement. That the potential achievement chimed very much with the popular opinion of the time (or at least the opinion of much of the establishment) is evident from the great enthusiasm expressed by newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic.

However, the subsequent failure of the treaty exposed the limitations of what Pauncefote could hope to achieve, despite casting himself in the role of conciliator.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p.178.

⁶² Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.13.

Congress's rejection of the treaty highlighted the gulf between the diplomatic and political elite, and the will of the people, as expressed through the legislature. It is here that Pauncefote's 'success' can clearly be seen to have had its limits. In his defence it could be argued that he could hardly be held solely responsible for the failure of the treaty. He was after all, merely the diplomatic representative of Her Majesty's Government; and if the combined forces of the President of the United States and its Secretary of State could not bring their influence to bear on Congress, then he could hardly be expected to sway the vote himself. The concept of wide ranging arbitration was also opposed by such prominent figures as Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge and Alfred Mahan.⁶³ Given these obstacles, the task of gaining approval for such a treaty may have been beyond even the most Machiavellian of diplomats. Nevertheless, the control of Congress over foreign policy was something that Pauncefote had showed contempt for throughout his time in Washington. This attitude was not only clearly revealed in his private letters home, but also more publicly, in his spat with Senator Morgan over the Bering Sea affair. Pauncefote appears to have believed – perhaps understandably for a man of his background and era – that foreign policy making should remain firmly in the hands of the elite circle to which he belonged. Because of this, the issue of arbitration, which was one that was to be the common thread throughout the major Anglo-American disputes of the 1890s was one that senators such as John Tyler Morgan were allowed to take issue against, without an effective public counterfoil on the British side. The senator was therefore able to depict the Bering Sea judgement as grossly unfair, and thus colour the popular view of arbitration, thereby reducing the chances of such an agreement as the Olney-Pauncefote treaty succeeding. Pauncefote's response to this seems to have been a blinkered one - he did not adapt to meet the needs of the US political scene, but continued to put his faith in the small group of policy makers with whom he had to be directly involved. He also took pride in the fact that he did not give newspaper interviews, wary of being misquoted by the US press, and also, no doubt mindful of the fact that his predecessor had lost his job because of newspaper 'entrapment'. However, a more tactful and open approach to putting across the benefits of arbitration schemes both with senators and

⁶³ J. P. Campbell, 'Taft,' p. 287.

the press certainly could not have harmed his cause, bearing in mind the narrowness of the vote by which the arbitration treaty was rejected.

This episode therefore served to underline one of his biggest failings as ambassador, which was a tendency to rail against, rather than attempt to work with, the realities of the US political system. His 'modus operandi' worked very well at the British end, a close relationship with the Foreign Secretary was really all that was required to achieve influence. However, the US political situation was a more complex one than that – a fact that he apparently understood, but to which he refused to adjust. The benefits of approaching politics differently in the United States was neatly summed up in a letter by the traveller and writer Moreton Frewen to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, in 1901, when he wrote, recalling the words of James Blaine: '... at Westminster the personal factor is nothing, here it is everything, and that remains true ...' and in the same letter, recalling a conversation with Theodore Roosevelt, he wrote: 'he told me last year that the only diplomat of ours who had ever made a study of the pawns and the pieces of Washington was "Mungo" [Michael] Herbert....'⁶⁴ This view fits in with the implication that had Pauncefote spent more time courting the key players in Congress, he might have achieved greater success.

The First Hague Peace Conference

Whilst the failure of the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty was a severe blow to Pauncefote's pride, he viewed the agreement reached at the First Hague Peace Conference as one of the proudest achievements of his career. Indeed R.B. Mowat, went as far as saying that he 'took peace to be the only object of his life' and that 'a close study of arbitration and its possibilities for removing the causes of war was one of the chief interests of his last years.'⁶⁵ He was, without doubt, at the vanguard of the major lasting achievement of the Hague Conference, that of the setting up a permanent court of arbitration, something

⁶⁴ Frewen to Lansdowne, 16 Sep. 1901, Balfour papers, 49727, fos. 155-158.

⁶⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.302.

with which the US delegation fully concurred. It is also significant in that it represented the logical continuation of a theme he had held fast to, despite the demise of the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty, and was fully consistent with his views on using legal means peacefully to address international disputes. Indeed, *The Times* Washington correspondent later drew attention to this connection, commenting that

The cause of international arbitration was one which he had specially at heart ... The rejection of the Anglo-American Treaty by the United States Senate had, in fact merely stimulated his anxiety to secure as far as possible by a general agreement between the Powers generally the pacific purpose he had failed to achieve by direct negotiation with America.⁶⁶

As with the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty, contemporaries saw the achievement as a more significant one than recent historians have given it credit for. In a recent study, Richard Langhorne described the permanent court as dealing with ‘generally insignificant’ disputes, but noted that its rules ‘remain the basis upon which international arbitrations are conducted.’⁶⁷ Indeed, its legacy was a durable one, since, in evolving forms, the permanent court of arbitration continued in the League of Nations and was revived in 1976 in the United Nations. It is still a working institution today, and according to David D. Caron it ‘... has enjoyed a structural renaissance over the past decade and has positioned itself to be an important jurisdictional complement to its younger sister, the International Court of Justice.’⁶⁸

Whilst the prospects for the Hague Peace Conference were not seen as great at the time, Pauncefote’s intervention and proposal for the international tribunal was seen by several observers and witnesses as the turning point in an otherwise fairly fruitless meeting. Indeed, the secretary of the US delegation, Frederic Holls, was full of praise for Pauncefote’s actions, as were the leading peace advocate Andrew Carnegie, and the

⁶⁶ *The Times*, 26 May, 1902, p.6.

⁶⁷ Langhorne, ‘Arbitration,’ p.45.

⁶⁸ David D Caron, ‘War and International Adjudication: Reflections on the 1899 Peace Conference,’ *American Journal of International Law*, 94:1 (Jan. 2000), p. 24.

US ambassador at London, Joseph Choate. Thus, Pauncefote's actions at the Hague did, even if indirectly, have a positive influence on Anglo-American relations. Happily for him, unlike the earlier arbitration treaty, this agreement *was* ratified by Congress - presumably the voluntary aspect of it was what made it palatable to a body that was reluctant to give up its control over foreign policy.

The achievement can therefore be seen as a genuinely practical one and one of which Pauncefote was justifiably proud, and accordingly received praise from politicians and newspapers alike. However, the extent to which a similar agreement would have been reached without his proposal is arguable - both the Americans and the Russians subsequently tabled similar schemes - although the Germans were notably not so enamoured of the project. As Denys P. Myers wrote in 1914, 'for all practical purposes' ideas for the scheme can be said to have originated simultaneously in Russia Great Britain and the United States.⁶⁹ The scheme therefore cannot be ascribed to Pauncefote alone, but its successful birth undoubtedly illustrated his diplomatic skills, and the skills of an accomplished legal draftsman. It also showed how he was in line with the fashionable thinking of his time. As R. B. Mowat observed, Pauncefote was one of 'hundreds' of people '... working in the last ten years of the nineteenth century to substitute a rule of law for a rule of force between states.'⁷⁰ The challenge he and others faced at gatherings such as the Hague was to put concrete measures into place that would not just be dismissed as idealism that was divorced from the *Realpolitik* of their political masters.

That Salisbury took the conference seriously was demonstrated in a despatch to Pauncefote, written in March 1899, discussing the purposes of the conference, in which he said that he intended to send a 'diplomatist of high standing' to the Hague.⁷¹ Of course, that 'diplomatist' turned out to be Pauncefote. Salisbury underlined his

⁶⁹ Myers, 'Hague,' p.770.

⁷⁰ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.151.

⁷¹ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 10 March 1899, PRO, FO83/16899.

commitment to the conference, and belief in Pauncefote's abilities, when in May 1899, in his instructions to Pauncefote, he wrote:

With regard to the question of making the employment of mediation or arbitration more general and effective for the settlement of international disputes, it is unnecessary for me to say that it is a matter to which Her Majesty's Government attach the highest importance, and which they are desirous of furthering by every means in their power. During the negotiations which your excellency has conducted at Washington for the conclusion of a treaty of general arbitration between this country and the United States, you were placed in full possession of the views of Her Majesty's Government on this subject. Those views have further received practical application in the conclusion of a treaty, also negotiated by your excellency, for the submission to arbitration of the disputed question of the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela. The success with which you conducted both these negotiations induces Her Majesty's government to feel sanguine that on the present occasion your efforts may be equally productive of good result.⁷²

Once the conference was underway, it was Pauncefote who put first forward the proposal for the establishment of a Permanent International Tribunal of Arbitration, even though others, including the United States and Russia were ready with their own schemes. Barbara Tuchman described Pauncefote as 'the outstanding champion of the idea in official life.'⁷³ Pauncefote's version of events was that

... several Powers, including Russia herself, were quite willing to entertain a proposal for the establishment of such a tribunal, but that none of them were inclined to be the first to introduce the subject. The President, immediately after laying the Russian project before the convention, invited observations from any delegates who might desire to put forward any projects of their own, and he appealed to me for any remarks I might have to make on the subject of arbitration.⁷⁴

⁷² Salisbury to Pauncefote, 16 May 1899, quoted in Myers, 'Hague,' p.773.

⁷³ Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War, 1890-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.253.

⁷⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 28 May 1899, quoted in Myers, 'Hague,' p. 775.

Pauncefote then went on to make his proposal. Frederick Holls commented on how the British ambassador's speech on a Permanent Court

... struck the keynote of subsequent discussions ... It was the right word, said at the right time, and marked a turning point in the history of the Conference ... There can be no doubt that the establishment of a permanent court of arbitration satisfies one of the most profound aspirations of civilized peoples.⁷⁵

Demonstrating that the US and British delegations were largely in accord on the issue, Pauncefote wrote to Salisbury:

I may mention that the United States Delegates were instructed to present a project of International Tribunal not dissimilar to mine, in some respects though hampered with provisions relating to procedure ... It will be laid before the Commission, but I am informed by my American colleagues that in view of the altered circumstances of the case they will not press it but support my proposal instead.⁷⁶

At the same time, the leader of the US delegation, Andrew White, was writing in his diary:

I ... find that Sir Julian Pauncefote's arbitration projects has admirable points ... from a theoretical point of view, I prefer this to our American plan of a tribunal permanently in session ... During the morning Sir Julian came in and talked over our plan of arbitration as well as his own and that submitted by Russia. He said that he had seen M. de Staal, and that it was agreed between them that the latter should send Sir Julian, at the first moment possible, an amalgamation of the Russian and British plans, and this Sir Julian promised that he would bring to us, giving us a chance to insert any features from our own plan which, in our judgement, might be important. He seemed much encouraged as we all are.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Holls, *Peace Conference*, p.237.

⁷⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 30 May 1899, PRO, FO83/1695.

⁷⁷ Andrew White, 1 June 1899, diary entry, quoted in Myers, 'Hague,' pp. 784-785.

That Lord Salisbury was fully behind the proposal was made clear in a memo from the Prime Minister to Sanderson, permanent under secretary at the Foreign Office, in which he wrote: '... approve entirely - say that his proposal is entirely in accordance with the general views of HMG and which have been on more than one occasion expressed. The particular scheme is judicious and has been skilfully put forward.'⁷⁸ And on 5 June Pauncefote could report back to Salisbury:

I am glad to be able to report that the project which I laid before the Committee ... has met with general concurrence, although amendments will be offered by the delegates of Russia and of the United States who have also presented projects for a Permanent tribunal.

The British project, however, having been first announced and first presented and being the most acceptable, will be taken as the basis of the deliberations of the committee.⁷⁹

Ten days later, Pauncefote was claiming even greater success for his scheme, especially as far as the Americans were concerned, writing to Salisbury:

Mr. White himself and the other American Delegates expressed at once in the strongest terms their entire approval of my proposal, and I have since been informed that it has met with the concurrence of all those present at the private meeting, and even of Count Munster, the First Delegate of Germany, who has hitherto been considered as hostile to every scheme for the organisation of a Permanent Tribunal.⁸⁰

And in his final assessment of the achievements of the conference, Pauncefote obviously took great pride in his achievements, writing:

Many of the Delegates assembled at the Hague entered upon their duties with the conviction that nothing practical would come of their labours and the mission would end in the expression of benevolent sentiments and of pious hopes for the preservation of peace. But before they had been at work a fortnight, a remarkable change came over

⁷⁸ Salisbury to Sanderson, 30 May 1899, PRO, FO83/1695.

⁷⁹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 5 June 1899, PRO, FO83/1695.

⁸⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 15 June 1899, PRO, FO83/1695.

the spirit of the Conference, and it was discovered that with a little goodwill it would be possible to arrive at a common understanding on some of the questions propounded by the Circular of Count Mouravieff and which continue to agitate the civilized world ... in the brief space of two months a great international work has been accomplished fraught with the highest promise for the advancement of civilization and the good of mankind ... Its most striking and novel feature is the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Arbitration, which has so long been the dream of the advocates of peace, destined apparently until now, never to be realised.⁸¹

Whilst Pauncefote was characteristically immodest in assessing his own achievements, his actions at the Hague did win praise from several other quarters. On the British side, Lord Salisbury, not known for being over generous in giving out personal compliments, congratulated Pauncefote '... on the considerable success of the Conference, so largely due to your efforts.' Likewise, Pauncefote's colleague on the British delegation, Sir John Ardagh wrote a private letter to James Gown that fully approved of the British ambassador's work, noting that

... the Peace Conference has not evolved the conclusions which the utopian fanatics of the world believed to be inevitable, but it has done much good work in dissipating unrealisable conceptions, and in putting those which appeared to be practically attainable in a concrete form. The construction of a Code of Arbitration, and the creation of a central international bureau and tribunal, to which disputants can resort is in itself a monumental work. Its evolution is in the main due to the experience, the skill and the moderation of Sir Julian Pauncefote, and a great degree also to the United States Delegates. The result would have been more complete but for the opposition of some of the European powers, but on the whole it is perhaps more than was hoped for or anticipated.⁸²

Pauncefote also received praise from Count Mouravieff, the Russian foreign minister. This was particularly significant, since it was the Russians who had called for the conference in the first place. Charles Scott, British ambassador at St. Petersburg wrote to Salisbury saying that the count was 'more than satisfied' with the progress of

⁸¹ Pauncefote and Henry Howard to Salisbury, 31 July 1899, PRO, FO83/169.

⁸² Ardagh to Gown, 29 July 1899, Ardagh Papers, PRO30/40/3.

the peace conference and that ‘...the conference was mainly indebted to the experience and very able and effective assistance of Sir Julian Pauncefote of whom His Excellency spoke in terms of high praise.’⁸³

Pauncefote’s actions received similar praise from leading advocates of peace diplomacy in the United States, and it is in this respect that his role in the Hague Conference should be seen as a further positive contribution to Anglo-American relations. Andrew Carnegie, for example, described the achievement thus:

The action of the first Hague Conference gave me intense joy. Called primarily to consider disarmament (which proved a dream), it created the commanding reality of a permanent tribunal to settle international disputes. I saw in this the greatest step toward peace that humanity had ever taken, and taken as if by inspiration, without much previous discussion. No wonder the sublime idea captivated the conference.⁸⁴

Joseph Choate, who was US ambassador to Britain at the time of the conference, spoke in similarly glowing terms, describing the establishment of the International Court of Arbitration as ‘the greatest achievement’ of the First Hague Conference, and commented that

... one is not surprised to learn that the honor of introducing the plan of such a court in the Conference happily belongs to the late Lord Pauncefote, who did so much for the maintenance of friendly relations between his country and ours during his long term as Ambassador at Washington.⁸⁵

Writing fifteen years after the event, Denys P. Myers, an American legal scholar, came to the conclusion that

Sir Julian Pauncefote’s [proposal] was the most advanced ... The British proposal in effect presented to the Conference what it ought to do and threw the burden of proof

⁸³ Scott to Salisbury, 24 July 1899, PRO, FO83/7101.

⁸⁴ Andrew Carnegie, *Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie* (Boston, NE University Press, 1920, 1986 edn.), pp.271-272.

⁸⁵ Choate, *Conferences*, p.35.

as to the failure to do it on the Conference; the other two started on the assumption that the world was ready only for a mincing step, and tried to disguise the motion involved in taking it.⁸⁶

Since the momentum for a permanent court of arbitration came first from the Americans, Pauncefote's actions can only have enhanced his reputation when he returned to Washington, and thus indirectly helped to improve Anglo-American relations. This is especially relevant in terms of future developments, when considering that other powers, most notably the Germans, raised objections to the plans. This fact did not escape the *The Times*, which commented in its leading article that

... an incidental, but very important result of the proceedings at the conference has been the establishment of still kinder relations between the two great English speaking powers than those which we rejoice to say had come into existence, in no small degree owing to Sir Julian Pauncefote's influence and exertions, a considerable time before.⁸⁷

The Manchester Guardian, which was always likely to be sympathetic to such a project, was nonetheless glowing in its assessment of what had been achieved at the Hague, saying:

The project as a whole is a conclusive answer to those who pretend, in the teeth of all the evidence, that the conference has achieved nothing or that it has disappointed the ardent hopes of the friends of peace throughout the world. Judging from the opinions of the most intelligent advocates of peace, the arbitration scheme far transcends the utmost expectations. It provides for almost every kind of international dispute, and gives international sanction to every pacific means for averting war and re-establishing peaceful relations between nations. Russia, England and America have played a leading part in creating this great instrument for securing international peace.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Myers, 'Hague,' p. 789.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, Aug. 1 1899, extract from PRO30/40/15.

⁸⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 July 1899, extract from PRO30/40/15.

The fact that the negotiations were successful was also significant for another reason, as Holls pointed out: ‘This is the first occasion upon which the United States of America takes part under circumstances so momentous in the deliberations of the states of Europe.’⁸⁹ In doing so, the United States had found itself working in concert with Great Britain, Russia and France, and against the wishes of Germany, apparently fearing the machinations of arbitration would work against its initial military advantage in any future conflict, because it mitigated against rapid mobilisation.⁹⁰ Indeed, at one stage Pauncefote had suspected that the German Emperor was actively trying to persuade the Austrians to join him in blocking an agreement.⁹¹ In this way the stage was set for the conflict of fifteen years later. Reflecting this was Kaiser’s Wilhelm’s pithy comment on proceedings, insisting that he had participated ‘... only that the Tsar should not lose face before Europe ... In practice however I shall rely on God and my sharp sword. And I shit on their decisions.’⁹²

It was because of his role in the peace conference that Pauncefote was raised to the peerage, and received congratulations from the Secretary of State, John Hay, in a private letter that again emphasised good Anglo-American relations:

I am so far away that I fear the whole world will have offered its congratulations before you receive this letter, but none will be more cordial, none will come more directly from the heart, than mine. Every new honour you receive from your Queen and your country but reminds us that the time is too rapidly approaching when you are to leave us. I can assure you that no diplomat has ever left us so widely, so universally regretted, as you will be ... my family join me in heartfelt congratulations to all of yours. All your honours have been nobly won, and they will be nobly worn.⁹³

⁸⁹ Holls, 9 June 1899, speaking to conference, quoted in Myers, ‘Hague,’ p.796.

⁹⁰ Lyons, *Internationalism*, p. 351.

⁹¹ Salisbury to Rumbold, 12 June 1899, in G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, vol. I (London: 1927-38), p.225..

⁹² Quoted in John Corry, *1898: Prelude to A Century* (New York: John A. Corry, 1998), p339.

⁹³ Hay to Pauncefote, 7 Aug. 1899, LOC, Pauncefote papers.

In reviewing this evidence, it would seem that C.S. Campbell's judgement that '... the Hague Conference did not constitute a particularly significant development for Anglo-American relations' pitches its significance too low.⁹⁴ Indeed, Campbell himself is somewhat ambivalent on this point, since he also commented that 'Americans and Britons were co-operating in a way their ancestors would have found incredible,' and concedes that 'their limited co-operation would have been improbable even a decade earlier.'⁹⁵ Whilst the British and Americans did not co-ordinate a joint approach to the conference, the fact that the Americans so warmly accepted Pauncefote's proposals can only have been of benefit to him on his return to Washington, and for the way in which the US would engage with Europe in future. However, in some senses it merely highlighted the fact that Pauncefote was most effective when working with a relatively small group of like-minded people. At the Hague he did not have Congressmen to deal with, and the fact that the scheme was a voluntary one meant that Congress was unlikely to veto the proposals. Thus, in terms of Anglo-American relations the achievement was something of a consolation for the loss of the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty, but did not contain the crucial element of compulsion that Congress so disliked.

In general terms, the First Hague Peace Conference still has its detractors (Michael Howard) as it did at the time (Balfour, for example saw such treaties as 'paper screens').⁹⁶ Such criticism does carry some weight - 1899, and the process it began, did not, after all, prevent the First World War - neither did the series of arbitration treaties that were later agreed by William Jennings Bryan.⁹⁷ Unless powers were willing to go to arbitration in the first place, there was little or nothing that a court of arbitration could do to prevent war. In essence, it suffered from the same weakness that the League of Nations faced, and the United Nations still faces: that unless decisions of such an international institution can be backed up by force, they are in danger of being

⁹⁴ C.S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.159.

⁹⁵ C. S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, pp.196-197.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Caron, *Reflections*, p.5

⁹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the legal process that was begun by the 1899 conference, see Caron, 'Reflections.'

perceived as worthless. Nevertheless, the Permanent Court of Arbitration has been used successfully many times to resolve (albeit relatively minor) disputes, and is still in existence. It can also be seen as a model for such institutions as the International Court of Justice. Also, as F.S.L. Lyons commented, the very fact that such a conference met in peacetime, and achieved something concrete can be considered as a 'remarkable advance,' as it showed that the peace movement 'had moved out of the hands of the amateur enthusiasts and into those of governments.'⁹⁸ Viewed in this context, the achievement of Pauncefote and others at the Hague should not be belittled, even if one wants to take issue with the effectiveness of the League of Nations or United Nations themselves. As David D. Caron points out in his study of the legacy of the 1899 Peace Conference, the participants in the 1899 conference were no more or less naïve than politicians today, and parallels can be drawn with recent negotiations on the international criminal court and the landmines convention.⁹⁹

Conclusion

In dealing with the issue of international arbitration, Pauncefote was at the forefront of an idea that was occupying the minds of many of the diplomatic elite of his era. In confronting failure at the hands of Congress over such an issue he was to be in good company - most famously, Congress's rejection of Woodrow Wilson's plan for the League of Nations. Pauncefote would not have been surprised by this event - indeed Senator Henry Cabot Lodge was to be as much a key part of the rejection of the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty as he was the League of Nations - and used much the same argument to reject it. Although admittedly speculative, this connection can be taken further. Had he lived to see it, it seems likely that in Woodrow Wilson's presidency, Pauncefote would have found an incumbent that he truly admired. A refined academic lawyer, with an unshakeable belief in international institutions as a way of resolving international disputes, would presumably have been the British ambassador's ideal president. Equally, Woodrow Wilson's (arguable) lack of tact in attempting to win over Congress was something that Pauncefote shared. In considering this angle, another reason

⁹⁸ Lyons, *Internationalism*, p. 354.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p.23

therefore emerges as to why reconsidering the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty and the First Hague Peace Conference is a worthwhile exercise. The debates that surrounded them, both in terms of their practical application, and the attitude of the US Congress towards them, foreshadowed those that were to rage on a larger scale after the First World War, and have a renewed resonance in 2002, when considering the US's cool attitude to several international agreements. Far from being irrelevant failures, the negotiations that Pauncefote was involved in during the 1890s form the beginning of an identifiable thread that continues in the shape of the 'internationalism' versus 'isolationism' arguments of today.

Chapter Six: Pauncefote and War: The Spanish-American War and the Second South African War

It is a very curious fact that the only power cordially friendly to us on this side of the water is England, and England is the one power which has most to dread from our growing power and prosperity. We are her most formidable rival, and the trade balances show a portentous leaning in our favour. But notwithstanding all this, the feeling here is more sympathetic and cordial than it has ever been.¹

John Hay, 19 July 1898.

Introduction

The events of the Spanish-American War and the Second South African War have been cited as making a major contribution to the *rapprochement* between Britain and the United States.² The 1898 war with Spain in particular has been viewed as something of a turning point in US attitudes towards Great Britain, partly because of Britain's benevolently neutral stance in the conflict, and partly because of the United States' tilt towards imperialism, with its intervention in Cuba and occupation of the Philippines. Several times during the war British authorities made decisions that aided the US war effort, for example in terms of intelligence gathering and hampering Spanish naval movements.³ As a consequence of this, and partly because the administration considered it to be in its own best interests, the United States adopted a similar approach to Great Britain during the Second South African War.⁴ Though important, it should, however, be emphasised that beneath the short-lived wartime expressions of affection, US politicians still maintained a hard-headed approach to defending their interests, as far as Britain was concerned.⁵ It has also been pointed out that the real significance of 1898 was to set the scene for increased American influence in the

¹ Hay to Day, 19 July 1898, LOC, William R. Day papers, box 8.

² Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 64.

³ *ibid*, p. 45.

⁴ See Ferguson, *Boer War*.

⁵ Neale, *Expansion*, pp.213-214, Mulanax, *Boer War*, p.2, Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, p. 69.

world.⁶ The conflicts offer a useful snapshot of the jockeying for position of the powers on the world stage at this point. In the 1898 war, the emerging great power, the United States, despatched the fading power of Spain with relative ease in a number of weeks, whilst the supposedly strongest great power, Great Britain, struggled over three years to defeat a largely guerrilla army made up of farmers.⁷ The effects on the national psyches of the two countries arguably set the tone for much of the next century. A self confident United States felt able to project itself on the world stage to a much greater degree, whilst a somewhat humbled Great Britain embarked on what was to prove the first of many soul searching exercises questioning its ability to prevail in global affairs.

On the face of it, the two wars demonstrated precisely the kind of *entente* that Pauncefote was apparently so eager to achieve during his time in Washington. The mutually friendly attitude of the two countries to each other's imperial adventures seemed to suggest that the British ambassador's conciliatory approach was beginning to reap rewards. The outpouring of transatlantic affection commented on by newspapers and journals at the time was unprecedented.⁸ However, Pauncefote's own actions during this period do not really reflect this state of affairs. Ironically, the outbreak of the Spanish-American War was also to prove the occasion for the biggest controversy of Pauncefote's career. In the weeks before the war, Pauncefote seems to have been opposing US action in Cuba to a greater degree than his own government would have wished, and this was used by the Germans four years later in an attempt to discredit him and the British government in the eyes of the United States.⁹ Furthermore, during the war, the part Pauncefote played in dealing with issues of neutral trade, again acted *against* US interests.¹⁰ Thus the key diplomatic manoeuvres that aided Anglo-American relations during the war were not made by Pauncefote. Indeed, both conflicts are notable for the lack of correspondence either official or unofficial that Pauncefote

⁶ Richard H. Heindel, *The American Impact on Great Britain, 1898-1914: A Study of the United States in World History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), p.75.

⁷ See Friedberg, *Titan*, p.209.

⁸ See Naamani, 'Public Opinion,' p.43-60.

⁹ C.S.Campbell, *Understanding*, Ch. 2.

¹⁰ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp. 207-208.

entered into in connection with them. Whilst he was arguably responsible for helping set up the circumstances that enabled good relations to be maintained because of his diplomacy over the previous decade, his own contribution to the *rapprochement* was not prominent in the wars themselves.

The Spanish–American War

As outlined above, the Spanish-American War was both the occasion for the most effusive outpouring of American affection towards Britain in the 1890s, and one of the most difficult periods for the British ambassador. It was actually before a shot had been fired in the conflict that Pauncefote played his most prominent and controversial role. It is possibly because Pauncefote genuinely thought that a negotiated solution would be found to the dispute between Spain and the United States over Cuba that he was to be so wrong-footed over the issue. Four months before war broke out he wrote in a despatch to Salisbury that ‘There appears to be no good ground for supposing that the present administration intend to take any active steps with regard to Cuba in the near future.’ However, in the same despatch, Pauncefote did sound a note of caution by drawing Salisbury’s attention to the fact that the language used by the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, was somewhat ominous for the state of relations between the two countries.¹¹ Nevertheless, his apparent belief that the disagreement between the two countries could be resolved without fighting was still evident when he reported as late as 12 April 1898 that after the delivery of a presidential message on the issue, ‘war is certainly less imminent,’ despite the jingoistic views of many in Congress.¹² This, in his view was mainly due to the fact that Spain had made considerable concessions that Pauncefote said had made ‘the more reasonable politicians disposed to think that there would remain no legitimate cause or pretext for war.’ He believed that the bellicose press had misled the public, since Spain’s diplomatic correspondence had not been presented to Congress.¹³

¹¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 20 Jan 1898, PRO, FO5/2321.

¹² Pauncefote to Salisbury, 12 April, 1898, PRO, FO5/2517.

¹³ *ibid* and Neale, *Expansion*, p.23.

Pauncefote's actions in the days that followed, regarding his role in a last ditch European effort to dissuade the United States from going to war with Spain have been the most closely analysed of his entire career, both by contemporaries and by historians.¹⁴ At issue was the extent to which Pauncefote exceeded the authority of his own government by drafting a statement - on behalf of all the great powers - that requested the United States to think more carefully about embarking upon a war with Spain. The affair came into public view in 1902, catching the attention of the newspapers, apparently inspired by a somewhat clumsy German attempt to gain diplomatic advantage over Britain's ageing ambassador. Broadly speaking, more recent accounts of the affair have been less sympathetic towards Pauncefote than his British and American contemporaries tended to be. In other words, he is seen as having made an uncharacteristic error of judgement in going beyond his instructions and being prepared to oppose the United States.¹⁵ However, when these various versions of what happened are analysed in the context of the rest of Pauncefote's Washington career, it can be seen that his actions over the matter were not such an aberration as they may at first sight appear to be.

European mediation

On 7 April 1898, the representatives of the six European Great Powers anxious for a Spanish American conflict to be avoided if at all possible, joined together to present a diplomatic note to the United States, asking it to do all it could to enter into mediation with Spain in its quarrel over Cuba. As *doyen* of the ambassadors, it fell to Pauncefote formally to present this note to the US Secretary of State, William R. Day. In fact, Pauncefote, in the process of drafting this note, had already presented it to him to ensure that the wording would be acceptable to the American government and it would not therefore meet with an adverse reaction. Thus the final version of the note was duly presented, and as fully expected, it was received politely, if noncommittally by the US

¹⁴ See PRO, FO5/2517; Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp.203-220; A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, pp.137-145; C.S. Campbell, *Understanding*, pp.30-39; Neale, *Expansion*, pp.15-30; Bridge, 'Concert of Europe,' pp.87-108.

¹⁵ C.S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p. 36.

government.¹⁶ Up to this point Pauncefote's actions appeared to be fully in keeping both with the wishes of his own government and those of the other ambassadors, who, whilst having some sympathy for the Spanish monarchy, were mindful of not occasioning a diplomatic breach with the United States. Even this moderate action, however, prompted the United States Ambassador at London, John Hay, to write to his president that

I was a little astonished – and so was Mr. Balfour - when we heard that Sir Julian joined in the collective note. But, after all, you knew best. The result is altogether in our favour. The note is perfectly harmless and it gave you the chance of which you so splendidly availed yourself. I congratulate you, with all my heart, on your masterly reply to the Ambassadors.¹⁷

Thus even before the second meeting, there is evidence that Pauncefote was somewhat at odds with his government over his attitude to the dispute. It was over the formulation of a second, more forceful note to the United States government, however, that the controversy surrounding Pauncefote's actions arose. The meeting to discuss this second representation took place at the British embassy on 14 April 1898, again because of Pauncefote's position as *doyen*. It is what happened in this meeting, and in the days afterwards that were to become the centre of later controversy. At the time, when the draft of the new note was sent to the various governments, none appeared keen to proceed with the move, since they were anxious not to upset the Americans more than was necessary. As a result, the initiative was quickly shelved, effectively leaving the Americans a free hand to deal with Spain as they saw fit. However, four years later, the affair came into full public view as the Germans attempted to make capital out of Pauncefote's apparent role in the affair. The issue came to public attention at this time as a result of British and German attempts to show their friendliness towards the United States. Kaiser Wilhelm II had ordered a royal yacht to be built in the United States, and when he proposed to send Prince Henry to attend the launch, the favourable publicity this attracted proved too much for some in the British

¹⁶ *ibid*, pp.31-32

¹⁷ Hay to McKinley, 9 April 1898, LOC, William R. Day papers, box 8.

establishment. Consequently, the British press began to claim that it was Britain, alone amongst European powers, which had not only supported the United States in the Spanish-American war, but also prevented European intervention at its outset. This in turn prompted a question in Parliament, which led Lord Cranborne officially to endorse the view that Britain had indeed played a crucial role in ensuring the United States had a free hand. At this point the Kaiser, similarly anxious to keep on good terms with the Americans, found the British claims too much to bear. Consequently, he paid an early morning call to the British Embassy in Berlin, and made his views clear to the British ambassador. Apparently at the behest of the Kaiser, the German government then released documents which not only showed a reluctance to criticise the United States stance in the imminent war against Spain, but which also pointed the finger at Pauncefote as the originator of the second, more critical circular. It is here that the reaction of both contemporaries and historians shed light on Pauncefote's actions, and reveal somewhat divergent views of his role.¹⁸

When the German attack on Pauncefote's actions occurred in February 1902, both British and US governments leapt to his defence. As part of the German desire to prove their loyalty to the United States, they published the second 1898 proposal for the European powers to intervene, with the Kaiser's marginal note stating that 'I consider it perfectly futile, pointless and therefore harmful! We should put ourselves in the wrong with the Americans!', and indicated that Pauncefote had taken the initiative over the issue, thus placing himself at odds with the Americans.¹⁹ In an indication of how the US government reacted to such an approach, the journalist G.W. Smalley noted that '... a high personage in Washington [thought to be a reference to Roosevelt] said "I do not believe the Imperial ink on the margin of Holleben's [the German ambassador at Washington] four-year old despatch was dry when the press telegram was sent from

¹⁸ The best explanations of why the controversy erupted when it did are provided in Bertha Ann Reuter *Anglo-American Relations During the Spanish American War*, New York, Macmillan (1924) pp. 78- 80, and A. E. Campbell (ed.), *Expansionism and Imperialism* (New York, Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 38-41.

¹⁹ Quoted in A.E. Campbell, *Expansionism*, p.38

Berlin.²⁰ Roosevelt, also commented that 'If he had said and done what Germany accuses him of, it would have been disloyal to himself and treacherous to us. He is incapable of that. He is incapable of anything but true and honorable conduct.'²¹ In an indication of how hurt he was by the accusations, Pauncefote wrote to former Secretary of State John W. Foster (of whom he had previously been so critical over the seals issue) to thank him for his support over the issue, in February 1902, saying:

I write to express to you my deep gratitude for your kind defence of me in today's *Washington Post*. My mouth being sealed I appreciate all the more the timely service you have rendered me and I feel that the support of such men as yourself ... will have more effect in stopping the most unjust clamour raised against me than anything I could write myself. I could not have believed it possible that I should ever be accused of saying or doing anything unfriendly to this country where I have spent so many years working heartily in the opposite direction.²²

As if to underline the supposed calumny of Germany's accusation, as the dispute rumbled on, Pauncefote, reportedly devastated by the slanders, died in May 1902, thus enabling the press to turn him into the nearest thing that the diplomatic world had to a martyr. Illustrative of this is G.W. Smalley's *Times* article, in which he wrote:

I express as a public duty a belief which I think the Ambassador never held and which I know he would never have expressed. The immediate predisposing cause of Lord Pauncefote's death must, in my opinion, be traced to those German calumnies which were set afloat this spring from Berlin. The suddenness and perfidy of that attack left him in a hopeless condition. He bore it with social gallantry which only added to his physical danger. I wish now to record the fact that he would of himself have borne it all in silence. He at first believed it for the interest of his country and ours that no answer should be made, thinking that controversy would only envenom the dispute. Convinced at last that this was but one step in a considered German scheme for embroiling England and the United States, he consented that the facts should be stated. In their

²⁰ *ibid*, p.40

²¹ Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p. 220.

²² Pauncefote to Foster, 20 Feb. 1902, LOC, J.W. Foster papers.

complete vindication of all his own Government's acts. One or two truths, nevertheless, which fixed responsibility on the guilty author of this intrigue he withheld. They are withheld still, but they are known. Lord Pauncefote, with the generosity which was part of his nature, forgave his enemy. I know no reason why his friends should do as much.²³

At the Foreign Office, Francis Villiers concurred with this point of view, commenting on a despatch that 'There can be no doubt that the incident did enormously affect Pauncefote's health.'²⁴ Thus after Pauncefote's death, his integrity and pro-American credentials remained intact, and (in public at least) the German accusations took on the appearance of a badly misjudged, and, after his death, a somewhat tasteless smear campaign. However, as time has gone on, the historical evidence has tended to provide a somewhat different picture of events, making the German stance more credible, and Pauncefote's lack of involvement less so. Firstly, the accusation that the Germans had faked evidence of their opposition to the peace initiative is easily dealt with. In fact, the Foreign Office had received a telegram to exactly that effect at the very time the second note was mooted in 1898. The British ambassador at Vienna, Horace Rumbold, wrote to the Foreign Office, saying: 'Count Gulouchowski tells me that he has just received a telegram from Berlin stating that the Emperor William refuses to associate in any further collective representation of the powers to the United States. Change of attitude on the part of Germany is evidently very unpalatable to his Excellency who appears to have little hope of preservation of peace.'²⁵ Thus it was clear at the time that the Kaiser's opposition to the plan was genuine, and thus the authenticity of his marginal note is more likely, and in any case somewhat academic. By contrast, accusations made about Pauncefote's actions during this period are less easily disproved, despite the fact that at the time any suggestion of his opposition to the United States over the war with Spain was met with disbelief.

²³ *The Times*, 26 May 1902, PRO, FO5/2517.

²⁴ Villiers, marginal note, 30 May 1902, pencilled on despatch from Lascelles to Lansdowne PRO, FO5/2517.

²⁵ Rumbold to Salisbury, 19 April 1898, PRO, F0115/1087.

Writing in 1929, Pauncefote's biographer came to his defence over the affair as staunchly as the British and Americans had in 1902. R.B. Mowat took particular exception to the German claim (not published until 1924) that Pauncefote had described the Americans as 'brigands,' writing that

Holleben's story that Pauncefote called the Americans brigands further discredits all the rest of his account. Such language was never known to pass Pauncefote's lips even in his family circle; he carried precision and reserve of speech like a garment in all his daily life.²⁶

Since Mowat's defence of Pauncefote is largely based on this assertion, it is worthwhile considering the validity of it. It does seem to be true to say that in public the British ambassador was careful about his choice of words, scrupulously avoiding press interviews, and presenting a somewhat bland persona at official functions. However, by Pauncefote's own admission regarding the meeting in question, 'No record was kept of the proceedings which were of an informal and conversational character,' and thus he may have spoken more freely than in a more formal setting.²⁷ Furthermore, his letters frequently reveal a man who could be highly critical of Americans in general, and who was not afraid of using derogatory language to describe them. At various times he had described American politicians as 'rascals' and 'mad dogs', the press as 'villainous' and compared one US senator to a 'mad buffalo' (a far from exhaustive list of terms he used).²⁸ Added to this is the fact that Pauncefote was always particularly scathing about 'jingo' senators (who, unsurprisingly, were the ones most vocally in favour of war with Spain). Whilst Mowat's assertion was made about a verbal exchange, rather than a written one, the circumstantial evidence nonetheless suggests that the German claim that he had been openly critical of the Americans was far less fanciful than it was made out to be by Mowat and some of Pauncefote's contemporaries. Indeed, ironically, when writing to Lansdowne to defend his position

²⁶ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.218.

²⁷ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, (telegram), 8 Feb. 1902, PRO, FO5/2517.

²⁸ Pauncefote to Bryce, 25 June 1891, MS Bryce 116, f 158; *ibid*, 10 Jan 1900, f.86; *ibid*, 26 April 1895, f.169; *ibid*, 9 Feb 1897, f.175.

in the affair, Pauncefote proved that he was capable of using the very type of indiscreet language that he was so vehemently denying he had used at the meeting. After thanking Lansdowne for his support, he wrote in somewhat bitter tones:

... "a question of veracity" between two ambassadors is too succulent a morsel for journalists of a certain class to abandon. Some scurrilous and Anglophobe papers have hurled all manner of lies and abuse at me, but I have been fairly treated by the more respectable Press, and nobody believes that I ever said or did anything with an unfriendly intent towards the United States. Accordingly I have received the most warm and gratifying expressions of sympathy and support and confidence from the President, the Secretary of State, members of the Cabinet, prominent senators, such as Cabot Lodge, Hanna, Cullom and others, and society in general who believe there was a plot against me.

As for my German colleague he is a vulgar little man full of vanity and low cunning and he has not succeeded in doing me any harm in public estimation here.²⁹

The argumentative atmosphere in which he died may also provide an answer as to why his wife destroyed the bulk of his private papers after his death. It is possible that they would have provided further evidence of his actions with regard to the Spanish-American war which were not in keeping with this official version of events, or at the very least provided further evidence of his occasionally caustic attitude towards Americans in general.

However, of more significance than Pauncefote's alleged name calling, was the extent to which he was actually at the forefront of a European move to halt the United States' path to war, which would have apparently been so out of character with his own professed desire to promote Anglo-American harmony. Historical investigations of the affair since Mowat have concluded that he certainly gave strong support to the second initiative, exceeded his authority by so doing, and was initially economical with the truth when the subject was raised again in 1902.³⁰ Indeed, R.G. Neale, writing in 1966 came to the unequivocal conclusion that 'Pauncefote, looked upon as champion of

²⁹ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, 28 Feb. 1902, PRO, FO800/144.

³⁰ See fn. 12, this chapter.

Anglo-American friendship and co-operation, was in fact more opposed to American policy at this period than has ever been realised.³¹ Since such a stance does seem to be in contrast to Pauncefote's attitude towards the United States during the rest of his time in Washington, it is worthwhile reviewing the genesis of the controversy, in order to ascertain to what extent Pauncefote's actions were in fact uncharacteristic of his diplomacy.

As a result of the meeting on 14 April 1898, Pauncefote sent Salisbury a despatch, similar to those sent by the other European representatives, indicative of their attitude to the prospect of Spanish-American conflict. Whether or not Pauncefote was at the forefront of composing the initiative, he gave Salisbury no private indication of his doubts about such a move, writing:

The attitude of Congress and the resolution voted yesterday in the House of Representatives by a large majority leave little hope for peace and the general opinion prevails that the warlike measures advocated have the approval of the Great Powers. The Memo of the Spanish Minister delivered on Sunday appears to offer a reasonable basis of arrangement and to remove all legitimate cause of war. If that view should be shared by the Great Powers the time has arrived to dispel the erroneous impression which prevails that the armed intervention of the US in Cuba for the purpose of effecting the independence of the island commands, in the words of the Message, 'the support and approval of the civilized world.'

Under these circumstances the representatives of the Great Powers at Washington consider that their respective governments might usefully call the attention of the USG to the above mentioned Memo of the Spanish Minister, and make it known that their approval cannot be given to an armed intervention which does not appear to them justified.

The observation of the Powers might be in the form of a note delivered by the representatives preferable that an identic Note should be delivered as soon as possible by each of the Foreign Ministers of the six great powers to the representative of the US accredited to them respectively.

The moral effect which would result from that course would be greater in the eyes of Europe and of the American people and would give to this intervention of the

³¹ Neale, *Expansion*, p. 213.

six Powers a character which would not expose their representatives to the appearance of having renewed their first representations which the Message of the President passes under silence.

It appears to the representatives that the greatest publicity should be given to such a Note in order to relieve the moral responsibility of the civilized world for an act of aggression in support of which its authority is invoked.³²

Later discussions over the drafting of the protest centred on the fact that Jules Cambon, the French ambassador added to the initial note, making it stronger in tone than the original, and thus allowing Pauncefote to distance himself from it.³³

The telegram was in fact sent to Arthur Balfour, who was deputising for a convalescing Salisbury. In passing the telegram on to Balfour, Thomas Sanderson, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office was apparently under no illusions about Pauncefote's role in events, commenting that

... it seems to me that as Pauncefote is recommending a fresh representation it could be very difficult for us to refuse to take part .

But the language of the identic telegram is not such as could be adopted without raising a storm ... I greatly doubt the fresh representation having any beneficial effect. But could I suggest that the answer ... might be that we would not refuse to join in such a representation if all the other Great Powers agree and that we must ... consider the form and wording of the communication which would in our opinion require great care in order to avoid an aggravation of the excitement which it is our object to allay.³⁴

The above statement not only shows that the initiative for such a move was most definitely coming from Washington, but also the extent to which the Foreign Office was willing – for a time at least – to defer to Pauncefote. Balfour also had strong

³² Quoted in A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, p.142.

³³ See C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, fn., p.34. The official French version of these events can be found in *Documents Diplomatiques Francais, 1871-1914*. (Tome 14. Paris: Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, 1937).

³⁴ Sanderson to Balfour, 15 April, 1898, Balfour Papers, 49739, f.26.

doubts about the new move, which were then confirmed by Joseph Chamberlain in no uncertain terms. Balfour's doubts, tempered by his respect for Pauncefote's abilities, were clearly expressed in his letter to Chamberlain, writing:

I confess to be in great perplexity ... The Representatives of the Powers at Washington ... appear to wish us to give the United States a lecture in international morality. If Pauncefote had not associated himself with this policy I confess I should have rejected it at once; but he knows our views, he is on the spot, and he is a man of solid judgement . It seems a strong order to reject his advice.³⁵

Balfour wrote back to Pauncefote:

... it seems very doubtful whether we ought to commit ourselves to a judgement adverse to the United States and whether, in the interests of peace, such a step would be desirable.

If your knowledge of the local situation suggests to you any observations we shall gladly receive them.³⁶

Pauncefote, in his somewhat muted reply said:

It appears to me that if it should be decided to take any further action, an [intimation?] to United States Representatives at capitals of the six great powers, in sense indicated by you namely that the Powers, while expressing no judgement on the merits of controversy, think suspension of hostilities by Spain offers an opportunity for peaceful settlement, and hope that that view may yet prevail, would suffice to rebut the assumption of Congress that any view of the Powers approve of its violent policy.³⁷

Balfour, now confirmed in his doubts over the move by consultation with Joseph Chamberlain, wrote once more to Pauncefote, saying:

³⁵ Quoted in C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.35.

³⁶ Quoted in A. E. Campbell, *Britain*, p.145.

³⁷ Quoted in C .S. Campbell, *Understaning*, p.35.

I gather that President is most anxious to avoid if possible a rupture with Spain. in these circumstances advice to United States of America by other Powers can only be useful if it strengthens his hands, and of this he must be the best judge. Considering our present ignorance as to his views, and extreme improbability that unsought advice will do any good, and the inexpediency of adopting any course which may suggest that we take sides in the controversy we shall, at least for the moment, do nothing. Please keep informed of fresh developments.³⁸

Once given such a rebuff, Pauncefote did not protest, and it was at this point in 1898 that the matter was dropped. C. S. Campbell's view of this exchange is that in rejecting Pauncefote's advice Balfour did much for the cause of Anglo-American friendship and saved Pauncefote 'from perhaps the most grievous mistake of his career.'³⁹ At the very least then, the communications of 1898 demonstrated that Pauncefote appeared to be supportive of an initiative which was out of step with his own government's wishes.

Therefore, whatever the truth of the language used by Pauncefote to describe the Americans, the German ambassador's observation that 'It is extremely probable that Sir J. Pauncefote acted at the time without instructions,' was, in general terms, correct.⁴⁰ The issue which added extra punch to the later German accusations was whether Pauncefote was not only willing to go along with such a move, but was the ringleader. Pauncefote's own communications on the subject in 1902 clearly show him shifting his ground on the subject of his own involvement in the affair, and his 'defence' is unconvincing. At the end of January, when the affair initially came to public attention, he firmly supported the government's line, but notably avoided referring specifically to his own role, writing:

The reply of Lord Cranborne to Mr. Norman's question in the House of Commons on the 20th instant with reference to the attitude of Great Britain before and

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.36

⁴⁰ Holleben to German Foreign Office, 13 Feb.1902, in E.T.S. Dugdale (ed.), *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914; vol II*, (London: Methuen, 1928), p.514.

during the War between the United States and Spain has had a most important and decisive effect on public opinion in this country and has entirely baffled the efforts made in certain quarters to misrepresent the facts, to the detriment of His Majesty's Government.

The conviction that a great service was rendered by England to the United States at that momentous period is stronger than ever throughout the country and the unworthy effort to minimize that service and especially to claim the credit for other governments is treated with derision.⁴¹

And in response to a further enquiry on the subject of his own actions, Pauncefote at first stated that 'I made no proposal nor took any initiative.'⁴²

However, when further pressed, if his answer was not a complete backdown from his previous denials, it at least suggests that his defence was more one of semantics rather than substance, as the text of his despatch shows:

My German colleague in his despatch transmitting the identic telegram states it was sent 'at my request.' That is incorrect. It was sent in pursuance of the general agreement.

I have not written to him to protest lest I should start an angry correspondence here.

With regard to YL's question respecting any proposal or initiative by me, I desire to explain that I strongly advocated at the meeting an identic telegram to our governments counselling action based on Spanish memorandum in the hope of averting war and even prepared a rough draft for consideration which I thought might be suitable and which was handed over to my French colleague to assist him in framing the telegram ultimately despatched.

That is draft my German colleague pretends was originally submitted by me for transmission to Govts.⁴³

⁴¹ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, (telegram), 31 Jan. 1902, PRO, FO5/2517.

⁴² Pauncefote to Lansdowne, (telegram), 8 Feb. 1902, PRO, FO5/2517.

⁴³ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, (telegram), 13 Feb. 1902, PRO, FO5/2517.

Thus, in admitting that he not only ‘strongly advocated’ action aimed at averting war, and that he ‘even prepared a rough draft,’ Pauncefote’s central position in the mooted representation is confirmed. This shifting response tallies with Holleben’s report of what he had been told by the French ambassador – that ‘Sir J. Pauncefote was completely shattered and greatly worried, and asked me how matters were four years ago; he could not remember the details.’⁴⁴ Whilst he may not technically have been the instigator of the move, his earlier attempts to distance himself from it ring very hollow. Perhaps in view of this, Lansdowne’s private letter to Pauncefote, intended to reassure him of his continuing support, was ambiguous in its wording on the affair, somewhat cryptically informing the ambassador that ‘Your share in the paternity of the proposal which you sent home is well understood here.’⁴⁵

In a further recent investigation of the affair, Francis Roy Bridge also adds the illuminating perspective of the Austrian ambassador – who it is generally conceded did initiate proceedings.⁴⁶ As Bridge points out, this account is reliable in at least as far as it was not made public by the Austrians at the time of the controversy, and therefore does not appear to be written in order to score points off the British ambassador. Nevertheless, he clearly took the view that Pauncefote was responsible for driving the initiative forward once the process was in motion, writing to his government that

Sir Julian Pauncefote has taken the initiative in a material sense, in putting forward a draft for the demarche of the representatives. This last document was drawn up in such a lively tone that that Herr von Holleben and M. Cambon immediately felt obliged to object to the English text. Hereupon the present version was accepted by the representatives of the powers. This text too, seemed to him – Hanotaux - somewhat strong. Hanotaux has to ask himself how it comes about that the representative of England should suddenly adopt such an unusually energetic tone?⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Holleben to German Foreign Office, 13 Feb. 1902, Dugdale, *Documents*, p.514.

⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, 25 Feb. 1902, PRO, FO800/144.

⁴⁶ Bridge, ‘Concert of Europe,’ pp. 87-108.

⁴⁷ Wolkenstein to Goluchowski, 16 April 1898, *ibid*, p.98

It is, therefore, now very clear that the accusations levelled at Pauncefote in 1902 were substantially correct, and that the British ambassador, apparently acting on his own initiative, was at the forefront of a move that was contrary to the policy of his government. As A.E. Campbell has pointed out, had the Spanish-American War broken in 1895, and the Germans made their accusations then, the US might have been much more willing to believe them. However, by 1902, with Anglo-American relations on a firmer footing and German-American relations more difficult, President Roosevelt was more than willing to give the ailing ambassador the benefit of the doubt.⁴⁸

It remains to consider further to what extent this action was in fact out of character with Pauncefote's usual diplomatic stance. The first observation to be made is that it is somewhat ironic that, despite his denials, the evidence that now exists of his part in the affair may in some senses, be to Pauncefote's credit. Whilst it could be argued that his actions were contrary to British policy, the affair does make him appear as a more principled character than that of someone who blindly supported the cause of Anglo-American harmony. His support for a negotiated solution is also in keeping with his genuine belief in arbitration, as evidenced in particular by his commitments to the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty and the Hague Peace Conference. His interest and role in formulating mechanisms to achieve peaceful solutions to disputes does seem to have been a facet of his character that went beyond what he was required to do as a diplomat. Added to his sincere belief in arbitration was his evident dislike of Congress and the yellow press – both of which were very much at the forefront of warmongering over Cuba. Seen in this context, his actions regarding the impending conflict with Spain are not so surprising, and seem to offer the best evidence to suggest why he acted as he did over the affair.

It is also instructive to place Pauncefote's actions in this affair in the wider context of international relations at the time. In his final assessment of the affair, A.E. Campbell makes the point that the representation that Pauncefote was accused of

⁴⁸ A. E. Campbell, p.40, and see the final chapter of this thesis.

initiating was 'very mild' – implying the whole affair was not of great importance.⁴⁹ In a strictly technical sense this may be true - such a representation would probably not have prevented the Spanish-American war nor, in isolation, done long term damage to Anglo-American relations. Nevertheless, Ernest May regarded the moment as a significant one – he saw European inaction as a 'crucial moment' in the balance of power between Europe and the United States.⁵⁰ Furthermore, as well as being revealing in terms of Pauncefote's career, it also reveals wider truths about the state of Anglo-German-American relations in the 1890s. Perhaps most importantly the affair illustrates that by 1902 Anglo-American relations were more than robust enough to withstand a calculated diplomatic attack from Germany. Whilst the evidence suggests that Pauncefote had indeed been willing to take a firmer line with the US over the war, by 1902, the American government was willing to overlook this. Had such an affair happened at the beginning of the 1890s, it is easy to imagine that the Americans would have exploited Pauncefote's discomfort for all it was worth, and possibly, given the sometimes frenzied atmosphere of American politics at the time, it would have led to a shortening of his career. The fact that this did not happen points up how effectively the British government, with Pauncefote's guidance, had neutered American antagonism towards Britain over the previous decade. This in itself might be seen as a tribute to Pauncefote's diplomacy. Both the British and United States governments may have been aware of his disapproval of the impending war with Spain, but were willing to overlook his 'indiscretion' on the subject as he had built up enough credit with them over the years for it to be overlooked. The affair also provides a contrasting snapshot with the state of German-American relations, whereby a charge levelled against Britain (albeit somewhat clumsily inspired by an impulsive Kaiser), which in the light of the evidence had considerable credence, was equally willingly dismissed by the Americans and indeed, rebounded against the Germans. One observer has commented that, over many issues in this period, the Germans 'never understood the effect that their

⁴⁹ A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, p.148.

⁵⁰ Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1961), p.181.

machinations ... had in the United States.⁵¹ Comparisons can be made with how the compromise over the Venezuela affair contrasted with the Kruger telegram, and Anglo-American harmony in the face of German opposition to their plans at the Hague Peace Conference.⁵² The difference in the previous two cases is that in those Pauncefote was undoubtedly working to ensure Anglo-American relations were kept on an even keel. As to his death soon after the controversy over the Spanish American War broke out, it might not be too fanciful to view it as symbolic; the first casualty of growing Anglo-German hostility, sacrificed on the altar of better Anglo-American relations. This shift in relations, as well as the growth of American power was vividly summarised by Henry Adams, who wrote in a letter to a friend:

I fight daily with Hay because he maintains that the Kaiser merely wants to show his power, and I insist that no man could make such a figure of himself except for a definite object. The violence of his embraces has become very shocking. Nothing on the French stage equals it. Poor old Pauncefote is almost broken up by a question of veracity forced upon him by the German government at Berlin, charging that he was not friendly enough to us in the Spanish war. Holleben, who is at best a very common or rather low-down German brute, is quite off his head. The Kaiser is running the details of every movement directly by telegraph. Theodore is much bothered, having quite enough bother of much more serious nature; and the rest of the government are maliciously and burglariously trying to dodge behind the German Americans, and turn Hans over to them; a trick which the Kaiser is vehemently trying to evade. As I cannot see into the Kaiser's cards, I cannot tell what his game is, but as far as concerns us - thus far, at least, - it seems very maladroit and blundering and German. My notion is that his boisterous demonstration here is meant to cover a weakness on the other side, either in Austria or in Russia ... I don't quite see how Pauncefote and Holleben can any longer speak to each other, and Cambon's position is most difficult, as he alone can decide the question of veracity.

Of course we all know that the German lies, if not in letter, certainly in spirit; but nothing in my memory of diplomatic history is so astounded as to see all these imperial representatives crawling at Hay's feet. I invoke the shade of my poor old Jefferson, and cast ashes on my white bald head. What a pantomime it is; and of all the

⁵¹ Manfred Jonas, *The United States and Germany-A Diplomatic History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p.59.

⁵² *ibid*, p.54.

men who saw the dance of Europe over us in 1860-4, Hay and I are left alone here to gloat over our revenge. Standing back in the shadow, as I do, it seems to me as though I were Nemesis.⁵³

Pauncefote's role during the war

By comparison with the controversy over his role before the outbreak of war, Pauncefote played a relatively quiet role once hostilities had commenced. Both his diplomatic and private correspondence is notably quiet on the subject during the period of the war. In a later private despatch to Salisbury he commented that this lack of communication was because of the lull in Anglo-American questions due to the war.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, whilst in other parts of the world, Britain was quietly making life easier for the Americans than the Spanish, as with the outbreak of the war Pauncefote ironically tended to be involved in actions that were potentially unpopular with Americans. His main role during the war was to claim compensation for British ships that could not trade with Cuba, due to the United States' blockade of the island.⁵⁵ According to his biographer, Pauncefote 'had a much harder time than when dealing with the Behring Sea captures ...' and that when an award of \$425,000 was granted by Congress, in response to a commission to investigate the claims, it caused 'profound annoyance' in the United States.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, just as with the Bering Sea claims, the co-operative actions of Great Britain elsewhere in the world during the war appear to have been a decisive factor in persuading Congress to grant the money.⁵⁷ This British attitude was characterised by the attitude of Salisbury to what became known as the 'Carranza affair,' with which Pauncefote also had some involvement. The incident

⁵³ Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 16 Feb 1902, *The Letters of Henry Adams Vol.V*, JC Levenson, Ernest Samuels, Charles Vardese, Viola Hopkins Winner (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1988), pp. 341-342.

⁵⁴ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 11 Nov. 1898, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f. 193.

⁵⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp. 207-208.

⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁷ Reuter, *Spanish-American War*, pp. 85-86.

involved the capture of two Spanish spies in Canada, one of whom was a Lieutenant Carranza. Difficulty arose when it emerged that the two men had been arrested on the strength of incriminating letters obtained illegally by US agents (having broken in to the men's lodgings in Canada). Because of this technical problem, Pauncefote consulted Salisbury, who decided to turn a blind eye to the Americans' legal infringement, thus allowing the Spaniards to be expelled from Canada. Salisbury's reaction to the matter was a telling one, encapsulated in a minute in which he wrote: 'If we prosecute the man on confidential information given to us by the United States Government, we must not expect ever to receive confidential information again ... I would certainly drop the matter.'⁵⁸

Much of the rest of Pauncefote's correspondence on the Spanish-American War was devoted to reporting on how it affected relations between the two countries, and the extent to which any improvement in relations might be exploited in diplomatic terms. On the British side, the most prominent supporter of closer ties in this period was Joseph Chamberlain, who openly advocated an alliance between the two countries in a speech in Birmingham in May 1898.⁵⁹ This suggestion from such an important public figure was enough to convince many that a secret alliance was actually made between Britain and America.⁶⁰ In actual fact, the prospect of such an alliance was remote, if not impossible at this time, suggesting that in practical terms, such expressions of amity counted for little – demonstrated by the fact that John Hay felt forced to deny any such proposal was in existence.⁶¹ As Congress had less than a year before rejected the much milder Olney-Pauncefote Treaty, it was hardly likely to sign up to a full-blown alliance, even in the newly changed circumstances. On the other side of the Atlantic, Pauncefote also seemed to recognise the difference between popular enthusiasm and political reality, but nevertheless saw an opportunity to use the change in atmosphere as a basis

⁵⁸ Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.211.

⁵⁹ Reuter, *Spanish-American War*, pp.19-20.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.70.

⁶¹ C.S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.207.

to start negotiations over outstanding American-Canadian issues, via the setting up of a Joint Commission. Writing to Salisbury on this issue, he said:

... the most astonishing feature of the present time is the sudden transition in this country from Anglophobia to the most exuberant affection for England and 'Britishers' in general. How long the fit will last no wise man would venture to predict – but it will certainly have an excellent effect on the future relations of the two countries, and we must seize this opportune moment to 'straighten out' as they call it, our Canadian difficulties. I ardently hope that the proposal for a great Commission to adjust all Canadian questions will do more than anything to cement friendly relations and ensure mutual sympathy and perhaps mutual aid in times of peril, or in other words the much talked of 'alliance'.⁶²

Pauncefote's talk of 'mutual aid in times of peril' is one of his clearest expositions of what he felt his mission was in the United States. Whilst he may not have talked about it as openly as Chamberlain, he certainly hoped that the resolution of outstanding issues would produce the same result – and that he saw it as leading to more than just a neutralisation of the United States in terms of the balance of power. The British ambassador also did his best to capitalise on this atmosphere by keeping on good terms with the owner of the *New York Tribune*, Whitelaw Reid, writing during the war to congratulate him on a speech on Queen Victoria's birthday, saying that

I have read it with great interest and pleasure as one of the signs of the times, and as a most graceful expression of the sentiments of good feeling towards my country which are I hope taking root. There can be no doubt of their being reciprocated in England.⁶³

He also made sure that he was not as out of step with this sentiment (as he had apparently been at the outbreak of the war) by sending President McKinley his personal congratulations at the conclusion of the conflict, writing in effusive terms to his private secretary that

⁶² Pauncefote to Salisbury, Salisbury Papers, vol. 139, 26 May 1898, f.181.

⁶³ Pauncefote to Whitelaw Reid, 11 June, 1898, LOC, Whitelaw Reid papers, reel 164.

... I cannot delay any longer offering you my congratulations on the glorious peace which has followed upon a glorious war, in the accomplishment of which you have rendered your country such eminent services. I should be grateful to you if you would take an opportunity of conveying my most sincere felicitations to the President, on whom the supreme responsibility has rested, and who will find a noble reward in the acclamation of the great American people, and the admiration which his exalted sentiments and resolute bearing have elicited throughout the civilized world.⁶⁴

Bearing in mind his manoeuvring at the beginning of the war, it is doubtful that Pauncefote was sincere in his greetings, but evidently he felt that for the greater good of Anglo-American relations, it was important to ensure that there was no question about where his sympathies lay.

In the period between the ending of the Spanish-American War, and the beginning of the Second South African War, Pauncefote continued to report on this upsurge of enthusiasm for transatlantic amity, for example noting at a presidential dinner in November 1898 how:

The President spoke to me in the liveliest satisfaction at the demonstrations of friendly feeling in the United States towards Great Britain and said he had been greatly struck by the remarkable enthusiasm all over the country at any reference to the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes flying together – an enthusiasm which appeared to be as marked in the West as in the East ... and he expressed to me his great satisfaction at this state of popular feeling.⁶⁵

And a little later he observed that 'The British Lion's tail has had a long respite and indeed the Alliance sentiment is as fevered as ever.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Pauncefote to McKinley's private secretary, 15 Aug. 1898, British Library, McKinley papers, series 1, reel 4, 15 Aug. 1898.

⁶⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 17 Nov. 1898, PRO, FO5/2366.

⁶⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 9 Dec. 1898, Salisbury papers, vol.139, f.202.

However, Pauncefote tempered this with despatches that demonstrate he still recognised that such feeling could not necessarily overcome all political problems, for example writing to James Bryce that

There has been too much gush in England and it has given an impression that we are clinging to the US as France does to Russia, for protection and support. There is still much good will manifested towards Great Britain throughout the country though in certain quarters an ebullition of ill feeling occasionally occurs. Thus Justice Harlon recently delivered a stump speech very abusive of England.

I think the Anglo-American league an admirable institution but I do not think it can usefully exert itself just now on behalf of arbitration or Penny Postage or any international question. It will probably find plenty of good work later on, but at present we must leave the US to settle their domestic difficulties which are very great, especially in relation to the burning question of colonies – they are not in the mood just now to tackle any business but their troubles at home.⁶⁷

The note of caution sounded in this letter coincided with the fact that the Joint Commission which was set up in 1898, and for which he had held such high hopes of resolving Anglo-Canadian issues was on the point of collapse – and indeed did so in February 1899.⁶⁸ Pauncefote himself had not been involved in it beyond the initial negotiations deciding its composition. Its failure, however, certainly reflects the point that Pauncefote was making in his letter to Bryce. Popular expressions of affection appeared to count for little when real diplomatic issues had to be addressed – they certainly did nothing to resolve the outstanding difficulties in relations with Canada.

The Second South African War

As the 1890s drew to a close, the Second South African War provided the critics of Britain's imperial activities with another round of ammunition. This was despite the fact that the Spanish-American War of 1898 had seen the United States embarking on its own albeit limited imperial adventures, and that Britain's benevolent neutrality in

⁶⁷ Pauncefote to Bryce, 24 Jan. 1899, Bryce papers MS Bryce, 116, f.179-80

⁶⁸ C.S.Campbell, *Understanding*, p.134.

that war had earned her more admirers than ever before from across the Atlantic. American distaste for British imperialism remained strong. As John H. Ferguson pointed out in his study of US diplomacy in the war, public opinion in the United States came to be overwhelmingly in favour of the Boers and the House of Representatives was ‘undoubtedly pro-Boer.’⁶⁹ Even Theodore Roosevelt, who admired the British, became doubtful about the merits of the British campaign. He said of the Second South African War effort: ‘It is as gallant a struggle as has ever been made,’ and acknowledged that 95% of the American people sympathised with the Boers.⁷⁰ However, since the Second South African War did not directly involve US interests, or impinge on the Monroe Doctrine, the practical effect of the anti-British feeling was limited. The US government, largely because of the influence of Secretary of State John Hay maintained a neutral line – and showed little concern about alleged violations, unless they directly affected US interests.⁷¹ Because of this stance (which in effect benefited Britain’s war effort because it gained most from the financial and naval implications of this policy), Hay was accused of being unnecessarily pro-British. Indeed the closest observer of US diplomacy in the war concluded that Hay’s stance lent ‘incalculable’ support to the British cause, and assured ‘the complete annihilation’ of the Boers’ independence.⁷² However, in his recent study of the issue, Richard Mulanax maintains that this stance was primarily designed to wrest concessions from Britain elsewhere, rather than showing sympathy for imperialism.⁷³ It should also be pointed out that US trade with Great Britain benefited from the conflict, thus reducing concerns over possible neutrality violations.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the Second South African War became an issue in the presidential elections of 1900, and the Democratic Party of William Jennings Bryan was strongly opposed to the British action. It included in its platform a resolution condemning ‘the strangling of liberty in South Africa.’ Whilst the

⁶⁹ Ferguson, *Boer War*, pp. ix, 191.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, pp.213, 219.

⁷¹ *ibid*, p.ix.

⁷² Ferguson, *Boer War*, p.219.

⁷³ Mulanax, *Boer War*, p.2.

⁷⁴ See Ferguson, *Boer War*, pp. 49-51.

Democrats were defeated in the presidential election, severe critics of the war could also be found in the Republican Party, as one senator put it in a speech to Congress:

To wish for the success of England in South Africa is to desire the triumph of the pirate on sea and the footpad on land, [it] is to wish for the downfall of human liberty and the triumph of human injustice and greed.⁷⁵

The writer Henry Adams, who was intimately acquainted with the leading American politicians of the day was similarly dismissive of Britain's actions, writing in 1900 that

... I have found that the stupidity and unintelligent greed of England had made all our difficulties, and would probably lead to ultimate catastrophe...England drags us by the hair into every swamp in the mad universe. She has dragged us into this hideous Boer business as she dragged us into the gold-standard.⁷⁶

As with the Spanish-American War, Pauncefote played a largely low-key diplomatic role during the Second South African War. His good relationship with Secretary of State John Hay was nonetheless an important one, and this is examined in the next chapter. Otherwise, Pauncefote's role during the Second South African War was mostly restricted to dealing with possible breaches of neutrality and reporting to his government on the mood of the United States, whilst making suggestions as to how this might be made more sympathetic towards Britain.

On the question of neutrality, Pauncefote quietly helped to ensure that the US government's benevolently neutral stance was maintained – although as long as John Hay was Secretary of State, Pauncefote's role was not overly challenging in this respect. He kept the US government informed of possible attempts to assist the Boers by sympathetic elements in the United States, thereby ensuring their impact was of a

⁷⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 9 Feb.1900, sends speech from Mr. Norton, Republican senator from Ohio, PRO, FO5/2426.

⁷⁶ Adams to Cameron, 5 March 1900, *Letters*, p.103.

limited nature. For example, in January 1900 he informed Hay of a group of pro-Boer volunteers preparing to leave Cincinnati for South Africa, and as a result they were prevented from leaving.⁷⁷ Similarly he informed the US government when it became apparent that some Irish-American citizens had enlisted for the Red Cross, and that they happened to be sharpshooters from the National Guard – consequently it was ensured that they were kept specifically to charitable duties.⁷⁸ By the same token, when the British consul at New Orleans was accused of helping to enlist US muleteers (who came to form a significant source of supply for Britain), Pauncefote was quick to deny any official involvement.⁷⁹ The way that Pauncefote's representations on such incidents were received in good faith by the US government serves to underline Hay's tacitly pro-British stance.

In communicating his concerns over the effects of the war upon US opinion, Pauncefote showed that he was acutely aware that opinion was divided over support for Britain, writing to Salisbury in January 1900 that

...the general sentiment and attitude in the nation in relation to our war in South Africa is as reasonable and friendly as could be expected considering the agitation kept up against us, all over the states, by the Irish, the Germans the Dutch and others, and certain vile papers (like the Washington Post) which are supposed to be in the pay of Dr. Leyd's agents. There are certain ruffians in the Senate ... [but] ... Everywhere in society and among the educated classes the tone is one of sympathy with England in the present contest ... the warmth and friendliness of manner shown towards me by the President and all his cabinet is very marked, evidently intended to show their desire to maintain and promote the entente cordiale and the 'unwritten treaty' which undoubtedly exists in spite of the outcry about the word 'alliance'. On the other hand we must bear in mind that this is the 'Presidential year' the year preceding the presidential election; during which the President is exposed to every kind of attack and abuse which political rancour and audacity and mendacity can suggest to the hostile press - and in view of the Irish and German vote, the present administration is bound to be extremely careful not to lay itself open to the charge of leaning on the side

⁷⁷ Ferguson, *Boer War*, p.63.

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 65.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 62.

of England in the present war by according to her any facilities which can be refused or by giving expression of the friendly sentiments which they entertain towards us.⁸⁰

To ensure that he was doing his bit to counteract hostile opinion in the United States, Pauncefote made use of his acquaintance with Whitelaw Reid, editor of the *New York Tribune*, writing to him:

... you have always been so kind and friendly to me from the first day when I landed in this country that I am sure you will excuse the liberty I take in sending you the enclosed Papers on the Transvaal War. My English heart is most grateful to the NY Tribune for the high tone and admirable attitude it has shown with reference to the attacks made in this country against Great Britain for waging war to secure freedom of equality of treatment to all white men in Africa. Malicious and mendacious statements are daily propagated on the subject and the enclosed papers may be useful to refer to – they consist of two speeches by Mr. Drage, MP... and a kind of syllabus of the whole British case.⁸¹

Pauncefote again showed his concern over the issue of public opinion a few weeks later, writing to Thomas Sanderson that ‘It would be most useful to employ a Press Agent here to distribute publications of the South African Association and otherwise counteract the effects of the Irish, German, Dutch and others to mislead public opinion which is singularly uninformed.’⁸²

The British ambassador’s concerns over attitudes to the war in the United States were also matched by two other well placed British observers. The British military attaché in Washington, Arthur Lee, noted the groundswell of support for the Boers, writing in his memoirs:

... there was no gainsaying the fact that the average man-in-the cars felt a kind of sneaking sympathy for the Boers, partly because they were ‘plain folk fighting for

⁸⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 19 Jan. 1900, Salisbury papers, vol. 140, fos. 59-60.

⁸¹ Pauncefote to Whitelaw Reid, 24 Jan. 1900, LOC, Whitelaw Reid Papers, reel 164.

⁸² Pauncefote to Sanderson, telegram, 12 Feb. 1900, PRO, FO115/1172.

their homes and their farms,' but also because they were 'republics defying a 'monarchy'....sympathy for the Boers developed into admiration, and sometimes enthusiasm for the 'plucky stand' which they were making against the might of the 'British Empire.'⁸³

And Valentine Chirol of the *London Times* was sober in his assessment when he wrote to a friend early in 1900 that:

I am afraid that all that can be said is that so far the good feeling and common sense of the better elements in the states has just been able to hold its own against the imported influence of the Irish and German elements and the still terribly potent survival of the old deep down Yankee prejudices...we have not yet overcome the old horrible past.⁸⁴

However, even before the presidential election was out of the way, Pauncefote was showing his satisfaction that anti-British opinion had been kept at bay, writing to Salisbury 'that his [McKinley's] attitude during the pro-Boer agitation was excellent – for it stirred up for a time the ant-British 'virus' which had been dormant of late... happily it has quite subsided.'⁸⁵

Despite his evident concerns, it is notable how Pauncefote seems to have been susceptible to the personal flattery that resulted from these improved relations. Despite having earlier cautioned about 'gush' over Anglo-American sentiment, when it came to his own circumstances, he seems to have been quite happy to bask in apparent acclamation, and attach significance to it, writing on one occasion for example that

The Universities of Harvard and Columbia have recently done me the honour to confer upon me the Degree of LLD and the incident has given rise to such a remarkable manifestation of reverence for the Queen as well as friendliness and

⁸³ Alan Clark (ed.), *A Good Innings: The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham* (London: John Murray, 1974), p.73.

⁸⁴ Chirol to Spring Rice, 25 Jan. 1900, Churchill Archives, CASR 1/9.

⁸⁵ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 14 Sep. 1900, Salisbury papers, vol. 140, f. 72.

goodwill towards Great Britain on the part of those great national institutions as to import to it more than usual public interest and importance.

This demonstration is all the more significant and gratifying at the present juncture when popular excitement consequent on the Presidential Campaign is at its height and every effort is being made by the opponents of the present Administration to prejudice the minds of the public against England especially in relation to the war in South Africa. ... The mighty acclamation and the enthusiasm with which the name of the Queen was received, and with which I was greeted in my capacity of Her Majesty's Representative seemed to proclaim that the old traditions of 'Kings College' from which the present University has sprung still cling to the site of the new foundation ... The name of the Queen was, as at Columbia University, the signal for tremendous and protracted cheering and President Eliot, in conferring upon me the degree referred to me as the 'the welcome ambassador of the country from which America has derived its best stock, its most serviceable habits of thought and its ideals of liberty and public justice.'⁸⁶

The fact that such acclamation was coming from the privileged bastions of the east coast elite, seems to have escaped his attention in this despatch. He took several pages to describe the circumstances in which he was awarded honours from the two American universities, and the space he devoted to such lavish official occasions suggests that he felt they were of more importance than they were in reality.

Overall, therefore, during the Second South African War Pauncefote, though having concerns about the division of opinion during the conflict, ultimately felt satisfied that the establishment in the country had stood by Britain to a more than acceptable extent. However, it is important to put this assessment in context. As will be examined in the next chapter, the administration's tacit support for Britain's war effort in the face of opposition from various sections of the population was not simply a 'pay back' for Britain's support during the Spanish-American war. Over other diplomatic issues during that period – specifically the disputes over the building of an isthmian canal and the Alaska boundary, the United States was in little mood to compromise.

⁸⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 10 July 1900, PRO, FO5/2428.

Thus, any 'goodwill' expressed by the US, something that even Pauncefote seems to have been susceptible to, came at the price of yet more British concessions.

Conclusion

Although the two wars are often cited as pivotal moments in Anglo-American relations in this period, they cannot really be seen as such in terms of Pauncefote's Washington career. Paradoxically, he was in effect working against US interests at the beginning of the Spanish-American War, and then whilst he helped to ensure that relations were amicable during the subsequent conflicts, he experienced no defining diplomatic moments. This is not to say his role was unimportant – the relatively low key nature of his role could be ascribed to the fact that he had already established good relations with John Hay, the key figure in determining foreign policy. Similarly his previous record of largely conciliatory diplomacy meant that his indiscretion over the Spanish-American War could be overlooked by the US administration. Therefore, perhaps the real significance of the two countries wartime relations, as far as Pauncefote was concerned, was that Britain's diplomatic concessions of the preceding years were beginning to pay dividends. A US government could now afford to be seen to be amicable towards Britain and feel confident enough that it would not be punished at the hands of the electorate. This might then be seen as the beginning of a politically more mature relationship – the Washington administration would still be a staunch defender of US interests where Britain was concerned, but did not feel such a need to flaunt this fact for the sake of appearance.

Chapter Seven: The 'Hay-Pauncefote axis' 1898-1902

John Hay and Lord Pauncefote ... were dedicated men, it is perhaps not too much to say; as long as they remained in office no-one could despair of British American friendship.

C.S.Campbell,

Anglo-American Understanding, (1957).¹

The time when Pauncefote and Hay were at Washington might be called the 'crystallising' period of British-American relations.

R.B. Mowat, *The American Entente*, (1939).²

Introduction

During Pauncefote's last four years as ambassador, John Hay was the US Secretary of State during what has been described as 'one of the most critical periods in all of American diplomatic history.'³ He was also the Secretary of State with whom the British ambassador had the best working and personal relationship in his thirteen years in Washington. The most concrete testimony to this relationship is the Hay-Pauncefote canal treaty of 1901, which paved the way for the construction of the Panama Canal after three years of wrangling between Congress and the British government. Also noteworthy was the fact that for much of their time of working together, Britain was involved in the Second South African War. Therefore, ensuring that Hay was well disposed towards Britain was of considerable importance, not only to counter European hostility, but also in the face of hostility from many in Congress, and significant sections of the wider population – most obviously the Irish, German and Dutch communities. Had Hay been someone of a more nationalistic mould (as, for example, James G. Blaine had been in the early 1890s), and Pauncefote not well enough established in his post to take the long view, Anglo-American relations during this

¹ Campbell, *Understanding*, p. 222.

² Mowat, *The American Entente* (London: Edward Arnold, 1939), p.130.

³ Kenton J. Clymer, *John Hay, The Gentleman as Diplomat* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), p.1.

difficult period might have been much more difficult. As it was, even with this strong central relationship, the power of the US Congress – and more specifically the Senate - was again crucial in shaping events. During this period, Hay and Pauncefote were often more united by their criticisms of Congress than they were divided between themselves over issues of policy. The largely respectful way in which Hay spoke of the British government's posture, notably over the canal issue, often provided a stark contrast to his attitude to his own body politic.

The purpose of this chapter is not simply to recount the story of Anglo-American diplomatic relations during the Hay-Pauncefote period. The negotiations involved in the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, the Alaska boundary dispute and the Open Door notes have been examined elsewhere.⁴ Instead, the intention is to focus specifically on the relationship between the two men at the centre of these negotiations, in order to understand better the extent to which their relationship was crucial in the developments that occurred during these years. If the claim made by C.S. Campbell quoted at the beginning of this chapter is to be believed, then their relationship was an important one, and, as will be seen, other observers have made similar claims. This chapter will, firstly, examine the relationship between the two men in general terms, and then, in the contexts of negotiations over the canal treaty, the Alaskan boundary, whilst bearing in mind that the Second South African War formed a backdrop. 'Sub themes' running through these sections are an analysis of the extent to which their difficulties with Congress, rather than instructions from President or Prime Minister, shaped their policy formulations, and how Lansdowne's appointment as Foreign Secretary altered the dynamic.

Hay and Pauncefote's 'special relationship'

Underpinning their diplomatic achievements, Hay and Pauncefote appear to have had a genuine rapport in their professional and personal and relationship that can have only

⁴ C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, ch. 5,6; Neale, *Expansion*; Perkins, *Rapprochement*, ch. 7; Penlington, Norman. *The Alaska Boundary Dispute: A Critical Reappraisal* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972).

aided the process of doing business together. Hay's background gives some clues as to why Pauncefote found him a more congenial colleague to work with than some of predecessors. Like Pauncefote, Hay trained as a lawyer and, ended up as a diplomat, although in between his career took a different course. His public career started when he was Abraham Lincoln's assistant private secretary during the US civil war. After holding diplomatic posts in Paris, Vienna and Madrid between 1865 and 1870, he then became 'a man of letters' for several years, distinguishing himself most notably as Abraham Lincoln's biographer. He then re-entered public service in the 1890s, serving as US ambassador to Britain from 1897-1898 and then Secretary of State from 1898 until his death in 1905. His wide travels had included England, even before his stint as ambassador there, and his experiences there helped shape his sympathetic views towards the country. Indeed his biographer said that he believed himself to be 'spiritually akin ... to the cultured English aristocrats with whom he associated.'⁵ Thus with his combination of legal and diplomatic training 'carefully cultivated gentility' and being an 'Anglo-Saxon from the top of his polished London shoes to the point of his neat grey beard' it is easy to see why Pauncefote found him a congenial colleague.⁶ Added to these factors is an instructive comparison with the attitude of the German ambassador at Washington when Hay took up his post, who commented that '[Secretary of State William R.] Day's leaving the Dept. means a great loss to us, the more so because his ... successor, Col. John Hay, belongs wholly to the British direction.'⁷

The ease of Hay and Pauncefote's relationship is evident in several pieces of their correspondence which went beyond the routine diplomatic niceties, or even the affirmations of Anglo-American solidarity, which also became somewhat routine following the events of the Spanish-American War. From the beginning of Pauncefote's time in Washington, the two struck up a good rapport. In a letter to Salisbury dated 10 May 1889, Pauncefote described Hay as being 'among the best class

⁵ Clymer, *Hay*, p.89.

⁶ *ibid*, p.5, Bradford Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.55.

⁷ Quoted in Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.57.

of American I have met.’⁸ A later example of their amity can be seen when Hay wrote to Pauncefote at the time when the latter was originally supposed to be retiring in 1899. In his letter to the British ambassador, Hay spoke of ‘the profound esteem and affectionate regard which you have inspired in all our hearts.’⁹ When Hay heard the news that Pauncefote’s term of office was to be extended he wrote to the US ambassador at London, Joseph Choate, that ‘We are delighted that Lord Pauncefote is to remain a while – though the Senate will probably forbid our reaping much advantage from his stay. Still, with him here, and you in London, we feel happy and confident.’¹⁰ Thus Hay neatly contrasted his good relationship with the British ambassador with his difficult one with Congress – a continual theme of his time as Secretary of State. Pauncefote himself also expressed the view that Hay would be glad he was remaining in post, and evidently saw his personal role as an important one when he wrote to Salisbury that

Were it not for the pending treaties and the Boer War, it would be better that I should be away during the Presidential campaign, but on the whole I think my presence here will be useful under the circumstances and I am sure that the President and Mr. Hay are very glad that there is to be no change in my post for the present.¹¹

Such compliments were returned by Pauncefote on receiving congratulations from Hay on his peerage when he wrote:

I send you my cordial thanks for your congratulations on my new honour, expressed with all the charming grace of your pen and with all the kindness of your heart. It is indeed a source of great rejoicing and pride to me to hear of the interest taken in America in the great reward for my public services conferred on me by the Queen, and of the friendly sympathy which the event has elicited. This greatly enhances the honour I have received and the great pleasure which it has given me.

⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 10 May 1889, Salisbury papers, USA 1887-90, f.82.

⁹ Hay to Pauncefote, undated, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

¹⁰ Hay to Choate, 7 March 1900, LOC, Choate papers, box 14.

¹¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 9 Mar. 1900, Salisbury papers, vol. 40, f.64.

As for your letter, it will always be a source of pride to me and mine... I was at Osborne last week, and the Queen, who seems to be growing younger, inquired (as usual when she sees me) after you and Mrs. Hay and spoke of you both in terms which show what a pleasant and friendly memory she retains of you both.¹²

When, in late 1900, Pauncefote was again supposed to be retiring, Hay and White actively lobbied the British to keep him at Washington. According to Allan Nevins, writing in 1930, White 'vetoed' Salisbury's suggestions of possible successors to Pauncefote, and Hay wrote to White that he never again expected to find an ambassador or a dean of the Diplomatic Corps with whom it would be so pleasant to work.¹³ After Pauncefote's death, letters from members of Pauncefote's family confirmed that their relationship was an especially good one. Pauncefote's wife, Selina, wrote to Hay that 'My husband entertained a warm affection and admiration for you dear Mr. Hay which any reference to you invariably brought forth.'¹⁴ His daughter Maud went even further writing that 'No-one knows better than we do of my darling father's real love for you.'¹⁵

Of course, while such goodwill confirmed that the Anglo-American 'entente' existed in a personal way at the highest level, it meant little in policy terms if it could not be exploited by either party to practical effect. That such mutual respect did have an impact on day to day diplomacy is evident from their correspondence to one another concerning practical matters. An example of this is the following letter in which Pauncefote offered his support for Hay's approach to the Alaska boundary negotiations and which demonstrates that there was a level of informal co-operation between the two men over the two countries' approach to the Hague Peace Conference:

I am ashamed to have so long delayed writing to thank you for the kind words you telegraphed ... as we were leaving New York. They were I assure you most

¹² Pauncefote to Hay, 25 Aug. 1899, LOC, Hay papers, reel 8.

¹³ Allan Nevins, *Henry White: Thirty Years of American Diplomacy* (New York: Harper & bros., 1930), p. 224.

¹⁴ Selina Pauncefote to Hay, 28 May 1902, LOC, Hay papers, reel 8.

¹⁵ Maud Pauncefote to Hay, 29 May 1902, LOC, Hay papers, reel 8.

gratefully appreciated and I should have written to say so before, had I not been in such a whirl of business since my arrival in London.

I am greatly disappointed that the efforts of Mr. Choate and myself to adjust the difficulty touching the Alaska Arbitration were not successful. But I do not despair and I am still making private suggestions which I earnestly hope may lead to a solution when I return to London.

This is a most charming and interesting place and full of remarkable people all bent on achieving something worthy of the occasion. The battle of peace is raging and I have great hopes that it will result in the establishment of an International Tribunal on sensible and practical lines and at first on a moderate scale. It is a great pleasure to meet with my American colleagues with whom I am working in most agreeable harmony ... It may interest you to read my Project intended to fit in as an additional chapter to the Russian Project, I therefore enclose a copy...¹⁶

As well as this informal exchange of information, Pauncefote also on occasion took the time to reassure his American colleague during difficult moments. For example, when Hay was at a particularly low ebb over the lack of progress of the canal treaty, Pauncefote wrote to him saying: ‘... it is best not to worry over it. I believe it will all come out right by and by, and it is very important to gain time for the most fervent spirits to cool down.’¹⁷

Indeed, the writer Henry Adams considered that such support for Hay, coming from Pauncefote was highly significant, stiffening his resolve, and even prevented him from resigning. Adams was a confidant of Hay and described by one observer as ‘the right man in the right place to observe the workings of American democracy in its new context of world power.’¹⁸ In his autobiography, Adams observed that ‘For the moment Hay had no ally, abroad or at home, except Pauncefote, and Adams always maintained that Pauncefote alone pulled him through.’¹⁹ And he added that later on:

¹⁶ Pauncefote to Hay, 2 June 1899, LOC, Hay papers, reel 8.

¹⁷ Pauncefote to Hay, 9 Jan. 1900, LOC, Hay papers, reel 8

¹⁸ Levenson, *Letters*, vol. iv, p.xxii.

¹⁹ Adams, *Education*, p. 356. Adams refers to himself in the third person in his autobiography.

For the moment, things were going fairly well, and Hay's team were less fidgety, but Pauncefote still pulled the whole load and turned the dangerous corners safely, while Cassini [the Russian ambassador] and Holleben [the German ambassador] helped the Senate to make what trouble they could, without serious offence...²⁰

Such a view does seem to be borne out by the warmth of the relationship between the two men, as well as the difficulties Hay faced from several other quarters. Had the Secretary of State not received such support from the British ambassador at such a difficult time, he might well have felt less inclined to persevere with his plans in the face of such stiff opposition from the Senate. Whilst, of course, this did not mean that they escaped 'the realities behind diplomacy,' Pauncefote did not have such productive and mutually supportive relationships with secretaries of state James G. Blaine, Richard Olney or John W. Foster. Thus, whilst a Congress in expansive mood on the one hand, and a British government buffeted by the Second South African War on the other, meant that Britain's room for manoeuvre was limited, this did not in itself guarantee an amicable solution to the problems faced. The personal factor in the relations between the two men helped to ensure that tensions between the two nations were minimised, rather than amplified. And, on Pauncefote's death, Adams commented that he had 'carried out tasks that filled an ex-private secretary of 1861 [Hay] with open-mouthed astonishment.'²¹ Their mutual admiration was genuine.

The Isthmian Canal Treaty

Discussions over the building of a Central American isthmian canal, linking the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, with its obvious benefits for trade and defence, which had been going on for many years gained new impetus at the end of the 1890s. The drawing up of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty in 1850 which proposed that any such scheme should be a joint venture between Great Britain and the United States, demonstrated that despite the engineering and political challenges it presented, its potential had long been recognised by both nations.

²⁰ *ibid*, p.373.

²¹ *ibid* p. 413

However, whilst by the end of the nineteenth century Britain had recognised the limited nature of its influence in the western hemisphere - and thus the diminished likelihood of its becoming involved in seeing through such a scheme - enthusiasm for it in the United States was reaching a crescendo. Indeed, so enthusiastic were many senators to see the canal built, that they were ready to ignore the existence of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty altogether, and push ahead with sole construction of the canal whether or not Britain agreed to it.²² And despite the recognition in Britain that it would not be a co-constructor, its completion would be no minor strategic issue. As one historian put it: 'It would confer a vital strategic advantage on the United States, impose an additional strain upon Great Britain's already over-stretched naval resources, and increase trade rivalry.'²³ Emphasising the importance of the issue, another historian has asserted that 'there are few more decisive events in the history of international relations in the twentieth century,' than the recognition of US supremacy entailed by the eventual agreement over the canal.²⁴ Coupled with this was the further difficulty of the need to appease Canadian sensitivities. Salisbury's instruction that the Canadians should be consulted was in large part due to the need for the dominion's support over the Second South African War, and caused considerable delays.²⁵ Although Britain was by this point highly unlikely to be involved in the construction of the canal, the crude dumping of an international agreement would undoubtedly have been a significant setback for Anglo-American relations, and it was this issue that made negotiations over a new canal treaty so lengthy.

In the United States, discussions by this time were not so much over whether a canal should be built, but over how it should be funded (publicly or privately), and

²² C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.130.

²³ Bourne, *Balance*, p.347.

²⁴ J.A.S. Grenville, 'Great Britain and the Isthmian Canal, 1898-1901.' *The American Historical Review*, 61:1 (Oct. 1955), p.48. It is interesting to observe that the canal dispute, the Venezuela dispute, the Spanish-American War and the Second South African War have all at various times been singled out as 'the decisive moment' in the shift in Anglo-American relations.

²⁵ C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.131.

what route it should take (Nicaragua or Panama), something that Pauncefote had been reporting on as early as 1894.²⁶ The timing of this groundswell of support for its construction was largely due to the circumstances of the Spanish-American War. The 1898 conflict had brought home to Americans how deployment of naval forces from coast to coast might be a crucial factor in any future war – and thus serious canal building plans were put in train. It was not just the ‘jingoese’ who were enthusiastic about such a scheme. In his Presidential message of December 1898, William McKinley spoke of the ‘urgency of some definite action by the Congress at the end of this session.’ And, as John Hay himself put it in a despatch to the first secretary at the US embassy in London, Henry White:

The events of the past year have made it more than ever necessary that some means of communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific should be at once accomplished. Such means of communication seem at this moment indispensable both for our commercial and national interests.²⁷

Hay later added in a postscript of a letter to an anxious Senator Morgan, who was worried about delays in an agreement to allow the canal to go ahead: ‘We are going to have that canal, and nothing can stop it.’²⁸ These views, expressed in private correspondence, are significant since they demonstrate that despite the three years and endless redrafting that the canal bill took to pass Congress, it was not Hay’s lack of enthusiasm for the project that was slowing the process down. What concerned him – more, apparently, than many members of Congress – was how to get the canal built without souring relations with England. This outlook was very similar to that of Pauncefote. Salisbury transferred the negotiations on a new treaty to Washington in December 1898 because of Pauncefote’s experience in such matters.²⁹ The British ambassador accepted from an early stage in negotiations that the canal was going to be

²⁶ Pauncefote to Kimberley, 21 Dec. 1894, Kimberley papers, MSS Eng. c.4408, fos. 42-44.

²⁷ Hay to White, 7 Dec. 1898, NARA, M77, reel 92.

²⁸ Hay to Morgan, 21 Jan. 1901, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

²⁹ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.273.

built, without British input, indeed he had made this point clear at the beginning of 1899, reporting to Salisbury that, judging by a debate in Congress:

It was apparent from the tone of the debate and from the attitude of the Press, that whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the mode of proceeding and of dealing with the difficulties, financial and political, public sentiment is firmly set upon the construction of the Canal at whatever cost as a national duty.³⁰

Therefore, like Hay, Pauncefote was essentially concerned with finding a treaty formulation that would leave British pride intact. In an unusual step, that clearly reflected the good relationship between the two men, Hay approached Pauncefote to draft the revision to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty that would allow the US project to go ahead without ruffling British feathers. More than one observer has pointed out, that as well as demonstrating his Anglophilia, by not employing his own staff to complete such a task, Hay was to blame for much of the trouble the treaty was to face in Congress. Had a state department official drafted the treaty, he would probably have been more sensitive to senatorial and public opinion – never one of Pauncefote's or Hay's strong points.³¹ Pauncefote's formula was simply to lift three key ingredients from the regulations from the Suez canal (which he had himself had a key part in drawing up): a ban on fortifications, neutralization of the canal in time of war and an invitation to other powers to become parties to the agreement. By presenting it in this form to Congress it ignored the fact that American politicians wanted it to be a national, rather than an international enterprise. As Bradford Perkins points out, neither Pauncefote nor Hay seems to have taken into account this important fact, and thus they were themselves largely to blame for the difficulties that followed.³² This consideration does therefore somewhat undermine J.A.S. Grenville's assertion that Pauncefote handled the negotiations 'with outstanding skill.'³³ Pauncefote's handling of the treaty fits into a familiar pattern. As with, for example, the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty of 1897, his

³⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 20 Jan. 1899, FO55/392.

³¹ Clymer, *Hay*, pp.174 -175.

³² Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.175.

³³ Grenville, *Isthmian Canal*, p. 55.

technical ability to construct treaties and his faith in international agreements seem to have run ahead of his political sensitivities, and thus he ran into difficulties with the Congress which he so despised. As the *Review of Reviews* put it: 'If the world were a hundred years nearer the wished for period of disarmament and perpetual peace, the treaty would be as safe in practice as it is fine and magnanimous in theory.'³⁴ The difference this time was that in Hay he was working with a Secretary of State who had many of the same strengths and weaknesses.

In drawing up the Hay – Pauncefote Treaty, then, both men were in broadly mutual agreement about what should be done, but had difficulties in convincing their respective constituencies that this was indeed the correct course to take. Consequently, a canal bill that was originally drawn up in 1898 only passed the Senate, after considerable redrafting, in 1901. During the negotiations, Hay often appeared to be more in agreement with the British ambassador than Congress, or, at some stages of the negotiation than Pauncefote was with his own government. In this respect, therefore, negotiations took on a significantly different shape from those over the Bering Sea or the Venezuela boundary. In those disputes negotiations were tortuous largely because solutions were traded back and forth between the two governments with each side attempting to second-guess the other and often much time elapsing whilst the next move was formulated in a somewhat Byzantine and secretive process. Pauncefote found his dealings with Blaine and Olney frustrating, and vice versa. By contrast, as the drafting of the treaty demonstrated, solutions to the canal dispute were often openly formulated in informal discussions between Hay and Pauncefote, working in concert to satisfy the demands of their respective domestic audiences. The 'tension point' in negotiations was therefore different. Another factor that seems to have altered the centre of gravity of the negotiations was the retirement of Lord Salisbury from the post of Foreign Secretary. As Zara Steiner has noted, Lansdowne, especially in his early years, sought the views of senior Foreign Office officials more than Salisbury did.³⁵ Since he had no previous experience in the post, it appears that Lansdowne was not

³⁴ *Review of Reviews* (New York), vol.xxi, p.281, quoted in Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.179.

³⁵ Steiner, *Foreign Office*, p.55.

only happy to extend Pauncefote's term of office, but also more than ready to give weight to the views of the man who had spent over ten years in Washington. Lansdowne's attitude in this respect was demonstrated from early on in his term of office, when he wrote to Pauncefote saying that

... I cannot resist telling you how sincerely I congratulate myself on my good fortune in finding you still at your post. Nothing could be more reassuring to me than this reflection. It will always be a pleasure to me to hear from you, the more frankly you write to me the better I shall be pleased – when you do so you will, I am afraid, have to bear in mind that my time has been too fully occupied of late to permit me to follow the course of international affairs as closely as I should have liked. You will therefore find me receptive but badly informed.³⁶

This was something of an admission by the man just promoted to the post of Foreign Secretary, and underlines the authority which Pauncefote had acquired. A little later, with difficulties over the canal negotiations mounting, he confirmed his reliance on Pauncefote by writing to him:

This new complication encourages me to make a suggestion which I have been meditating since I came to office, viz that you should, if it is not very inconvenient consent to remain at Washington for a further period of a year. We shall have difficult problems to consider and I am new to my work. I should like to be able to depend for a little while longer on your invaluable assistance.³⁷

In accepting this offer, Pauncefote stressed what he felt were his strengths, and again referred to the closeness of the two countries, writing:

It is most gratifying to me to feel that I enjoy your Lordship's confidence in these troubled times and I earnestly hope that my long experience of this country and my good relations with the administration and with the people generally, will under your able guidance be of utility in disposing of the two important and difficult

³⁶ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, 11 Nov. 1900, PRO, Lansdowne papers, FO800/144.

³⁷ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, 14 Dec. 1900, PRO, Lansdowne papers, FO800/144.

questions (the only two hopefully) which threaten to disturb the *entente cordiale* namely Alaska and Nicaragua.³⁸

This extension of Pauncefote's term of office confirmed the high esteem in which the British political establishment held him. Similarly, McKinley had a good degree of respect for Hay's ability to formulate foreign policy. Therefore, Hay and Pauncefote's good working relationship was enhanced by the fact that they were entrusted by their superiors to come up with acceptable solutions to the problem at hand. As will be seen, however, this relationship was put to the severest of tests by the demands that Congress made with regard to the formulation of the canal treaty. That agreement *was* ultimately reached in the face of these competing forces must in some measure be put down to the strength of what might be termed the 'Hay-Pauncefote axis,' even if some of the problems they faced were of their own making.

There is ample evidence to show that Hay and Pauncefote were largely in agreement, both on the shape that the canal treaty should take and also in their attitude towards Congress. Their letters, not only to each other but also to others show a considerable consistency of view over the affair. That Pauncefote was ready from an early stage to accept that the canal would be built, and the British input would be limited to having a say in the conditions under which it would operate, was evident from an early stage in negotiations. He made this clear, writing to Salisbury in January 1899 that

It was apparent from the tone of the debate and from the attitude of the Press, that whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the mode of proceeding and of dealing with the difficulties, financial and political, public sentiment is firmly set upon the construction of the canal at whatever cost.³⁹

³⁸ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, 25 Dec. 1900, PRO, Lansdowne papers, FO800/144.

³⁹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 20 Jan. 1899, PRO, FO55/392.

Writing to James Bryce, something of a confidant of Pauncefote where Anglo-American affairs were concerned, he made it quite clear what he accepted and what he rejected about the US position. Importantly, he realised that the 1850 Clayton-Bulwer treaty was no longer worth preserving, something that he appears to have recognised before his own government, writing in January 1900:

The horizon here is not much clearer than at home, and the canal question has stirred up the muddy sentiment of anti-British feeling which lies below the surface and for a while had settled down lower than usual.

My view of the position is that if we can secure by negotiations the 3 great points viz. 1. neutralization 2. equality of treatment 3. free transit at all times, subject to reasonable tolls – we should let the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty go by the board.

But we cannot with dignity accept the terms dictated by the Senate with such singular insolence and effrontery. That body is becoming worse every session and is now more like a flock of sheep driven by mad dogs. The country does not understand the question. The people think we want to prevent the Canal being built and hold on to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty for that purpose alone. They think that if they build the canal at their own cost they should be free from all conditions, forgetting that eventually the cost will be made good by tolls on the shipping of all nations and that neutralisation of the canal has been the historic policy of the US before the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and down to the present time - and that you cannot have neutralisation without the concurrence of other Powers.⁴⁰

Pauncefote's letter to Bryce typifies his mixture of practical good sense, mixed in with an impatience and condescension towards Congress. Pauncefote reiterated his views on it in a letter nine days later to Lord Salisbury, which bears quoting at some length because of the way in which the ambassador revealingly placed the negotiations in the wider context of Anglo-American relations:

Your Lordship will see... there is an agitation for a revival of the popular cry for an exclusively American Canal, and the idea is to ignore the Commission of Inquiry which has not yet concluded its labours, as well as the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. Should

⁴⁰ Pauncefote to Bryce, 10 Jan. 1900, Bryce papers, MS Bryce 116, fos. 185-186.

this move be successful it will place the President and his administration in a very serious position and imperil international relations.

Mr. Hay therefore ... instructed Mr. Choate to approach your Lordship with an urgent request that you will save the situation by agreeing now to conclude a treaty modifying the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty....

Hay spoke to me anxiously on the subject and begged me to write to your Lordship in support of his request ...

I venture to observe ... that the proposed convention would be for the benefit of the world at large; that its conclusion at the present time would strengthen the relations between the two nations, that the canal would certainly be made by the US in the face of our opposition and we may have much more difficulty later on maintaining the "general principle" of the Clayton Bulwer Treaty, whereas the proposed Convention secures all that the world at large can reasonably demand - that the question being one of worldwide interest it seems hardly worthwhile to make it depend on the issue of the Canadian negotiations which are of a purely local character ... As regards the Alaska Boundary, the national feeling is almost as intense as that regarding the Monroe Doctrine and the opposition of Great Britain to its construction would undoubtedly impair very seriously the good relations between the two countries, and probably bring back the state of tension which existed at the time of the Venezuela boundary trouble. America seems to be our only friend just now and it would be unfortunate to quarrel with her. These and other considerations occur to me and are no doubt in your Lordship's mind - but there may be higher and more potent reasons of which I am not aware, giving a different aspect to the question.⁴¹

The above letter is significant, not only for its importance regarding the canal negotiations, but also because it explicitly draws together several of the strands that are implicit in much of Pauncefote's diplomacy throughout the 1890s. In particular, his wish not to upset the United States unduly, and to subsume Canadian interests (a merely 'local issue') to the greater Anglo-American good were evident elsewhere in his diplomacy. Also, of relevance to the line of enquiry pursued in this chapter is his emphasis on the exhortations of Hay in the matter, and his complete willingness to repeat them to Salisbury.

⁴¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 19 Jan 1900, Salisbury papers, vol. 40, fos. 54 -57.

Meanwhile, it is clear that Hay was in sympathy with Pauncefote, both over his view both of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, and his attitude to the Senate. The closeness of his views to those of Pauncefote over the matter are clearly demonstrated in a letter written later in 1900 to President McKinley, in which he wrote:

The Senate will certainly pass the Hepburn Bill [introduced by Senator Hepburn to circumvent the necessity of agreement with Britain] as soon as they can get at it – which leaves us in a difficult position. If the Canal Convention is not ratified, the Clayton Bulwer treaty remains in full force. This is not merely my view. It is the view of every Secretary of State for fifty years, and it had the support of the Senate Committee of Foreign Relations in their recent report. But the Hepburn Bill directs you to act as if that treaty did not exist – that is to repudiate and violate a solemn obligation to a friendly power, when that power is perfectly ready and willing to release us from it. I believe nothing like this has been done in the history of the world.⁴²

And, at the end of the year, when the Senate had rejected the canal convention, an exasperated Hay wrote to Henry White in London, expressing further his great frustration over the actions of the Senate, saying:

[Henry Cabot] Lodge has now come out in a carefully prepared interview saying that a treaty, when it is sent to the Senate, is not properly speaking a treaty – it is merely a project. That is to say that if France and the U. S. make a treaty, after careful study and negotiations, it is nothing more, when sent to the Senate, than a petition from the two nations to that body, to make a real treaty for them. The attitude of the Senate towards public affairs makes all serious negotiations impossible.

I am sick to the heart of the whole business, and shall gladly get out at the first opportunity ...⁴³

Similarly, in a letter to Joseph Choate, he again showed how he was more in sympathy with the British government than with Congress, writing:

⁴² Hay to McKinley, 23 Sept. 1900, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

⁴³ Hay to White, 23 Dec. 1900, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

As to the attitude of the British government - it is not to be questioned that they have a perfect right to reject the amended treaty, if they think best. They generously gave us our release from the Clayton-Bulwer Convention, in the terms we ourselves suggested. We have suffered a rebuff at the hands of the Senate; it is our dignity that has suffered and not that of England. If Great Britain should now reject the Treaty the general opinion of mankind would justify her in it. If our Congress should then go forward and violently abrogate the Clayton - Bulwer treaty by legislative action - which is to be apprehended - we shall be putting ourselves hopelessly in the wrong, and not, so far as I can see, injuring England, except to the extent that the interruption of friendly relations will injure us both. The President's veto can not prevent this, as both Senate and house show two-thirds against him in the matter.⁴⁴

And, in a letter to a senator, Hay wrote that 'the British government have shown a very fair and reasonable spirit.'⁴⁵ This contrasts notably with his view of the Senate, of which he said 'the minority is so savagely resolved upon a violent solution and the majority is so completely terrorised by the minority that I am convinced nothing further can be done.'⁴⁶

Thus this frustration with the Senate was a recurrent feature in the correspondence of both Pauncefote and Hay. The question of the power of the Senate over foreign relations had been a constant headache for Pauncefote throughout the 1890s. Previous secretaries of state had also been frustrated by it from time to time, most notably in its destruction of the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty in 1897. However, in John Hay Pauncefote seems to have found an American colleague who found the institution even more perplexing than he did. This concern over the power of Congress was not just confined to the two men, however. For example, the matter was also taken up in an article in *Harper's Weekly* in June 1901, which considered the powers given to the Senate to be a 'mistake of the fathers' and considered that

⁴⁴ Hay to Choate, 21 Dec. 1900, LOC, Choate papers, box 14.

⁴⁵ Hay to Foraker, 23 Aug. 1901, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

⁴⁶ Hay to Choate, 5 Feb. 1901, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

Both Lord Pauncefote and Secretary Hay have yielded to the Senate, and democracy reigns. After standing in the way and preventing the ratification of treaties of first rate importance since the time when the Washington treaty was entered into (1871), the Senate has now demanded the right to sit in the diplomatic game from the dealing of the cards to the taking of the last trick. Here is a remarkable development in international relations, and another piece of evidence that the fathers did not build so wisely as they thought when they assumed that the three so called independent departments of the government would always refrain from interfering with one another. With the negotiation of the new Hay-Pauncefote treaty goes, for the moment, the last shred of Executive independence ... the President ... now ... cannot enter into a treaty with a foreign power unless he has first obtained the assent of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, or of its chairman.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, as Henry Adams noted on the issue of Hay's relationship with the Senate, he did find the process of brokering agreements with senators a particularly personal trial, as Adams put it:

... he certainly has organic trouble with the Senate ... Hay was made to be a first-rate ambassador abroad; he loathes being a third rate politician at home. He thinks that the proper man for the cabinet is some one like Platt or Quay or McKinley; someone with whom the senators can play poker and drink whiskey and hatch jobs in a corner and so get things done. He feels that he can't do it, and it takes the life out of him.⁴⁸

And, as a more recent writer has observed, Hay made 'little effort to conceal his contempt for the Senators, and they reciprocated by manhandling some of his treaties.'⁴⁹ Such comments mirror the view of Pauncefote that he 'did little to improve public opinion [in the United States], even senatorial opinion.'⁵⁰ Thus, as with other negotiations, it seems fair to say that although the two men undoubtedly had to face

⁴⁷ Henry Loomis Nelson, *Harper's Weekly* (22 June 1901), extract included in Pauncefote to Lansdowne FO5/2457.

⁴⁸ Levenson, *Letters*, vol. v, p.204.

⁴⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall inc., 1980), p.487.

⁵⁰ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 13.

political and institutional obstacles in getting their treaty accepted, their lack of personal rapport with senators did not help their cause.

That the two men were in substantial harmony in their views over the issue is demonstrated by a letter from Hay to the US ambassador at London, Joseph Choate, in which he wrote:

He [Pauncefote] and I are entirely in agreement as to the leading principles to be observed in making such a treaty, and also in regard to the peculiar necessities of the political situation in Washington, which, of course, you understand; but which neither Lord Lansdowne nor any European public official can possibly understand who has not lived in America.⁵¹

Hay's assertion that 'Lord Lansdowne nor any other European public official' could understand the political situation in Washington also emphasises the importance he attached to Pauncefote's role. He saw the British ambassador as crucial to persuading the British government to accept the new treaty proposal.

Finally in a letter to a US senator, when the final version of the treaty was submitted to Congress, Hay once more underlined his commitment to good Anglo-American relations, writing:

It has been my firm and constant hope throughout these negotiations that a solution of this difficult and important question between the two governments would finally be reached which, instead of disturbing the amicable relations which have recently existed and ought always to exist between the United States and Great Britain, would make them more friendly still, and I believe the treaty now presented if finally established will have this desired effect.⁵²

⁵¹ Hay to Choate, 27 April, 1901, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

⁵² Hay to Cullom, 12 Dec. 1901, LOC, Hay papers, reel 2.

At the same time, Pauncefote was echoing this sentiment, writing that : ‘There is a general feeling ... that our attitude has been generous and that the Treaty will do much to keep up our good relations.’⁵³

As to Hay’s general approach to foreign policy, Adams observed that

Hay’s policy of removing one after another, all irritations and closing all discussions with foreign countries, roused incessant obstruction, which could be overcome only by patience and bargaining in executive patronage, if indeed it could be overcome at all. The price actually paid was not very great except in the physical exhaustion of Hay and Pauncefote, Root and McKinley.⁵⁴

The Alaska Boundary dispute

An initially complicating factor in the difficulties with the Senate over the trans-isthmian canal, was Canada’s desire that any such agreement should be linked to a comprehensive deal over the outstanding Canadian-American disputes.⁵⁵ Pauncefote believed that the questions should not be linked, and indeed his view prevailed, since the Hay–Pauncefote Treaty was concluded despite Canadian anxieties. Nevertheless, Hay and Pauncefote could not ignore American-Canadian issues, and the most pressing of these was the Alaska boundary dispute. Like the negotiations over the canal, this was a dispute which had been rumbling on for many years, and had the potential for a serious rupture of relations between the two countries. Its roots dated back to the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1825, which in turn influenced the Russian-American agreement of 1867, whereby the United States purchased Alaska. It was the gold rush in the Klondike River region of the late 1890s that gave the dispute a new urgency. The dispute was a complex one, but the main issue at stake in the negotiations of 1898-1903 was access to the economically important Lynn Canal, to which Canada claimed a

⁵³ Quote in C.S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.238.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.373

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.131.

right.⁵⁶ In some respects the argument had the potential to cause even more serious trouble than the isthmian canal dispute, since there was a genuine risk of armed conflict erupting. This does not imply that the two countries were close to formally declaring war over the issue, but there was a danger that matters could spiral out of control. The risk was that Canadians and Americans on the spot might take matters into their own hands, rather in the manner that the Bering Sea dispute threatened to flare up in 1890-91. Indeed, the Alaska boundary dispute was such a serious diplomatic incident that, with the threat of violent outbreaks between Canadian and American miners increasing, Roosevelt ordered troops into the area in late March 1902.⁵⁷

Evidently, the difficulties that faced Hay and Pauncefote over the Alaska issue were by no means trivial. However, because of other priorities and sensitivities, attempts at a resolution of the issue were repeatedly disrupted. It was at first hoped that the matter could be resolved by the Joint Commission that was set up to resolve all major outstanding US – Canadian issues (an idea which McKinley had suggested to Pauncefote in March 1898).⁵⁸ As discussed earlier, that hope was dashed when the commission broke up without agreement in February 1899. Again, in the spring of that year, Pauncefote almost settled the issue in discussion with Ambassador Choate in London, but their arbitration formula was rejected by Canadian premier Wilfred Laurier, and, now leader of the opposition, Sir Charles Tupper.⁵⁹ In language with which Pauncefote was familiar from his dealings with him over the Bering Sea dispute, Tupper claimed that

No more monstrous, no more insulting proposition could be made. The result of many years' close acquaintance with British statesmen had impressed him forcibly with their great unwillingness to allow any circumstances whatever even to threaten collision with the United States ... If England had treated France [in the Fashoda

⁵⁶ Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, p.36.

⁵⁷ *ibid* p.38.

⁵⁸ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.163.

⁵⁹ *ibid* p.165.

affair] as she was treating the United States today the Nile would now not have been in possession of Great Britain.⁶⁰

Ironically, it was the very truth of this statement that made the wisdom of holding out against an agreement an unwise one for Canada. Because of Canadian intransigence and the fact that the canal treaty became a priority, little progress was made on the Alaskan issue for nearly two years.⁶¹ Also, for several months during 1899, Pauncefote was preoccupied with the Hague Peace Conference. Because of this, the boundary negotiations were dealt with by the first secretary at the Washington embassy, Reginald Tower, who managed to work out a *modus vivendi* with Hay in October 1899, agreeing on a provisional border that made some concessions to Canada, whilst negotiations for a permanent settlement dragged on.⁶² Because of its support in the Second South African War, the British government was receptive to Canada's input. However, the United States was more comfortable with the *modus vivendi* agreement than was Canada - thus by prolonging negotiations, Canada played into American hands.

Because of these factors, the Alaskan dispute was not brought to a conclusion during Pauncefote's lifetime. However, when their minds were focussed on it, the issue again served to point up how well Hay and Pauncefote worked together. In an indication of this, Hay wrote to Choate at one point in the negotiations contrasting the good relations between the two men and the pressures they were under from external factors, saying:

Lord Pauncefote has arrived, apparently very well and happy, and sanguine, as he always is, of the speedy settlement of all our troubles ... I have heard of Lord Pauncefote saying since he arrived that he and I could settle the [Alaskan boundary] matter in an hour. I think this is entirely true if we lived in an atmosphere of pure reason but this is far from being the case. Lord Pauncefote has Canada behind him, which he cannot convince, and behind us is the Senate, thirty one members of which

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 24 July, 1899, quoted in C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.142.

⁶¹ Perkins, *Great Rapprochement*, p.165.

⁶² Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 145, p.149.

can oppose a categorical veto to anything the executive may determine upon. I have my doubts whether even our *modus vivendi*, in which we gained virtually everything, would pass the Senate if it required their sanction. The narrowness and prejudice of the men from the northwest is beyond any idea I had ever formed, though I have had occasion to know them pretty well. I do not mean that I entirely despair of coming to any arrangement but the difficulties in the way are certainly very great.⁶³

Just as with the canal issue then, Pauncefote's communications over the Alaska boundary dispute suggested that he and Hay were in greater agreement than their respective superiors. In April 1901, the two men agreed to a binational commission – an idea that Canada once more rejected, as they wanted neutral arbitrators involved.⁶⁴ With the death of President McKinley (assassinated in September 1901) and his replacement by Theodore Roosevelt, their task was made even more difficult. Hay found he was no longer just at odds with Congress, but with his own President as well. Hay's biographer has made the point that unlike Roosevelt and others, he 'considered good Anglo-American relations more important than upholding the American claim in Alaska.'⁶⁵ Indeed, years later Roosevelt wrote that 'Hay could not be trusted where England was concerned.'⁶⁶ In one of his last despatches on the subject, Pauncefote made clear how Hay's efforts to reach a settlement over the boundary dispute had been cast aside by President Roosevelt – he disapproved of settling the dispute via international arbitration. Domestic factors and the circumstances of the Second South African War had also made matters more complex. Pauncefote wrote to Lansdowne that he was

... surprised to observe a marked change of attitude on his [Hay's] part in relation to the [Alaska boundary] question. He was quite despondent as to the prospect of any agreement for an arbitration. He gave me to understand that a strong opposition had arisen from an unexpected quarter to the mode of settlement proposed by him in May last. He stated that the President disapproved of his Draft Convention and would

⁶³ Hay to Choate, Nov. 13, 1899, Choate papers, box 14.

⁶⁴ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 166.

⁶⁵ Clymer, *Hay*, p. 167.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, p. 38.

not have sanctioned it had he been in power at the time. That the President considers the claim of the United States is so manifestly clear and unanswerable that he is not disposed to run the risk of sacrificing American territory under a compromise which is the almost certain result of an arbitration .

This is a surprising change of sentiment considering his strenuous advocacy of arbitration in his Presidential Message.

It appears that the senators whom he has consulted are in favour of letting the question stand over for the present as all is going smoothly under the "modus vivendi." I learn also from a private but reliable source that the President is anxious to postpone the question until after the war in South Africa. I cannot but suspect that this sudden desire to postpone the question is due to political considerations of a domestic character such as pressure from the Western States and the agitation raised against England at the present time by the pro-Boer and Irish parties.⁶⁷

For his part, Pauncefote, as in the Bering Sea dispute, became frustrated with the uncompromising attitude of the Canadians. Reportedly this frustration led him to telling Henry White that 'the very name of Canada makes me sick.'⁶⁸ This comment is another example of how Pauncefote, despite his reputation for professionalism could, on occasion, be indiscreet, and had his words been made public, there could have been serious repercussions, even though he was probably merely reflecting the exasperation that members of the British government also felt over the Canadian issue.

However, once the canal issue had been settled, the way was clear to resolve the Alaska boundary dispute on its own merits. Thus, in an optimistic letter, Pauncefote wrote to Lansdowne revealing his sense of pride at the prospect of achieving his aim, as well as a somewhat chauvinistic attitude towards his foreign colleagues, saying:

I am disposed to think that it would be wise not to delay much longer taking up the Alaska Boundary and other questions dealt with by the Joint Commission. It is the last of the four great disputes which have been for so many years a constant menace to our good relations and I think we may count on the President and Mr. Hay to strain every nerve to accomplish a settlement and thus wipe the slate clean.

⁶⁷ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, 28 March 1902, PRO, FO5/2510.

⁶⁸ Quote in Clymer, *Hay*, p.170.

The success of the canal treaty has been a great blow to my foreign colleagues here. Not one of them has offered congratulations, and throughout they have maintained a lugubrious silence. It was hoped no doubt that the treaty would be mangled in the Senate and that the *entente cordiale* would perish with it.

If we now settle the Alaska trouble they will be in despair and I shall be able to say with infinite satisfaction *nunc dimittis*.⁶⁹

In an enthusiastic response, Lansdowne gave Pauncefote encouragement: 'The conditions are favourable and may never be more so. How delightful it would be if you should be able before you leave Washington to give us that clean slate which we all so much desire.'⁷⁰ Because of his death, Pauncefote was not able to see the Alaska boundary issue resolved. However, when his successor at Washington, Michael Herbert, did sign an agreement providing for a settlement of the issue (the Hay-Herbert Treaty of 24 January 1903) it was very much along the lines agreed by Hay and Pauncefote in May 1901. Indeed, as one observer has noted: 'Pauncefote, too, could have claimed much of the credit; for ... its substance and to a large extent its very wording followed the draft of 1901, for which he and the Secretary of State had been responsible.'⁷¹ Thus, within a year of his death, and largely because of the groundwork he had done with John Hay, the 'clean slate' which Pauncefote had discussed in his correspondence with Lansdowne had been achieved.

Conclusion

Several years after Hay and Pauncefote had been working together, the former ambassador to Britain, Joseph Choate, paid tribute to the strength of their working relationship, saying that

If ever two men deserved the gratitude of their respective nations, and each of the other's nation, those men were John Hay and Lord Pauncefote, perfectly plain, straightforward men who believed that it was their part to say what they meant and

⁶⁹ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, 19 Dec. 1901, PRO, FO800/144.

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, 31 Dec. 1901, PRO, FO800/144.

⁷¹ C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p.307.

mean what they said, and to express in perfectly clear English what was in their mind .
And ... They lived and died without ever once suspecting that their words were
capable of any other meaning than was borne on the face of them.⁷²

It was certainly true, that in some respects, the relationship between the two men was the 'glue' that kept relations between the two countries cordial during a difficult and significant period in their relations. This was especially true during the presidency of William McKinley who left most foreign policy decisions to Hay.⁷³ The achievements of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, the Alaska boundary agreement, and, indirectly, the Hague Peace Treaty were amongst the prominent fruits of their good relationship. As C. S. Campbell put it 'No diplomats could have been more anxious to resume negotiations than Hay and Pauncefote, few better understood their business or had more sympathetic superiors' although he did qualify this by saying that it was the circumstances of the Spanish-American, and then the Second South African War that allowed them to attempt to capitalise on this.⁷⁴ However, ironically, it can also be seen that part of the difficulty they encountered sprang from the nature of the two men themselves. Most importantly, with regard to the canal treaty, neither of them were fully attuned to the necessity of ensuring that the US Congress be consulted at every stage of the process, and this proved to be the real stumbling block. Just as the British government objected to the way in which the Americans appeared initially to present them with a *fait accompli*, and was offended more by the manner in which the matter was being handled, rather than the actuality of what was happening, so key senators were offended by Hay and Pauncefote's lack of consultation in drafting the treaty initially. Looked at one way, Hay rather than Pauncefote was to blame for this state of affairs, since he was the politician being held to account, and the onus was on him to achieve a political settlement by using all the skills at his disposal. However, Pauncefote must also share some of the blame. He had, after all, been working in Washington for over ten years, and for him not to foresee that his treaty might run into trouble with Congress betrayed an unwillingness to adapt to the context in which he

⁷² Joseph Choate, speech, 4 Feb. 1913, quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp.290-291.

⁷³ C. S. Campbell, *Understanding*, p172.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, pp.170-171.

was operating – despite his avowed wish for closer Anglo-American relations. Thus whilst the Hay-Pauncefote treaty was ultimately something of which both men were proud, it is an achievement that might have been accomplished a good deal earlier had one or both men had a more acute and flexible political ear. Had this been achieved more quickly, it is also possible to speculate that negotiations over the Alaska boundary would also have been concluded more quickly, and thus, Pauncefote's longed for 'clean slate' would actually have been achieved by the time of his death. Nevertheless, their mutual support over a range of issues did help to ensure that the US government remained sympathetic towards Britain during the Second South African War, and this, as much as concrete agreements in their name, was a significant diplomatic achievement.

Chapter Eight: Pauncefote's legacy.

Conclusion

...he [Pauncefote] has now left behind him the reputation of having done more than any one man to cement that union between the two great Anglo-Saxon races which is one of the healthiest and most promising indications of our time.

Lord Salisbury, House of Lords, 2 June 1902¹

...the diplomates [sic] count for very little in Washington now, or even of a negative quantity ... They can now intrigue among each other without disturbing us.

Henry Adams, 20 April 1902.²

Introduction

The above statements offer contrasting, but not necessarily incompatible, views of the role of an ambassador to Washington at the beginning of the twentieth century. If both Henry Adams' somewhat cynical view and Lord Salisbury's high estimation are to be reconciled, two main explanations emerge. One is the simple fact that by the turn of the century the United States' power - economic, political, and to a lesser extent military - had grown to such an extent that European intrigues tended to be directed towards gaining the United States' approval, rather than undermining that country's interests.³ The other, which relates more directly to Britain, is that during Pauncefote's time as ambassador, the long lasting disputes between the two countries had been resolved, or at least neutralised, as serious issues. Thus, looked at one way, Pauncefote's biggest achievement was to manage successfully the change in status of the two most powerful nations on earth, without a significant rupture occurring. In so doing, ironically, he arguably made the role of his successors less important, since the issues they had to deal with were, for a time, less pressing. The object of this concluding chapter is to

¹ Lord Salisbury, quoted in *The Times*, 3 June 1902, p.6.

² Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 20 April 1902, Levenson, *Letters*, vol. 5, p. 330.

³ See, for example, Jonas, *Diplomatic History*, p.65.

analyse Pauncefote's legacy in Washington, and to probe his overall weaknesses and strengths. In so doing, the immediate reaction to his death will be examined in order to gauge the opinion of contemporaries. After this, the longer view will be taken, examining the extent of his legacy, comparing his role to that of his predecessors and successors, and assessing his achievements in the context in which he was operating.

The reaction to Pauncefote's death

If Pauncefote's achievement were to be judged solely by the immediate reaction to his death, he could be viewed as the ideal diplomat. He died of a heart attack on 24 May 1902 at the age of 73, having suffered from gout and heart troubles for some time.⁴ Tributes flowed from both sides of the Atlantic from both politicians and the press, in a widespread and exceptional manner. President Roosevelt went out of his way to emphasise his respect for the late ambassador by attending his funeral himself – a break in protocol where ambassadors were concerned.⁵ In a further sign of respect, it was arranged for Pauncefote's body to be taken back to Britain in the US cruiser *Brooklyn*, draped in an American flag.⁶ At the British end, the Admiralty made careful arrangements for receiving his body in Southampton, including a small flotilla of naval vessels, a marine band and a naval gun salute.⁷ In a personal letter to Lady Pauncefote, Roosevelt sounded a note of compassion, that went beyond what might have been expected, writing that

We both of us sorrowed with you and yours in your great trial; I honoured your husband for his great public services, and I loved him for his high worth as a man. I only wish there was more we could have done.⁸

⁴ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, pp.293-294.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 296.

⁶ *ibid*.

⁷ Arrangements for reception, Admiral Charles F. Hotham, 12 July 1902, ADM1/7620.

⁸ Roosevelt to Lady Pauncefote, 29 May 1902, quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.294.

His high opinion of Pauncefote was also confirmed by the fact that he ordered the United States flag on the White House to be flown at half mast, apparently saying 'I didn't do it because he was British ambassador, but because he was a damn good fellow.'⁹ And according to the journalist G.W. Smalley:

Next after Mr. Hay, it was perhaps Lord Pauncefote whose influence on the President led him gently to an attitude of benevolence toward the Mother Country. He accepted Lord Pauncefote as a type. The British Ambassador had a directness of method and a transparent honest sincerity in all his dealings which profoundly impressed the President. He knew when Lord Pauncefote said a thing it was so, and that in all Anglo-American issues, the Ambassador's voice was the voice of England.¹⁰

Three years later, on receiving congratulations from Lady Pauncefote on being elected to the presidency for a second time, Roosevelt's praise was undimmed, writing:

I am sure you realise how often we think of you and Lord Pauncefote. I do not recall any other family of diplomats who combined in so high a degree great public power with the power of attracting in private life such strong affections.¹¹

In a similar vein to Roosevelt, John Hay wrote to Lady Pauncefote that

It is we who are under the deepest obligations to him for a succession of generous and friendly acts, running through all the years he has resided here. While at all times the able and faithful representative of England, eager for her interests and jealous of her honor, he was a statesman and diplomatist of so lofty and liberal a spirit that he always saw and appreciated our point of view and in fact knew this country as well as we did. I never hesitated to open my whole heart to him, for he was the soul of honour and of candor. Few men of our time have been his equals in ability, wide knowledge of affairs, and that high courtesy which comes from a kind and liberal heart. I am sure no one - not of his immediate family - can, more than I, feel in his loss a sense of personal

⁹ Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.297.

¹⁰ Smalley, *Memories*, p.216.

¹¹ Roosevelt to Lady Pauncefote, 3 Jan.1905, British Library, Roosevelt Papers, reel 412.

and incurable bereavement ... His career forms a bright page in the diplomatic history of the British Empire.¹²

As far as leading British politicians were concerned, the tributes were equally warm. Lord Salisbury's tribute to him in the House of Lords, on 3 June 1902 included some significant comments, describing Pauncefote as somebody

... whom I through many years of friendship deeply valued and whose death is a very serious loss to the public service of this Empire ... he belonged to a class of public servants of whom, perhaps we do not quite think enough, but whose powers of mind, whose unflagging exertions, whose fidelity to their duty and to their chiefs, are among the causes which enable this country to uphold her strength and her isolation in spite of all dangers and difficulties by which from time to time our history is threatened.

Lord Pauncefote is a very remarkable instance, though he is by no means a solitary one ... I am not aware that he had any special means of obtaining the recognition he deserved. He rose because all with whom he came into contact recognised his sterling abilities and his entire devotion to his country.¹³

Lord Rosebery concurred in this tribute and added:

I am sure that no-one could utter a more auspicious hope over his grave than that his death, as well as his life, may have tended to draw nearer the union between the two great branches of the English speaking people.¹⁴

The Press

The press, of whom Pauncefote had been so wary and cynical throughout his time in Washington, was similarly full of praise for his achievements. Doubtless he would have been happy to include such favourable cuttings in his despatches home, despite his views. A recounting of some of these tributes is worthwhile, since they provide another

¹² Quoted in Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.295.

¹³ Reported in *The Times*, 3 June, 1902, p.6.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

yardstick by which he can be judged – whether he actually lived up to this high praise will be assessed below.

The *New York Evening Post*, for example, contrasted his popularity with that of his predecessors, saying that

The United States has been unfortunate in its British Ministers. It sent Lord Sackville West home because of his indiscretion in the Murchison incident, and Sir Edward Thornton, who was his predecessor, while highly respected as a gentleman, never made friends here. But Lord Pauncefote has been extremely popular in this country, as well as highly respected by Queen Victoria, King Edward and the government at home.¹⁵

Similarly, the *New York Tribune*, a paper about which Pauncefote had on occasion been particularly scathing, was full of praise for his achievements, saying that in his death

... the British Empire suffers bereavement and the whole world a loss ... in sending him to us Great Britain paid us the compliment of sending us one than whom there was none better in all her distinguished diplomatic service. If the character, career and known abilities of her ambassador were the criterion of her judgement, she esteemed her embassy at Washington second in importance to no other in the world ... He came to this country at a time when, through impatience and misapprehension, relations between the United States and Great Britain were far less cordial than they should have been. He is removed from this place forever at a time when those relations are characterized with especial cordiality, confidence and intimacy.¹⁶

Elsewhere in the paper, amidst extensive coverage marking his death, it went on to say that

It was Lord Pauncefote's intimacy with American public men that time and again enabled him to smooth over difficult situations and make his career in the United States one long record of conciliatory yet self-interested diplomacy. His personality, his long

¹⁵ *New York Evening Post*, 24 May 1902, p.1.

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, 25 May 1902, extract in PRO, FO5/2486.

experience and his unfailing amiability undoubtedly inspired a degree of personal confidence in his utterances and policies not often given to the conventional diplomat.

The paper also drew attention to John Hay's response to Pauncefote's death, saying that

Secretary Hay, whose cordial personal friendship and official relations with the ambassador have been for several years most close, was too deeply affected by Lord Pauncefote's death to trust himself to any formal estimate to-day of the loss to the two nations and to the world at large. Speaking from his own experience, he regarded Lord Pauncefote as perhaps the one of all Englishmen who knew Americans the best, and in his opinion no foreign representative, consistent with his duty to his own country could have been a better friend of the United States. In all his dealings with this government, Lord Pauncefote had never failed to show the greatest solicitude for American welfare, and on more than one occasion had proved a warm friend indeed.

On his general standing in the United States the paper commented:

In the thirteen years that Lord Pauncefote represented Great Britain at Washington he had no peer in the diplomatic corps in personal popularity with the American people and in cordial relations with the United States government. He was indefatigable in his efforts to cement more closely the relationship between the two nations and unremitting in cultivating that harmony of attitude on the part of the United States and England toward the other great powers that was conspicuously exhibited ... at the Hague Conference ... he came to be regarded as one of the warmest friends the United States possessed in the council of nations

On the British side, *the Westminster Gazette* concurred in this view:

The Empire loses one of its finest diplomatists. He filled many posts, and always with success. His stay in Washington was prolonged because there was no-one in the diplomatic service to replace him who had anything like his status, influence, or power for good.¹⁷

¹⁷ *ibid.*

In its leader comment, *The Times*, also went beyond the usual tributes to someone who had recently died, saying:

Lord Pauncefote's career was long and varied, but it is essentially the last and most important period of it which he spent in America that will secure for him an honourable and conspicuous place in the annals of British diplomacy. And not in our own country alone, we believe he will be long and affectionately remembered after his death has been marked by signal and unusual tokens of the unique regard in which he was held by all Americans who came into contact with him ... How definite an impression his laborious life has left upon his fellow countrymen it is not easy to say. As a people we are prone to forget, perhaps never even recognise, the silent endeavours of diplomacy, except in those rare cases where a masterful personality like that of the "third great Canning" has linked itself with an international crisis so striking as to stamp itself indelibly on the national mind. But if Lord Pauncefote's worth is to receive its due recognition, it should be long before we forget those services to the cause of Anglo-American concord which the American press is commemorating to-day.¹⁸

However, *The Times* Washington correspondent, whilst full of praise for Pauncefote in general, did nonetheless point up one significant weakness, saying that

With Senators, in as much as the Senate has the last word on ratification, amendment or rejection of treaties, an ambassador has occasion for all his diplomatic resources. There is no diplomatic privity between them, they do not negotiate directly with each other, but the chances of getting a treaty safely past the reefs and shoal waters of the Senate depend much on the tact and good feeling of the envoy who is concerned. This is true not only of particular treaties and at particular moments, but of the general attitude of an ambassador and his general intercourse with senators.

Perhaps he was deficient in suppleness, in those intuitions which only diplomatists and women possess, and he may have been too prone to believe in the honesty of some of the politicians and diplomatists with whom he had to deal. For intrigue he had no gift and of deception he was incapable. Probably he underrated the value of opinion; it seemed to me he did not study carefully the currents of opinion in this country and the

¹⁸ *The Times*, 26 May 1902, p.9.

forces which are dominant in public life. But he made no serious mistake, though now and then he may have missed an opportunity.¹⁹

Whilst tributes given immediately after a public figure's death are almost guaranteed to be flattering, those given to Pauncefote are noteworthy since they do go beyond formal niceties, and much of what they say has been repeated by historians since. They also point to the value Pauncefote's contemporaries placed upon the role of the diplomat in the political process. The comments of such figures as Roosevelt, Hay and Salisbury all show a respect for his abilities that are striking in their warmth. For the purposes of this study, references to his overall contribution to the cause of better Anglo-American relations are the most interesting. On this theme, the American publication, *Harper's New Monthly* had been equally full of praise, even before his death, at the time when it was thought he would be retiring in the spring of 1900. In the article, it said that

It is safe to say that never before has the representative of another government accredited to Washington attained such popularity with the American people as Her Majesty's present ambassador ... Lord Pauncefote's work in Washington, extending over more than the last ten years, has been so far reaching in its character, has actually so shaped history that any brief appreciation of it is impossible ... There has, during the last decade been no more exacting post in the whole of the British service ... twenty five years ago no-one could have realised that it would ever be possible for the British minister, as he was then, to play such a prominent part in American affairs – to become such an actual figure, one may even say, in American history – as the first British ambassador to Washington has become...²⁰

At the time of his own retirement from the Foreign Office, Lord Salisbury wrote of his appreciation, saying that

I cannot part from the Foreign Office without writing you a word to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to you for the great support you have given me - and for the

¹⁹ *The Times*, 26 May 1902, p.6.

²⁰ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (Dec. 1899-May 1900), pp. 687-688.

valuable public service you have rendered by the very skilful discharge of your important duties. The value of your labours may be fairly measured by the contrast that may be observed in Anglo-American [relations?] at the time Lord Sackville left – and the present hour.²¹

Thus, Lord Pauncefote, who had been appointed to the Washington post because of the high esteem with which Lord Salisbury in particular held him, ended his career with that reputation intact and enhanced. The remaining sections of this chapter will examine to what extent that reputation was deserved, when examined in a wider context.

Comparisons with predecessors and successors

One way of gauging the extent to which these tributes had any substance to them, is by comparing the achievements and reputation of Pauncefote with those of his predecessors and successors in the Washington post. In chapter two, some comparisons have already been made with diplomats in other postings, and his immediate predecessor Lord Sackville.²²

The slowness of British governments to recognise the importance of the Washington mission has been discussed earlier in this thesis. It was something that was noted by President Buchanan, even before the civil war of 1861-65, when he wrote to the former British Foreign Secretary:

No two countries have ever existed on the face of the earth which could do each other so much good or so much harm ... Perhaps I attribute too much importance to the cultivation of friendly relations between the two countries; but I think you do not estimate this as highly as it deserves. Your mission here ought always to be filled by a

²¹ Salisbury to Pauncefote, 17 Nov. 1900, LOC, Pauncefote Papers.

²² See chapter 2 of this thesis.

first – rate man whose character is known in this country and whose acts and opinions will command respect and influence in England.²³

Whilst for most of the nineteenth century the British government did not attach great importance to its Washington mission, the representatives it sent there from the Civil War period to the beginning of the 1880s do appear to have possessed ability. Lord Lyons, who was minister from 1859 to 1865 during the Civil War period, was described by one writer as ‘a man of sense, of industry ... and earnestly devoted to his country and his profession,’ whilst another described his ‘decisive influence’ and brilliant career.²⁴ Similarly, Sir Edward Thornton who served from 1868-1881 was seen as ‘able and very popular with the Americans.’²⁵ Indeed, the two men faced genuine tests of their diplomatic skills, since they were operating in the difficult atmosphere created by the Civil War. Emphasising how delicate relations were at this time, Lyons commented in 1864 that ‘three fourths of the American people are eagerly longing for a safe opportunity of making war with England.’²⁶ In Thornton’s case, his task included the negotiation of the Treaty of Washington in 1871, which began the process of reducing the animosity experienced by his predecessor.²⁷

Therefore by the beginning of Lionel Sackville-West’s (later Lord Sackville) tenure in 1881, Anglo-American relations appeared to have improved - in part due to Thornton’s efforts – although beneath the surface several issues still remained to be confronted.²⁸ In Sackville’s term of office, serious disputes such as those over the Bering Sea, Venezuela, Alaska and the canal had not yet emerged as the serious points of contention that they became in the 1890s. Consequently Anglo-American relations

²³ President Buchanan to Lord Clarendon, April 1859, quoted in Beckles Willson, *Friendly Relations: A Narrative of Britain’s Ministers and Ambassadors to America, 1791-1930* (London: L. Dickson and Thompson, 1934), p. 202.

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 202, Allen, *Anglo-American Relations*, p.454.

²⁵ Allen, *Anglo-American Relations*, p.507.

²⁶ Quoted in C. S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, p.110.

²⁷ Allen, *Anglo-American Relations*, p.507.

²⁸ C. S. Campbell, *Rapprochement*, p.110.

were not forced to move one way or the other, and the full potential strength of the United States on the international stage had not yet registered on official British minds. Therefore, the routine attacks on Britain in US election campaigns rumbled on without any keen necessity for them to be challenged, or for a British minister to make his mark. Nevertheless, the Irish community in the United States was a particularly potent anti-British force in US politics during Sackville's time.²⁹ Given this, and that elections were a time when it paid for British officials to keep a low profile, in his handling of the 'Sackville affair' described earlier the British minister acted indiscreetly. His actions harmed Anglo-American relations, even if only temporarily. As shown above, Lord Salisbury himself made a favourably direct comparison with Anglo-American relations at the time of Lord Sackville's departure in 1889, and Pauncefote's in 1902. Neither does he appear to have shone in his post previous to the controversy. One writer described him as 'a simple, good tempered somewhat indolent man ... capable of steady work when occasion really demanded it.'³⁰ Cecil Spring-Rice, meanwhile, who worked under Sackville, had mixed views about him, stating that

'The Americans thoroughly understand him and tell him all sorts of things they don't to anyone else ... To our government unfortunately he is so hopelessly reserved that unless he is directly asked anything he never gives anything at all.'³¹

The fact that Salisbury was lining up Pauncefote for his job even before the scandal broke suggests that this view was not without foundation.³²

Thus, in briefly observing the records of Pauncefote's predecessors, an important point can be made in answer to the question 'do diplomats matter?' A clear answer is provided by Sackville's example: they certainly do if they get things wrong. Had a diplomatic blunder of this type been made during the Civil War, the consequences could have been far more serious. Leaving aside for the time being the

²⁹ Allen, *Anglo-American Relations*, p.521.

³⁰ Willson, *Friendly Relations*, p.245.

³¹ *ibid*, p.246.

³² See chapter 2 of this thesis.

discussion over the extent to which they shape the policy of or are merely a mouthpiece for their country, if they make a misjudgement, diplomats can undoubtedly have an adverse influence on relations. Therefore, the fact that Pauncefote's reputation was high in both Britain and the United States at the end of his term of office (despite the German controversy) is significant in itself. As highlighted in the course of this thesis, he did make errors of judgement and have weaknesses as an ambassador, but none of these came publicly into view in a way that would seriously derail the progress of better Anglo-American relations that he so desired.

It is difficult to draw unqualified conclusions from a comparison with Pauncefote's immediate successor, Sir Michael Herbert, since he died in September 1903, after less than a year in his post. The 'clean slate' that Pauncefote hankered after was achieved a few months after Pauncefote's death, with the signing of the Hay-Herbert Treaty as a solution to the Alaskan boundary dispute. However, this did not mean Anglo-American relations were completely without difficulties in the period leading up to the First World War. Events proved that it was still necessary to have a diplomat of stature and considerable competence in Washington, if the legacy of the 1890s was to blossom. This was demonstrated very soon after Pauncefote's death, in the shape of the Venezuela crisis of 1902-03. In essence, this involved an Anglo-German naval operation against Venezuela, in an attempt to retrieve unpaid debts from that country.³³ The United States government was nervous about any such operation, primarily because of its implications for the maintenance of the Monroe Doctrine – a principle that it had defended so staunchly in the earlier Venezuela dispute of 1895-6. Despite this, in the early stages of the operation, Britain misjudged the mood of the United States, assuming that it would not object to their actions. C.S. Campbell considered that this was in part due to Pauncefote's departure saying that

Most probably Britain's apparent carelessness about America was attributable to errors of judgement ... Deprived of mature counsel from America during the

³³ See Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, pp.28-34.

interregnum after the great ambassador's [Pauncefote's] death, just when intervention was planned, the government seems to simply have underestimated the dangers.³⁴

A more recent study has also agreed with this conclusion, asserting that 'Perhaps the seasoned British Ambassador, Julian Pauncefote, would have warned the Foreign Office about the folly of their ways.'³⁵ Although he had been somewhat slow to recognise the tenacity with which the Cleveland administration would defend this principle in the previous crisis, it is reasonable to assume that he would have been alert to such feelings a second time around. Initially, Pauncefote's replacement at Washington, Michael Herbert, who did not arrive in Washington until October 1902, reinforced the impression that the United States would not object to the joint action, but later began to express anxieties of which the British government took notice, and thus an agreement was worked out whereby the matter would go to arbitration.³⁶ Thus although it is now evident that President Roosevelt had seen Germany, rather than Britain as the real danger in the affair, the importance of having good advice from Washington was made clear, as was the fact that, like all friendships, the *entente* was something that had to be worked at. A positive consequence of the Venezuela affair, as far as Anglo-American relations were concerned, was that when Roosevelt unveiled his 'Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine - effectively claiming the power to police the Western hemisphere - it met with British approval.³⁷ Thus British policy had travelled some distance from the time when it balked over United States diplomatic intervention in Anglo-Venezuelan affairs in 1895.

Despite these difficulties, in his short tenure Herbert did achieve the signing of an agreement to settle the Alaska boundary dispute, and successfully cultivated his popularity with Theodore Roosevelt. The New York *Tribune* commented that 'it is not recalled that ever before has so intimate a personal friendship existed between a

³⁴ C.S. Campbell, quoted in Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, pp.29-30.

³⁵ Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams – German and American Imperialism in Latin America*. (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.81.

³⁶ Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, pp.31-32.

³⁷ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p.190.

president and a foreign diplomat as that between President Roosevelt and Ambassador Herbert.³⁸ Similarly, Henry Adams considered that Herbert ‘counted for double the value of an ordinary diplomat.’³⁹ Such comments, although anecdotal, give the impression that had he served a longer term, his standing and achievements might have overshadowed even Pauncefote’s. It should also be remembered that Roosevelt’s style of presidency was quite different from that of his predecessors. His was a much more personal and informal style, which attached great value to his unofficial links with ambassadors – something that was not true of the presidents of the 1890s.⁴⁰ He also reasserted the authority of the presidency in a way that had not been seen during Pauncefote’s time. It is true that Roosevelt expressed great respect for Pauncefote, but had he dealt with him for a longer period when in office it may have been that he would have found his somewhat formal bearing rather difficult to deal with. This view is supported by the advice that the journalist Valentine Chirol gave to one of Pauncefote’s successors, specifically that ‘the “discretion” & “reserve” which are the qualities that you deem to be most important in British Ambassador in Washington may come to be mistaken for aloofness & indifference, if not for actual outrageousness.’⁴¹ Discretion and reserve are two words that would certainly describe Pauncefote’s character – one observer described him as ‘a little remote and self-contained.’⁴² Thus, comparisons with Michael Herbert’s tenure of office send out mixed messages. Initially, his lack of experience appears to have momentarily damaged Anglo-American relations, but his personal popularity and ability to deal with politicians proved a great strength over the longer term. Ultimately the shortness of his tenure prevents a definitive assessment of whether he was a decisively more or less effective diplomat than Pauncefote, but he did appear to possess political skills that his predecessor lacked.

³⁸ Quoted in Nelson Manfred Blake, ‘Ambassadors at the Court of Theodore Roosevelt,’ *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 42:2, (Sept.1955), p.186.

³⁹ Adams, *Education*, p. 413.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Blake, ‘Ambassadors.’

⁴¹ Quoted in Neilson, ‘Marionette,’ p.74.

⁴² Willson, *Friendly Relations*, p. 262.

A more instructive comparison than that with the Washington career of Herbert, or even Sackville, is a comparison with Sir Mortimer Durand, who was ambassador from 1903-1906. Although Durand should have found relations with the United States government easier than in Pauncefote's time, with the major divisive issues such as the isthmian canal and Alaska boundary out of the way, the reverse was in fact true. So poor was his relationship with President Roosevelt that he was (unusually) removed from his position before serving out the standard five-year term as an ambassador. His plight demonstrated again how the failings of a particular individual could still be damaging to relations between the two countries. In his study of Durand in Washington, Peter Larsen highlighted how Roosevelt not only struggled to relate to the British ambassador, but also actively campaigned for his removal.⁴³ Larsen came to the conclusion that in the period 1904-1906, there is 'much evidence' that relations between Britain and the United States were 'marred by mutual misunderstanding and mistrust.'⁴⁴ He also went as far as to say that what he termed the "Durand affair" 'forces us to revise the picture of cordial Anglo-American relations in the first decade of the twentieth century.'⁴⁵ This suggests both that Pauncefote's legacy was still a fragile one, and that (despite what Henry Adams may have thought) ambassadors did still have a significant role to play. Certainly, the examples that Larsen cites of Roosevelt's correspondence regarding Durand do not suggest a constructive relationship between the two men. At one point the exasperated President wrote to the US ambassador to Great Britain, Whitelaw Reid, that

It would have been a good thing if I could have kept in touch with England thro' Durand, but [Secretary of State Elihu] Root and I, and for that matter [French ambassador Jean Jules] Jusserand and [German ambassador Speck von Sternberg] Speck also, have absolutely given up any effort to work with Durand at all. He seems to have the brain of about eight guinea-pig power. Why, under Heaven the English keep him here I do not know. If they do not care for an Ambassador, then abolish the

⁴³ Larsen, 'Durand' pp. 65-77.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.65.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.67.

embassy; but it is useless to have a worthy creature of mutton suet consistency like the good Sir Mortimer.⁴⁶

There is no evidence that Pauncefote was ever on the receiving end of such criticism from a United States President. Roosevelt found it difficult to make headway with Durand from early on in his ambassadorship, and as a recent study by William Tilchin has pointed out, this was not helped by the fact that he did not have great respect for Lord Lansdowne either. As Tilchin put it: 'President Roosevelt had confidence in neither, and neither understood Roosevelt very well.'⁴⁷ In November 1904, the President was writing frankly to his friend, Cecil Spring-Rice:

Great heavens ... how I wish you were ambassador here! There are fifty matters that come up that I would like to discuss with you, notably about affairs in the far east, and you could be of great service to your own country as well as to this country.⁴⁸

And, in a sign that such a state of affairs might have wider implications in terms of the Anglo-American dialogue, Roosevelt wrote a month later:

England is inclined to be friendly to us and is inclined to support Japan against Russia... she is pretty flabby and I am afraid to trust either the foresightedness or the tenacity of purpose of her statesmen.

And, at the same time he was writing:

Whether it is my fault or Sir Mortimer's ... our minds do not meet; and in any event I should be unwilling to speak with such freedom as I desire to anyone in whom I had not such absolute trust as I have in Spring Rice.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Roosevelt to Whitelaw Reid, April 1906, quoted in Larsen, 'Durand,' p.66.

⁴⁷ Tilchin, 'Roosevelt,' p.56

⁴⁸ Roosevelt to Spring Rice, November 1904, quoted in Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, p.59.

⁴⁹ Roosevelt, to George von Lengerke Meyer, 26 Dec. 1904, Roosevelt to Henry White, 27 Dec.1904, quoted in Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, p.60.

A little later, Roosevelt stepped up his objections, making it clear that he wanted the British government to know how he felt, writing to Reid:

I think you ought to let them [King Edward VII and Sir Edward Grey] both know confidentially of the utter worthlessness of Durand ... If he had been such a man as Spring Rice or such a man as Speck or Jusserand, [during the negotiations for the settlement of the Moroccan crisis] I would have told him at every turn just what was being done and the Foreign Office at London would have known every move. In short I would have consulted him just as I consulted Jusserand.⁵⁰

The issue of poor communications also had an impact during mediation over the final phases of the Russo-Japanese war, when Roosevelt expressed his dismay at the British position, writing to his English friend, Cecil Spring-Rice that

In my letters to you I have sometimes spoken sharply of the Kaiser. I want to say now that in these peace negotiations he has acted like a trump. He has done everything he could to make the Czar yield and had backed me up in every way, and I thoroughly appreciate how he has behaved.

However, he was critical of the British government's reluctance to use its influence on Japan, and thought that the British government would not have minded if the war had lasted longer.⁵¹ Similarly, Roosevelt worried about worsening relations with Canada, and Britain's role in that regard, saying that 'I am very much afraid that the English are drifting where we shall have to send a warship up to Newfoundland to look after our interests.'⁵² The implication of his concern was that England was 'drifting' because it was not receiving steady guidance from Washington.

After many months of Roosevelt's complaints, expressed primarily to Reid, Spring-Rice and Arthur Lee, the British government reluctantly realised that Durand had to be removed. In October 1906, Grey wrote to Lee: 'I will arrange a change of

⁵⁰ Roosevelt to Whitelaw Reid, 27 June 1906, quoted in Larsen, 'Durand,' p.74.

⁵¹ Quoted in Blake, 'Ambassadors,' pp. 197-198.

⁵² *ibid*, p. 200.

ambassador soon, about the end of the year. It is not an easy or agreeable thing to do, but I recognize the necessity of it and I see that it underlies everything else.' He added at the end of his letter that he hoped to see mutual confidence between the two governments grow and to keep in touch 'through a more alert ambassador next year.'⁵³ Roosevelt's response was one of relief mixed with compassion for the unfortunate ambassador, commenting that 'I shall be very sorry to have Durand lose his pension or suffer in any way, but it is a simple farce to have him here as ambassador.'⁵⁴ Thus, Durand's term as ambassador could not have provided a greater contrast than with Pauncefote's. Whereas Durand's tenure was cut short, Pauncefote served two consecutive five-year stints, and then additionally had his retirement date postponed twice. Where Pauncefote negotiated a string of significant agreements, Durand was excluded (or excluded himself) from the most important foreign affairs negotiations of Roosevelt's presidency. By this measure, Pauncefote's achievement looks substantial.

However, whilst Roosevelt's gregarious personal style meant that it was important for an effective ambassador to be able to relate to him on a personal level, it also meant that he was comfortable finding other British public figures with whom he could express his views in an informal manner. Indeed, the very fact that the British government had picked up on his campaign to remove Durand was due to his willingness to seek out other contacts. As David Burton has observed, throughout his presidency and beyond, Roosevelt kept in close contact with such British figures as Spring-Rice, Arthur Lee and George Otto Trevelyan, ensuring that his views were not totally misread at the British end.⁵⁵ The question of how much influence these figures actually had on Roosevelt's policy is debatable. According to Bradford Perkins, 'Spring-Rice never had the influence on Roosevelt that he and even some historians thought he had. The President made his own judgements and they were usually less

⁵³ Grey to Lee, 24, Oct. 1906, quoted in Larsen, 'Durand,' p.75.

⁵⁴ Roosevelt to Whitelaw Reid, 6 Nov. 1906, quoted in Tilchin, *Roosevelt*, p. 112.

⁵⁵ See David H. Burton, 'Theodore Roosevelt and his English Correspondents: a Special Relationship of Friends,' *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 63:2 (1973).

extreme and wiser than Spring Rice's.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it did mean that Roosevelt did still have a means of exerting an informal influence on British policy. Thus, the consequences of Durand's failings should be kept in proportion. At the same time as complaining about his difficulties with Durand, Roosevelt was writing to Lee that

You need not ever be troubled by the nightmare of a possible contest between the two great English-speaking peoples. I believe that is practically impossible now, and that it will grow entirely so as the years go by. In keeping ready for possible war, I never even take into account a war with England. I treat it as out of the question.⁵⁷

The British establishment evidently agreed with this statement, for, as a result of Admiral Fisher's naval reforms at this time, the West Indian and Halifax garrisons were removed, the Pacific squadron virtually disappeared, the North Atlantic station was abolished and that in the Caribbean greatly reduced.⁵⁸ Thus, the fact that substantial arguments had now been put aside, that Roosevelt was a believer in Anglo-Saxon ideals, and that he had a circle of English friends in whom he could confide, meant that Durand's failings were not enough to put Anglo-American relations back on their old, mutually suspicious footing in the long term. This said, the fact that there was a genuine lack of understanding between the two countries over such important issues as the Moroccan crisis and the Russo-Japanese War showed that informal contacts were not a sufficient substitute for an ambassador with whom the United States government could do business.

When Durand, after much lobbying from Roosevelt, was replaced by James Bryce in 1907, diplomatic relations were once more restored to an even keel, even though Roosevelt did not develop the same kind of relationship with Bryce that he had with Herbert, Sternberg or Jusserand.⁵⁹ Just how reliant the Foreign Office had become on the experience of Pauncefote is illustrated by the comment of the Permanent Under

⁵⁶ Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 110.

⁵⁷ Roosevelt to Lee, 6 June, 1905, quoted in Tilchin, p. 110.

⁵⁸ Perkins *Rapprochement*, p. 157.

⁵⁹ Blake, 'Ambassadors,' pp. 203-204.

Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Charles Hardinge, that 'we have not got a soul in the FO who has ever been to Washington except myself & it is nearly 20 years since I left.'⁶⁰ According to David Burton, Bryce was never Roosevelt's intimate in the way of Spring-Rice or Arthur Lee.⁶¹ He also faced policy difficulties such as those over the Newfoundland fisheries and seals, which led D.C. Watt to consider the mission a failure 'in the short run.'⁶² In an echo of Pauncefote's 1897 attempt, the Senate did not ratify a 1911 arbitration agreement between the two countries. Also in an echo of Pauncefote, Bryce was critical of the US press and the Senate.⁶³ Nevertheless, by the end of Bryce's ambassadorship in 1913 he had been largely successful in achieving his three aims of cultivating the goodwill of the American people, settling outstanding differences between Britain and the United States, and leaving behind a framework that would facilitate harmonious Anglo-American relations in the future.⁶⁴ Keith Robbins has described Bryce as an 'able negotiator' who possessed a personal authority that contributed to the success of his mission.⁶⁵ Pauncefote himself would have not have been surprised at the choice of Bryce, since he had often sought advice from the former MP, who was an expert on US affairs. However, a notable difference in the way Bryce approached affairs from Pauncefote was his 'assiduous cultivation of the public in America,' which involved speechmaking and travelling to every state in the Union, two things that Pauncefote, who rarely strayed far from the east coast, never seems to have contemplated.⁶⁶ On this point, Robbins says that Bryce 'succeeded in being an ambassador to the people of the United States,' and that his authority was augmented by the fact he was a writer and a historian.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Hardinge to Bryce, 26. Dec. 1906, quoted in Neilson, 'Marionette,' p.73.

⁶¹ Burton, 'Roosevelt', p. 12.

⁶² Donald Cameron Watt. *Personalities and Policies. Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 22.

⁶³ Neilson, 'Marionette,' pp.59-60.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.14

⁶⁵ Keith Robbins, *Politicians, Diplomacy and War in Modern British History* (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press), 1994, p. 63.

⁶⁶ Neilson, 'Marionette,' p.74.

⁶⁷ Robbins, *Politicians*, p. 63.

Another factor that worked in Bryce's favour was that by the end of Roosevelt's presidency the unpredictable actions of the Kaiser had meant that the United States President had backed away from his earlier attempts consciously to create a stronger German-American friendship.⁶⁸ This therefore meant that the cordial relationship with Britain was more appealing to American eyes, despite the earlier difficulties with Durand: a factor that would have immense importance in the years to come. Of particular concern to the United States were Germany's apparent designs on Latin America, which contrasted with the more informal British interest in the financial and service sectors in the region.⁶⁹ German-American relations were also made worse by the fact that both countries were embarking on a period of expansion, whereas Britain appeared to be a 'satiated' power.⁷⁰ In fact, Nancy Mitchell has recently concluded that there was no real German threat to United States' interests in Latin America, and tension over the issue was due to a 'mix of German bombast and American paranoia.'⁷¹ Herwig Holger, however, drew a more equivocal conclusion, stating that whilst 'neither "formal" nor "informal" empire in South America was within the realm of the attainable' for Germany, 'Berlin never undertook one step that might have removed the fears and suspicions of people like Theodore Roosevelt.'⁷² Such a state of affairs played into British hands and prompted the British *Fortnightly Review* to be able to report that 'Under his [Roosevelt's] auspices pretty nearly every issue of any moment or contention has been wiped off the Anglo-American slate.'⁷³ However, by the time Roosevelt's confidant, Cecil Spring-Rice, did get his treasured Washington post, circumstances were rapidly changing. He could no longer rely on the personal contact that he had developed with Roosevelt, and the exigencies of the First World War were to put the *rapprochement* to an altogether more challenging test. Nevertheless, the

⁶⁸ See Tilchin, pp.209-210.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, *Dreams*, p.3.

⁷⁰ Jonas, *Diplomatic History*, p.50.

⁷¹ Mitchell, *Dreams*, p.44.

⁷² Herwig Holger, *Germany's Vision of Empire in Venezuela: 1871-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p.241.

⁷³ Quoted in Perkins, *Rapprochement*, p. 172.

legacy of conciliatory British diplomacy and German unpredictability meant that whilst United States sympathies in wartime could not be taken for granted, it would be easier for the British than the Germans to convince Americans of the merits of their cause.

Therefore, when assessing Pauncefote's achievement by comparing it to that of his successors in the period up to the First World War, it appears in a favourable light. In terms of the larger legacy of enduring good relations, it would also be accurate to say his work laid the foundations for future co-operation. However, any direct comparison with those who came before or after him should be qualified. Pauncefote presided over an era when the British government began to make conscious, if piecemeal, efforts to mend fences with the United States. The shock of the Venezuela crisis alerted the British government to the reality of United States power, and the exigencies of the Spanish-American War and the Second South African War concentrated minds on both sides of the Atlantic. At this crucial time Pauncefote was fortunate to have in John Hay a Secretary of State in whom he could put absolute trust, and his longevity of service gave him great authority with the British government. Undoubtedly the actions of an ambassador at such an important juncture were an important factor in the mix of Anglo-American relations. However, had, for example, Herbert, Bryce or Spring-Rice been faced with the circumstances of the 1890s, it is possible to speculate that they would have acquitted themselves as well - or even better than - Pauncefote did. By the same token, Pauncefote might not have fitted so well into the later era. As suggested earlier, he might have found it more difficult in the long run to adapt to the more personal, informal style of a President Roosevelt, and in any case his reputation might not have shone so brightly when fewer issues divided the two countries. In a wider context, Bradford Perkins has suggested that the growth in United States power was less of an issue in the 1900s than it might otherwise have been, because of the generally prosperous state of world economies. This meant that competition between the two powers mattered less, and so the issue of Britain's relative decline was not as sharply brought into focus as it might otherwise have been.⁷⁴ Therefore, whilst comparisons with his predecessors and successors are helpful in that they can give us one context in

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p.130.

which to set his achievements, and one measure of his relative successes and failures, they also tend towards the realm of speculation. Consequently, any final conclusion must return to measure Pauncefote's achievements in the setting of his own era and on their own merits.

CONCLUSION

The final section of this thesis will, firstly, examine Pauncefote's overall attitude and approach towards Americans and the United States political scene during his time in Washington, and then move on to analyse his strengths and weaknesses when handling the key diplomatic issues of his career as ambassador.

The issue of how Pauncefote viewed Americans has emerged as a recurring theme of this thesis, and therefore demands some attention in its own right. This is partly because it provides a noteworthy contrast to the image of him presented in the tributes to him at the time of his death, and by most of those who have reviewed his career since. Also, and more importantly, by studying his attitude in this respect it becomes possible to address the question of whether his prejudices were really important when faced with substantive issues of diplomacy. One of the key observations that contemporaries made about Pauncefote's time in Washington was that he was the master of discretion and professionalism, and this (coupled with his genuine desire for *rapprochement*) lent him an air of authority that grew over time. However, many of Pauncefote's letters show a surprising level of indiscretion, and were often highly critical of American attitudes. If such opinions had been leaked to the press, it is likely that his posting would have ended as quickly as that of Sackville or Durand. For example, early on in his Washington career, he was writing to a Foreign Office clerk that '... Americans ... are so vain and so sensitive that they see an affront in everything that does not suit their particular fancies or opposes their aims and wishes however fantastic and absurd.'⁷⁵ And, later, in a comment in which he obviously failed to see

⁷⁵ Pauncefote to Jervoise, 22 Jan. 1891, PRO, FO5/2114.

any irony, he wrote to Salisbury that ‘It is very difficult to persuade an American that he is not superior *rationae soli* to the rest of creation.’⁷⁶ When viewed alongside his continual criticism of Congress and the press, and his inflexible views towards the dignity of his office, such a comment does seem to lack self-awareness. And, seen in a wider context, such prejudices were important, since it was the very perception that the British saw *themselves* as superior that engendered so much anti-British feeling in the United States. On this point, Zara Steiner has described how the British diplomat, Eustace Percy described ‘that quality of public arrogance, the “Mr. Darcy syndrome” which so irritated the Americans even in that narrow Anglo-Saxon elite in which British diplomats moved.’⁷⁷ Pauncefote’s criticisms were also directed personally at times, as when Pauncefote wrote that ‘I am convinced that Olney is far from wishing to give offence, but the main characteristics of American Diplomatic Notes are vulgarity and verbosity.’⁷⁸ As noted earlier, he also made particularly personal and disparaging comments about James G. Blaine, John W. Foster, Senator Morgan, Charles Tupper, and President Cleveland. The way he wrote about such people does not suggest that he had a particularly high opinion of the people with whom he was dealing – and all of them were prominent figures with whom he had to deal over a number of years. It might be argued that such comments are inevitable from someone involved in high level politics and diplomacy for such a long period. However, they do not sit well with his reputation for tolerance and urbanity, and resorting to personal criticism seems to have been something of an unhelpful reflex reaction when he was faced with difficult diplomatic situations. For example, his blind spot with regard to Senator Morgan made the already difficult task of getting measures through the Senate almost impossible, and his request for Charles Tupper to be removed from the sealing negotiations gave substance to the Canadian charge that Britain ignored its interest.⁷⁹ Pauncefote’s assertion that Cleveland probably wrote the Venezuela note while ‘sitting between two bottles of whisky’ ignored the fact that more nimble diplomacy might have avoided the

⁷⁶ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 17 Jan. 1896, Salisbury papers, vol.139, f.36.

⁷⁷ Steiner, ‘Elitism,’ p. 47.

⁷⁸ Pauncefote to Bertie (private), 26 June 1896, FO5/2290.

⁷⁹ See chapter three of this thesis.

situation in the first place.⁸⁰ Thus, it is arguable that Pauncefote's personal views *did* have a material and negative impact on his diplomacy. As pointed out in chapter six, they also undermined his credibility over his alleged comments and actions in 1898, particularly when added to his disparaging comments about ambassador Holleben. The fact that he was willing to submit such comments to paper also makes it easier to speculate about the type of language he used in informal verbal exchanges. Whilst most of these comments were restricted to private letters, Pauncefote made them to a wide range of correspondents, thus increasing the risk that such indiscretions might leak out. The fact that such comments did not become public knowledge might also suggest that he considered his correspondents to be reliable. More importantly, however, they suggest that he had a tendency to avoid looking at deeper, political motives to understand why people acted in the way that they did.

Pauncefote's personal views about individual American politicians spilled over into more jaundiced ones about the American political system in general. The way in which he objected to Congress's treatment over the canal treaty, for example, was fairly typical, when he wrote to James Bryce that: '...we cannot with dignity accept the terms dictated by the Senate with such singular insolence and effrontery. That body is becoming worse every day and is more like a flock of sheep driven by mad dogs.'⁸¹ That it was notoriously difficult to get treaties regarding foreign affairs through Congress is not at issue. It is also something that successive presidents and secretaries of state complained about (and still do). However, this very fact meant that it is not unreasonable to suggest that by the end of his career Pauncefote might have been wiser and more circumspect in his approach towards that body. Measures that he had negotiated, in connection with the Bering Sea dispute and the Olney-Pauncefote treaty had suffered at the hands of Congress, so he would have done better to consider more subtle ways of operating than merely railing against it. As observed in chapter seven, had both he and Hay adopted a more consultative approach to Congress over the canal issue, and swallowed some pride, the negotiation over the treaty might well not have

⁸⁰ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 23 May 1896, Salisbury papers, vol. 139, f.107.

⁸¹ Pauncefote to Bryce, 10 Jan. 1900, MS Bryce116, f. 186

been as drawn out as it was. Thus, the contention that Pauncefote's *attitude* and *tactics* were important, and were his weak point, is reinforced when observing not only his view of individuals within the American political system, but also Congress as a whole. On this point, another fruitful comparison with his successor, Michael Herbert, can be made. He was someone who had a reputation for being subtler in his approach towards the political system in that he had 'studied the pawns and pieces of Washington,' and by implication understood how important the personal factor was in relation to diplomacy.⁸² It is an impression reinforced by Henry Adams, an acute observer who was close to the heart of the political scene in this period.⁸³ Criticisms of Pauncefote in this respect do not deny the great difficulties he faced in his negotiations. Domestic pressures constrained United States foreign policy making in a way that was not so obvious in Britain. However, the fact that he faced these challenges does not mean that he could not have adapted more readily in the way that he approached them.

Another feature of Pauncefote's character was his belief in formality, and his concern for carrying out his diplomatic duties in the 'correct' manner. Whilst this could be construed as an example of his professionalism, in fact it appears to have added to the general air of Victorian inflexibility about him, which may have further hampered his efforts to be more accommodating in his approach to the United States political and diplomatic scene. His reports are often peppered with lengthy accounts of formal proceedings, which suggest that even at his advancing age and with his wealth of experience, he was still somewhat in awe of them. For example, in a piece of (official) correspondence with Rosebery he spent a great deal of time describing the 'brilliance' of the uniforms at one ceremonial occasion.⁸⁴ Reporting on a ball held on a visit by the Spanish princess he described how 'Her exquisite dress and magnificent jewels ... excited the greatest interest and admiration ... She ... could not repress an exclamation of pleasure when she saw the raised platform covered with red cloth at the end of the ballroom,' and Pauncefote's aforementioned description of his receipt of awards from

⁸² Moreton Frewen to Lansdowne, Sep. 16, 1901 Balfour papers: 49727, fols.155-158:

⁸³ Adams, *Education*, pp. 413-414.

⁸⁴ Pauncefote to Rosebery, 25 May 1893, PRO, FO5/2187.

universities suggest that he was more than usually attached to, and impressed by, the trappings of power.⁸⁵ Similarly underlining the importance he attached to matters of protocol were a lengthy letter to Lord Lansdowne commenting on a ‘controversy’ regarding a matter of precedence among ambassadors’ wives at an official dinner, a refusal of an invitation to a private dinner until he knew where he would be sitting, and an insistence that he should take precedence over the US Vice-President at an official occasion.⁸⁶ In correspondence that dealt with such matters Pauncefote often went into great detail describing these situations – at times devoting more space to them than his analysis of the United States political scene. Such an attachment to ceremony and form may not be completely remarkable – he was after all an ambassador in the Victorian mould. However, the way in which Pauncefote was so eager to convey every detail of such events to his superiors – men who were by and large inured to such frippery - does suggest a certain naivety in his outlook. It is possible that he was impressed by such things because he was not from a particularly wealthy or well connected family (in relative terms), and therefore found comfort in the outward manifestations of his status.⁸⁷ Whatever the reason, whilst his fondness for ‘good form’ may have gone unremarked in Paris or Vienna, in ‘New World’ Washington, his attitude appears to have been viewed with some bemusement. A small example of this is a newspaper report that mischievously suggested that Pauncefote was jumping the queues in official White House ceremonies. On reading it, one cannot but think that the reporter knew he was criticising Pauncefote on something over which he would be particularly sensitive. It described how:

Sir Julian Pauncefote is earning an unenviable reputation among the members of the Diplomatic Corps in Washington through his constantly pushing himself ahead of the position assigned to him by rules of precedent founded upon length of service. He has apologised to different members of the diplomatic corps three or four times within as many months for infringing on the dignity and rights of others; but all these

⁸⁵ *ibid* and Pauncefote to Salisbury, 18 May 1900, PRO FO5/2428.

⁸⁶ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, 16 Feb. 1901, PRO, FO5/2456; *New York Evening Post*, 24 May, 1902.

⁸⁷ See Mowat, pp.1-2 for family background. Cannadine in *Aristocracy*, describes him as being from ‘minor landed gentry,’ p.716.

apologies will put Sir Julian in an excellent condition by experience to apologise for his government in the Behring's Sea. An apology is due and Sir Julian is the man to make it.

The British ambassador rose to the bait precisely as the reporter might have hoped. In his letter to Salisbury explaining the situation, after alluding to 'the reptile press of this country,' he referred to the critical report saying:

I see the Times has reproduced the enclosed lying and scurrilous paragraph about me which appeared in ... papers here. I am on the best terms with every member of the Corps Diplomatique. The origin of the slander is that I and my party were swept with the crowd at the White House on a recent occasion into the presence of the President before there had been time or means of knowing who had gone before ... Some papers announce my recall, but they do so whenever any question arises which is the subject of temporary excitement between the two governments. A great portion of the population of every city lives on the Press, and earns its daily bread by manufacturing lies and calumnies against individuals, public and private.⁸⁸

This despatch not only shows his extreme sensitivity where matters of protocol were concerned, but also his sensitivity towards press criticism. As noted in the course of this thesis, he repeatedly used such phrases as the 'reptile press,' 'the ignorant and malevolent press,' or 'the villainous press' when describing United States newspaper reporting. He also referred to some of their views more than once as 'imbecile' and, in a particularly choice phrase, referred to the 'stream of mendacity and audacity and ignorance and malice and general blackguardism that daily flows from most of them.'⁸⁹ In Pauncefote's defence, a few points may be considered here. It is understandable that he would have been especially sensitive to press criticism due to the manner in which his predecessor lost his job, and therefore doubly anxious when such reports reached London. It is also true that the so-called 'yellow press' did not have a good reputation for balanced reporting within the United States – and was particularly notorious for

⁸⁸ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 21 Jan. 1891, Salisbury papers, vol. 78, US, 1891-1895, fos.11-13.

⁸⁹ Pauncefote to Kimberley, 25 April 1895, Kimberley papers, MSS Eng., c4408, f.73; Pauncefote to Bryce, 26 April 1895; Bryce papers, MS Bryce f.169; Pauncefote to Wodehouse, 14 May 1895; Kimberley papers MSS, Eng, c.4408, f.79.

whipping up war fever by its reporting on Cuba in 1898.⁹⁰ Similarly, for a member of the political elite to be critical of the press is hardly unknown. However, as with his approach towards Congress, although Pauncefote may have been faced with a critical audience (albeit that when sending back reports that were highly favourable to himself, he tended to assert that they were from 'reliable' journals), he was once again inflexible in his approach towards the medium. He wore almost as a badge of pride the fact that he never gave interviews, or made speeches. Whilst he may have seen this as the only way of protecting himself from misreporting, it was also a somewhat blinkered approach. In an age where he was the almost sole face of the British government in the United States, some well placed speeches and interviews that put the British case on the issues of the day would more likely have helped his cause than not. Such a view may be seen as attempting to apply modern public relations ideas to an age in which they did not exist. However, the examples of James Bryce and Joseph Choate, Pauncefote's opposite number in London (from 1899-1905), a frequent speechmaker, and highly popular figure in British public life, suggest that this is not true.⁹¹

Therefore, it is arguable that along with his attitude towards US politicians, Congress, and his overly exaggerated respect for protocol, his attitude towards the press was unhelpful in his capacity as ambassador. Taken individually, all these instances may appear as somewhat trivial and anecdotal, when considering Pauncefote's role in the wider context of Anglo-American relations. However, taken as a whole, it would be reasonable to contend that such attitudes *were* important in the pursuit of the ambassador's avowed goal of encouraging closer relations between the two countries. Here also lies something of a paradox. Whilst Pauncefote (like others of his political class) had a clear aim of contributing to the attainment of more cordial Anglo-American relations, he seems to have largely pursued it in the narrowest diplomatic sense. Whilst he did strike up friendships with the likes of the (particularly Anglophile and aristocratic) John Hay, and was undoubtedly highly respected by many in Washington,

⁹⁰ Brogan, *America*, p.452.

⁹¹ See Allen Hampton Kitchens, *Ambassador Extraordinary: The Diplomatic Career of Joseph Hodges Choate*, PhD (George Washington University, 1971), pp. 452-453.

he does not appear to have warmed to American ways in the way that Cecil Spring-Rice or Michael Herbert did. Neither does he appear to have appreciated the American political system in the same way as the intellectually inclined James Bryce.⁹² Similarly, he does not seem to have had the genuine and overt enthusiasm for things American that were held by the likes of contemporaries such as Balfour, Chamberlain and Churchill, with their American family connections bolstering their political allegiances.⁹³ In his defence, it might be argued that in fact in a diplomat this sense of remove, and a healthy disdain for the US political scene, might have been an advantage. An ambassador also has to be wary of interfering in domestic politics. Diplomacy, after all, involves hard-headed calculations and sentiment apparently counts for little. Pauncefote's viewpoint also matched that of Lord Salisbury, who unlike many of his colleagues was no great fan of the United States *per se*, and saw little merit in trying to cultivate 'influence' which he regarded as a somewhat nebulous quality.⁹⁴ It might also be argued that if Pauncefote managed to stay in post for thirteen years without his views and prejudices becoming widely known, whilst achieving tangible results, and gaining plaudits from British and American observers alike, then he was actually the consummate professional. Nevertheless, despite his record of success, in periods when he did have difficulties they do seem to have been exacerbated by his unwillingness to fully engage with a US political system that was substantially different from Britain's. This must, at least in part, be attributed to the attitudes discussed above.

When R.B. Mowat concluded his biography of Pauncefote, he was unstinting in his praise for the diplomat, and uncritical of any of his actions during his time in Washington. He considered that Pauncefote had a 'magnificent record,' and was as effusive in his admiration as had been those who wrote tributes to him at the time of his

⁹² See Francis Anthony Coghlan, *James Bryce, Intellectual Architect of the Anglo-American Entente*, PhD, (Bryn Mawr College, 1966).

⁹³ Watt, *Personalities*, p.25.

⁹⁴ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 46, pp.511-512.

death.⁹⁵ In particular, he drew attention to Pauncefote's skills as 'an international lawyer, as a negotiator of treaties, and as an improver of international relations.'⁹⁶ Mowat drew attention to the fact that the ambassador was responsible for several treaties, something that is not necessarily the chief work of a diplomat, but which stands as a concrete testimony to his achievements.⁹⁷ To discount all of these conclusions would be somewhat perverse in the light of the evidence. It is true to say that Anglo-American relations were markedly better in 1902 than in 1889. Pauncefote was instrumental in this, in that he was the key negotiator in the resolution of the major Anglo-American disputes of the era. The esteem in which he was held by many of his contemporaries is self-evident. However, as this thesis has sought to demonstrate, this should not mean that his actions defy further analysis, or that his reputation is beyond criticism. It is reasonable to question whether he could have achieved more within the context in which he was operating, and whether he could have avoided some of the difficulties in which he found himself.

When considering Pauncefote's role, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that he was, of course, operating within the confines of foreign policy directed from London. As the 1890s progressed this policy emerged as being a broadly conciliatory one, as far as Anglo-American relations were concerned. However, caution should be adopted when generalising about this approach. When the details of such disputes as the Bering Sea crisis, the Venezuela dispute, the isthmian canal issue and the Alaska boundary are examined, it is clear that the British government was often reluctant to make concessions to the United States. This appears, in part, to be due to a failure to recognise fully that the United States could not be relied upon to defer to British power. Salisbury's early attempts to ignore the United States' position in the Venezuela dispute, and Lansdowne's affront at the perceived attack on British dignity over the canal issue, are two examples of this. When concessions were made, they came after stubborn resistance from US policy makers, accompanied – crucially – by Pauncefote's

⁹⁵ Mowat, *Pauncefote*, p.298.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p.297.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p.298.

tendency to lean in the direction of concession, rather than unthinkingly supporting the line of his government. Thus, for example, after hints from Pauncefote, Salisbury softened his stance on the Venezuela dispute, and was more accommodating towards an arbitration treaty. In the same way, Lansdowne ended up accepting a draft of the canal treaty that he had initially rejected. In this way a picture emerges of a string of concessions being made to the United States, but in a piecemeal, rather than a planned sense. Whilst Prime Ministers and foreign secretaries generally professed their wish for better relations with the United States, they did not always seem to know fully how this would be achieved in practice. In some measure, Pauncefote's persistently conciliatory stance, coupled with the authority gained from the length of his tenure, meant that it was he who was able to give British policy a softer edge than it often showed when leaving Whitehall. Although he was not an outspoken critic of his own government's policy, had Pauncefote merely been a mouthpiece for his superiors concessions on some key issues would not have come so readily. In these respects, Pauncefote's achievement was an important one – his conciliatory stance, coupled with his skill at drafting treaties, undoubtedly contributed to better Anglo-American relations by the end of the nineteenth century.

However, whilst Pauncefote should be given praise for his obvious strengths as a conciliator and as a highly competent lawyer, it is his skills as a diplomat in the wider sense that emerge as most open to question. When the major events of his era are looked at in turn, his ability to foresee future problems, and his subtlety in dealing with the more difficult, but nevertheless important, political players can be called into question. Over the Bering Sea crisis, he initially underestimated the seriousness of the problem, as he did the genuine depth of feeling at the highest levels over the Venezuela crisis. It might be argued that such judgements are easy to make with the benefit of hindsight. However, his approach of not embarking on *any* kind of diplomacy in the early stages of these disputes does appear somewhat short-sighted, and might be seen as a symptom of his having too great a respect for protocol. Furthermore, his tendency in the early stages of these disputes to take the polite reception accorded to him by presidents and secretaries of state at face value, do smack of a certain naivety.

Similarly, it appears that he could have reduced his problems with the Senate over a range of issues by adopting a more proactive approach to that body. By informally lobbying key senators – or at least soliciting their views - and anticipating at an earlier stage what their criticisms might be, rather than fulminating against them after decisions went against him, the chances of getting such measures agreed upon more quickly might have stood a better chance. In the imperfect world of international diplomacy it would, of course, be naïve to suggest that all these negotiations could have proceeded without a hitch, given the other pressures that were on United States politicians. Nevertheless, it does seem reasonable to suggest that had Pauncefote been a little less technocratic in his approach, and more open to embracing US politicians (even – or especially - ones who did not meet with his approval) his rewards could have been even greater.

In conclusion, Pauncefote's strengths and weaknesses as a diplomat can be most effectively illustrated by comparing his greatest success with his greatest failure during his time in Washington. Although he took great pride from almost achieving the 'clean slate' of removing the Bering Sea, Venezuelan and Alaskan boundaries, and the canal issue, as points of Anglo-American tension, his most accomplished success in this period was arguably at the Hague Peace Conference. Here, he was able to apply his skills to their best effect. In presenting his proposals to the conference he was in his element because he could use his skills as a legal draftsman and international lawyer in an environment where people were basically well disposed to receiving his arguments. Other countries were already formulating similar proposals, and his inclination towards conciliation meant that elements of their proposals could relatively easily be incorporated to achieve a satisfactory outcome. Coupled with this were two other factors that would have helped Pauncefote in this achievement. Firstly, the conference was something of a showcase for the concept of international arbitration and conciliation through legal mechanisms. This was a concept to which Pauncefote was firmly attached, and a field in which he had much experience. Secondly, the grandeur and formality of the occasion, enhanced by the fact that it was the first of its kind, would also have appealed to the British ambassador's sense of protocol and self

importance. In short, the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 provided the perfect environment for a diplomat of Pauncefote's character – and it is therefore unsurprising that his achievement there was swift and popular.

By contrast, the 'worst' episode of Pauncefote's career was his handling of the events leading up to the Spanish-American War of 1898. This incident highlighted how he lacked the 'political' skills that would have made him the complete ambassador. Here he somewhat clumsily departed from his government's policy and left himself open to charges of acting against the interests of the United States (which, it seems, were accurate). It was not so much the thinking behind his actions, but the way in which he carried them out, and later tried to defend them, that show his lack of skill as an 'operator.' His support for more mediation in the dispute between the United States and Spain may have, technically speaking, been a reasonable one, since Spain had already agreed to most of the demands made of it. However, such a view failed to take into account the belligerent mood of Congress, and the fact that in this instance the British government saw no merit in upsetting the United States. Thus, he allowed his natural instinct for peaceful arbitration to get in the way of political realities. Later on, his defence of his activities in 1898 was unconvincing, and served to underline his inability to handle the turbulence of politics when it strayed outside the negotiation of the finer points of a specific agreement. That he fell back on personal criticism of those who had launched the 'attack' on him, revealed a much thinner political skin than the image presented to the world.

Pauncefote was a skilful and conscientious international lawyer, a patient negotiator when working on a specific brief, and was inclined to edge his government towards conciliation with considerable success. He genuinely believed that Anglo-American relations could be improved, and that legal mechanisms and international arbitration were central to achieving this aim. In many respects, therefore, he played his important role well. However, his approach to diplomacy was somewhat narrow and technocratic. He never overcame his personal prejudices towards the American political scene, and his somewhat formal, and at times naïve, approach meant that he was not

always fully attuned to the currents that lay there, and he never harnessed political skills to advance the Anglo-American cause. Had he been more willing to adapt, it is possible that the Anglo-American *rapprochement* would have happened more swiftly and smoothly than it did.

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