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RESEARCH ARTICLE

BRITISH IMPERIAL INFLUENCE ON THE AMERICAN COLONIES: FROM SETTLEMENT TO THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This research work examines British influence on the American colonies from the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown (1607) to the special relationship in the twenty-first-century. The influence between certain colonizing countries and their colonies continues to exist even after they gained their independence. In the case of the 13 original British colonies in North America that declared independence in 1776 from the United Kingdom and forming the basis of the United States, many argue that this relationship is questionable today. In other words, doubt remains about the influence that Great Britain could have on the United States of America, which have become one of the world's greatest powers. To achieve my goal many therories such as Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of mimicry and ambivalence (1994) and Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory (1974) help to appreciate existing documents and books, internet resources with historico-analytical approach. The research work reveals that the colonies, shaped by British imperial power, were nevertheless led to reject it and over time, this British influence shifted from colonial domination to sovereign partnership. Independence reproduced metropolitan principles even as it repudiated metropolitan authority. The Special Relationship joins sovereign equality with structural asymmetries of power. So, instead of talking about influential relationship, many people suggest partnership to characterise the relation between United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America. This should edify the worldwide policy by setting an example of a particular independence, like the British colonies of the United States of America.

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Britain and its American colonies is one of the most consequential bonds in modern political history. When the Virginia Company founded Jamestown in April 1607, it began what would become nearly 176 years of direct British rule. During that time, the colonies absorbed British law, the English language, Protestant religious culture, and mercantilist economic structures. At the same time, they developed an identity distinct from the metropolitan centre.

This historical entanglement matters beyond the Anglo-American national narratives. It is a paradigmatic case of colonial mimicry and ambivalence in the sense theorised by Homi K. Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*, 1994, pp. 85-92). The colonised subject internalises the coloniser's cultural and institutional forms. Yet the very act of reproduction produces difference and, ultimately, rupture. Read through Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems framework (*The Modern World-System I*, 1974, pp. 67-129), the same history reveals a hierarchical capitalist world-economy. The metropolitan core extracted value from the colonial periphery through legislative instruments. This produced precisely the grievances that drove revolutionary mobilisation and new relationship. The different strategies used by each party over time and space constitute references or steps that have led to a solid partnership. The colonial relationship did not end with independence. After the Treaty of Paris (1783), the two nations entered a long process of diplomatic reconstruction. They were commercial rivals yet ideological partners. This process culminated in the "Special Relationship," a phrase Churchill coined in his Fulton, Missouri address of 5 March 1946 (Churchill, 1946). That partnership has survived wars, economic crises, and deep disagreements. It remains the most significant bilateral bond in the contemporary international order. The purpose of this research work is to trace and explain that full arc from the Age of Exploration to the present. It does so through a systematic historico-analytical reading anchored in the two theoretical frameworks above. This research work encompasses five chapters. The first chapter situates the study. The second chapter examines colonial genesis and the emergence of self-governing institutions. The third chapter analyses the crisis of empire and the revolutionary rupture of 1763-1783. The fourth chapter traces diplomatic reconstruction and the Great Rapprochement of 1895-1914 and the fifth chapter evaluates the Special Relationship from the two World Wars to the second Trump administration.

Situating of the Study

Contextual and Thematic Background: British colonialism in North America developed within the wider context of European imperial expansion that followed Columbus's landfall of 1492. England established its first durable settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. This was nearly a century after Spain's Caribbean and South American ventures. Within 125 years, Britain had thirteen distinct colonial polities along the eastern seaboard (Taylor, *American Colonies*, 2001, p. 3). As Alan Taylor (2001, p. 3) observes, settlers gradually "became less European in habits and outlook and more American." This cultural differentiation, combined with robust traditions of representative self-government, produced the conditions for the revolutionary break of 1775-1783. The post-independence trajectory of Anglo-American relations is equally complex. From armed hostility in the Revolutionary War, the two nations moved toward the sustained partnership that Churchill named the "Special Relationship" in 1946. This partnership was institutionalised through NATO, the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement, and dense networks of commercial and cultural exchange. It has proved remarkably durable. It survived the Suez Crisis (1956), disagreements over Vietnam and Iraq, and the disruptions of both Trump presidencie

Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework: The historiography of British-American colonial relations is vast and methodologically varied. Early nationalist accounts framed the colonial period and the Revolution as a march toward liberty. George Bancroft's *History of the United States of America* (1834-1878) is the most celebrated example (Bancroft, 1834-1878). The twentieth century brought a revisionist turn. Economic historians such as Oliver Dickerson (*The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution*, 1951) emphasised how mercantile legislation structured colonial grievances. Progressive historians, following Charles Beard (*An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, 1913), foregrounded class conflict as a primary driver of revolutionary mobilisation. R. R. Palmer's *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (1959) locates the American experience within a broader transatlantic revolutionary wave. Palmer (1959, p. 239) argues that the American founding "added a new content to the concept of progress" and "gave a whole new dimension to ideas of liberty and equality." Robert V. Remini's *A Short History of the United States* (2008) offers a reliable synthetic account of the full arc from colonial foundations to the early twenty-first century. James L. Abrahamson's study of the American home front across four major conflicts (1983) provides essential context for the wartime dimensions of the Anglo-American relationship.

This study adopts two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory of mimicry and ambivalence (*The Location of Culture*, 1994). For Bhabha (1994, p. 86), colonial mimicry demands that the colonised approximate but never fully replicate the coloniser. This produces subjects who are "almost the same but not quite." Their closeness to metropolitan norms constitutes a structural threat to colonial authority. This framework explains why the American colonists reproduced British institutions while resenting British authority. It also explains why the Declaration of Independence simultaneously rejected British rule and invoked British Enlightenment principles.

The second framework is Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory (*The Modern World-System I*, 1974). Wallerstein (1974, pp. 67-129) argues that the capitalist world-economy is organised as a hierarchy of core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral zones. Core states extract surplus value from dependent peripheries through political coercion and market mechanisms. The Navigation Acts of 1651, 1660, and 1663, which confined colonial trade to English vessels and English ports, were direct expressions of this structural logic (Dickerson, 1951, pp. 23-47). Together, Bhabha and Wallerstein allow the study to read political, cultural, and economic processes as connected dimensions of a single colonial system.

Purpose of the Study: This research work aims to analyse British imperial influence on the American colonies and the bilateral relationship that grows from it. More specifically, it seeks to show that the colonial and post-colonial trajectory of British-American relations is best understood as a constitutively ambivalent process. Imperial power and colonial resistance, rupture and continuity, asymmetry and partnership are not opposites. They are structural complements. In so doing, this study contributes a theoretically informed perspective to the field of British Civilisation studies.

Significance of the Study: This research work is significant on several counts. First, it applies postcolonial and world-systems frameworks to the British-American colonial relationship. This combination is less common in anglophone scholarship than in postcolonial studies of Africa and Asia. Second, it gives students and teachers of British civilisation a structured, theoretically coherent overview of a complex historical relationship often reduced in survey treatments. Third, the arc from colonial dependency to the world's most institutionally dense bilateral partnership offers a model of the long-term consequences of colonial entanglement. This model has comparative relevance for postcolonial trajectories elsewhere, including in the Francophone and Anglophone African zones. As Palmer (1959, p. 239) observed, the American experience "got people into the habit of thinking more concretely about political questions." That habit of thought remains relevant wherever the legacies of colonial rule are still being negotiated.

Research Questions

The following four questions structure the inquiry

- By what institutional mechanisms did Britain exercise colonial authority over the thirteen colonies? How did those mechanisms generate the constitutional contradictions that led to revolutionary rupture?
- To what extent do Bhabha's (1994) concepts of mimicry and ambivalence illuminate the cultural and political dynamics of the colonial-metropolitan relationship?
- How did the two nations reconstruct a functional bilateral relationship after the break of independence and the subsequent War of 1812?
- What has been the structural logic of the Special Relationship, and how has it evolved across successive administrations through the present day?

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a historico-analytical method. It combines a systematic review of primary sources, colonial charters, legislative acts, diplomatic treaties, and official declarations,

with critical engagement with secondary historical and theoretical literature. A correlational perspective traces patterns of continuity and rupture across distinct historical periods. Cultural and linguistic dimensions are addressed only where they bear directly on these concerns. The temporal scope runs from 1492, the conventional starting point of the Age of European Exploration, to 2025, the year that inaugurated the second Trump administration and concluded the Biden presidency.

British Colonial Expansion And The Birth of the American Colonies

Age of Exploration and the Genesis of British Colonialism: The Age of Exploration is conventionally dated from Christopher Columbus's Bahamian landfall of 12 October 1492. It opened an era of European imperial expansion that reshaped global political geography (Taylor, *American Colonies*, 2001, p. 3). Britain was a late entrant. England's sustained colonisation effort began almost a century after Spain's Caribbean and South American ventures. The first durable settlement was established at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. This followed the costly failure of the Roanoke Colony (1585-1590). The Age of Exploration was not merely a geographical adventure. It was an economic project. European states sought to incorporate new territories into a hierarchical world-economy. Peripheral zones would supply raw materials and markets for the metropolitan core (Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I*, 1974, pp. 67-89). The Navigation Acts of 1651, 1660, and 1663 confined colonial trade to English vessels and English ports. They were the legislative expression of this mercantilist logic (Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts*, 1951, pp. 23-47). Colonial populations keenly resented this arrangement. As Taylor (2001, p. 87) notes, they understood themselves to be "exploited by the older countries both as a source of low-priced raw materials and as a market for manufactured wares."

Figure 1. The thirteen British colonies on the eastern seaboard of North America, 17th-18th centuries. Adapted from Encyclopaedia Britannica Online (https://www.britannica.com/topic/American-colonies. Accessed 1 April 2025).

Thirteen Colonies: Settlement, Population, and Economy: Between 1607 and 1732, Britain established thirteen colonies along the eastern seaboard: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia (Remini, *A Short History*, 2008, pp. 12-15). By the eve of the Revolution, the colonial population had grown to approximately 2.5 million. Economic opportunity, early marriages, and high birth rates drove that growth (Remini, 2008, p. 16). The colonial economy rested on agriculture, fishing, and small-scale manufacturing. There were clear regional differences. The New England colonies favoured maritime trade and mixed farming. The middle colonies specialised in grain production. The southern colonies depended on plantation agriculture sustained by the forced labour of enslaved Africans, who constituted the second-largest demographic group in the colonial population.

Immigration further complicated the social fabric. Persons of English origin formed the principal component of the settler population. However, successive waves of Scottish, Irish, German, Dutch, and Huguenot immigrants produced considerable cultural heterogeneity (Taylor, 2001, pp. 133-160). The diversity of Protestant denominations, Puritan, Presbyterian, Quaker, Lutheran, and Anglican, made religious uniformity impossible. It fostered a culture of pluralism that Bhabha (1994) would recognise as a productive site of colonial ambivalence. The colonists were simultaneously loyal subjects of the Crown and practitioners of a civic and religious life increasingly at odds with metropolitan norms.

Self-Government and the Seeds of Constitutional Conflict: From their earliest years, the American colonies developed robust traditions of representative self-government. These traditions were structurally at odds with the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. In 1619, Governor George Yeardley introduced to Virginia a bicameral legislature. It comprised a governor's council appointed by the Virginia Company in London and a House of Burgesses of elected representatives. This was the first representative legislative body in continental America (Remini, 2008, p. 17). These institutional developments created a political culture in which colonists saw their assemblies as the functional equivalents of the Westminster Parliament. They believed their assemblies could legislate on local affairs, control taxation, and check executive authority. This view was irreconcilable with Parliament's claim to unlimited sovereignty over all British subjects. As Remini (2008, p. 25) observes, until 1760 the colonists "possessed greater political freedom than perhaps any other people on earth." It was precisely this experience of political agency that made imperial tightening after 1763 so explosive.

Crisis of Empire and the Revolutionary Rupture (1763-1783)

Imperial Reorganisation and Colonial Discontent after 1763: The Seven Years' War (1756-1763), known in America as the French and Indian War, was the pivot on which the colonial relationship turned. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 ceded France's North American territories to Britain and transferred Spanish Florida to British control. Britain now dominated the continent east of the Mississippi (Remini, 2008, p. 45). However, the war left Britain with a large national debt and a vastly enlarged empire to administer. The British government's response was to tighten imperial control and require the

colonies to contribute to their own defence. This set in motion the chain of events that led to independence (Abrahamson, 1983, p. 3). Throughout most of the colonial period, Britain had governed its American territories under "salutary neglect." This was a deliberate administrative looseness that allowed the colonies to develop their own institutions while remaining broadly loyal to the Crown. After 1763, this policy was abruptly abandoned. A succession of fiscal measures followed. The Stamp Act (1765), the Townshend Acts (1767), and the Tea Act (1773) all sought to impose Parliamentary taxation on the colonies without their consent. This directly violated the constitutional principle, embedded in English common law, that taxation required the consent of the taxed (Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonists*, 1764).

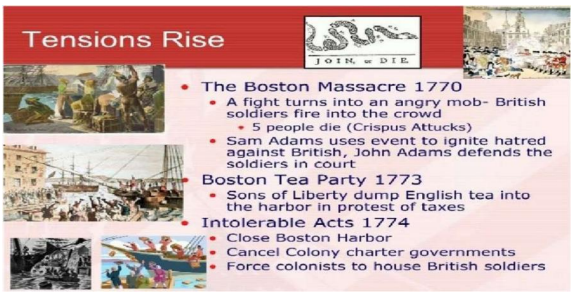

Figure 2. The Boston Massacre, 5 March 1770, engraved by Paul Revere. A catalytic moment in colonial resistance to British imperial authority (Revere, 1770, as reproduced at ushistory.org, accessed 1 April 2025)

Stamp Act Crisis and the Doctrine of No Taxation without Representation: Parliament passed the Stamp Act on 22 March 1765. It imposed a direct tax on all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, and commercial papers circulating in the colonies (Dickerson, 1951, p. 89). It was the first direct Parliamentary tax on the colonists. The response was immediate and violent. Colonial assemblies from Massachusetts to South Carolina passed resolutions denouncing the Act. The Sons of Liberty organised boycotts and demonstrations. The Stamp Act Congress of October 1765 brought together delegates from nine colonies to frame a collective constitutional protest (Remini, 2008, pp. 50-52). The core of the colonial objection was formulated by the Boston lawyer James Otis in *The Rights of the British Colonists Asserted and Proved* (1764). Since the colonists were unrepresented in Parliament, Parliament had no constitutional authority to tax them. The slogan "No Taxation without Representation" captured this argument. In Bhabha's terms, this was colonial mimicry turning back upon its origin. The colonists used metropolitan constitutional doctrine against the metropole itself (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86; Otis, 1764).

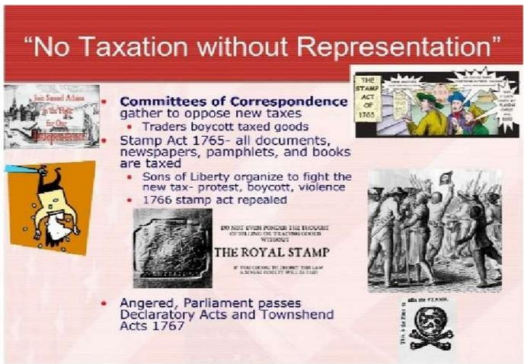

Figure 3. Effigy protests against the Stamp Act, 1765. Colonists invoked English constitutional principles against Parliament (Source: parliament.uk, accessed 1 April 2025).

Widespread boycotts of British goods damaged British trade severely. Metropolitan merchants lobbied Parliament for repeal. The Stamp Act was repealed on 18 March 1766. Yet Parliament simultaneously passed the Declaratory Act, which asserted its right to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever" (Remini, 2008, p. 53). This combination of tactical concession and doctrinal intransigence illustrates the ambivalence Wallerstein (1974, p. 115) identifies in how core powers manage peripheral resistance. The system accommodates challenge without surrendering its structural logic.

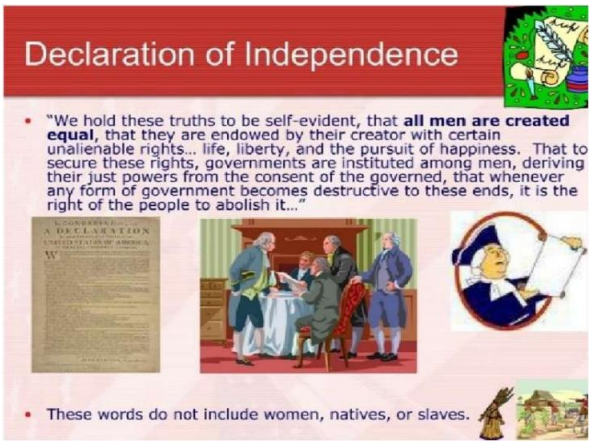

Figure 4. Celebration of the repeal of the Stamp Act, 18 March 1766, as depicted in the colonial press. The simultaneous Declaratory Act significantly qualified the victory (Source: britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk, accessed 1 April 2025)

Escalation and the Outbreak of Armed Conflict: The decade between the Stamp Act and the outbreak of armed hostilities saw a steady deterioration of colonial-metropolitan relations. The Townshend Acts (1767) reimposed duties on imported British goods. The Boston Massacre of 5 March 1770, in which British soldiers killed five colonists during a street altercation, galvanised colonial opinion. The Boston Tea Party of 16 December 1773, in which colonists destroyed a shipment of East India Company tea in Boston harbour, prompted the Coercive Acts of 1774. Colonial opinion across the continent viewed these as a declaration of war on colonial self-government (Remini, 2008, pp. 55-62).

The Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia in September 1774 to articulate colonial grievances. By May 1775, when the Second Continental Congress assembled, armed conflict had already erupted at Lexington and Concord. General Thomas Gage deployed nearly 1,000 British troops from Boston on the night of 18 April 1775 to seize colonial arms at Concord. This marked the formal start of hostilities (Remini, 2008, p. 63). The Continental Congress organised a continental army under George Washington of Virginia, a figure whose military experience and political judgement made him the indispensable symbol of the revolutionary cause.

Declaration of Independence and its Theoretical Significance: The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia was its principal drafter (Remini, 2008, p. 70). The document drew on John Locke's natural-rights philosophy, the civic republicanism of the English Whig tradition, and the Enlightenment principle that legitimate government rests on the consent of the governed.

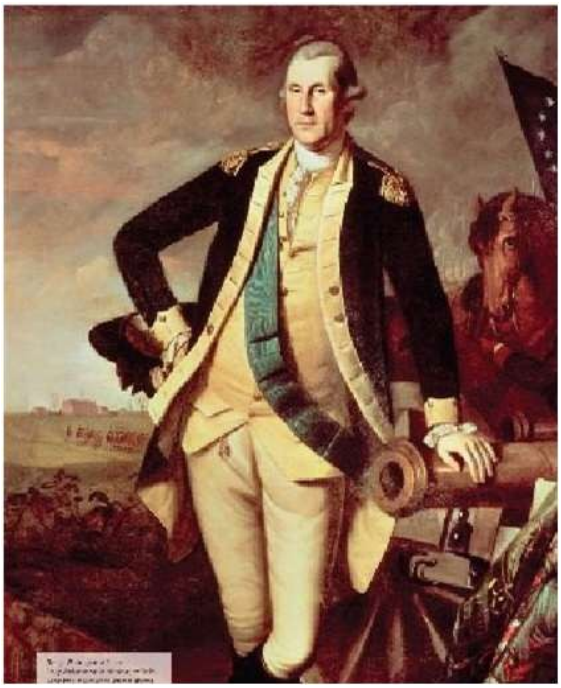

Figure 5. Colonial militia assembling for the defence of Concord, 1775. The opening engagements of the Revolutionary War transformed a colonial tax dispute into a war of independence (Source: ushistory.org, accessed 1 April 2025)

The Declaration's foundational claim, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (United States Continental Congress, 1776), was in Bhabha's terms a performative appropriation of metropolitan discourse. It exceeded and ultimately subverted colonial authority (Bhabha, 1994, p. 92). Palmer (*The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 1959, p. 239) argues that the Declaration "dethroned England and set up America as a model for those seeking a better world." It inspired democratic movements across Europe and Latin America. Great Britain formally recognised American sovereignty under the Treaty of Paris, signed on 3 September 1783 (Remini, 2008, p. 78).

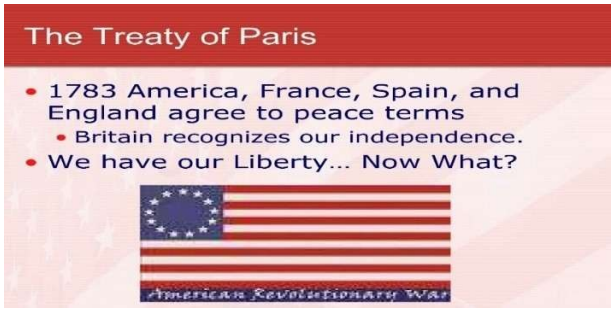

Figure 6. The Treaty of Paris (3 September 1783), by which Great Britain formally recognised the independence of the United States (Source: history.state.gov, accessed 1 April 2025).

DIPLOMATIC RECONSTRUCTION AND THE GREAT RAPPROCHEMENT (1783-1914)

Post-Independence Diplomacy and the Jay Treaty (1783-1795): The Treaty of Paris did not immediately produce stable Anglo-American relations. Significant tensions persisted. Britain retained frontier military posts in violation of the treaty. It treated Loyalists and their property poorly. It interfered with American neutral shipping during the wars of the French Revolution. It also impressed American sailors into the Royal Navy (Remini, 2008, pp. 79-83). In 1785, John Adams became the first American minister to the Court of St James's. King George III received him with formal courtesy (Remini, 2008, p. 80). The outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793 brought Anglo-American relations to a new crisis. The Jay Treaty of 1795, negotiated by Chief Justice John Jay, resolved immediate tensions through commercial concessions and an arbitration framework. It established a decade of peaceful trade relations (Remini, 2008, p. 84). The treaty was deeply unpopular with those who saw it as excessive deference to British demands. However, it demonstrated that both governments retained a pragmatic interest in economic cooperation.

Figure 7. The British evacuation of New York, November 1783. The departure of British forces marked the end of the Revolutionary War and the beginning of post-independence diplomacy (Source: ushistory.org, accessed 1 April 2025)

War of 1812 and the Consolidation of Sovereignty: The fragile peace established by the Jay Treaty was broken by the War of 1812. President James Madison asked Congress to declare war on 1 June 1812. The reasons were years of British interference with American maritime commerce and the impressment of American sailors (Remini, 2008, p. 89). The United States had earlier imposed the Embargo Act of 1807 in retaliation for Britain's blockade of France. The embargo damaged American commerce more than British and was repealed in 1809. As H. W. Brands (*T. R.: The Last Romantic*, 1997, p. 214) observes, American "war hawks" called the conflict "a second war of independence." This reflected the perception that Britain was treating the United States as a dependent rather than a sovereign equal. The Treaty of Ghent, signed on 24 December 1814, ended the war with no territorial changes (Remini, 2008, p. 94). It paradoxically opened the most sustained period of Anglo-American peace in the two nations' shared history. The Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817 demilitarised the Great Lakes. The Convention of 1818 settled the northern boundary along the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 extended that boundary to the Pacific. The War of 1812 was both the last armed conflict between the two nations and the foundation for a framework of peaceful coexistence.

The Great Rapprochement (1895-1914): The convergence of British and American strategic interests that historians call the "Great Rapprochement" developed over the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth

(Remini, 2008, p. 130). Several factors drove this convergence. British imperial overextension and the rise of Imperial Germany as a continental rival compelled London to seek strategic reassurance from Washington. The United States' victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898 gave it an overseas imperial presence and a new stake in managing the international order. Both nations shared an interest in the Open Door Policy in China. Both contributed forces to the Eight-Nation Alliance that suppressed the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 (Remini, 2008, p. 131). The Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901 granted the United States the right to build and control a Central American canal. The resolution of the Alaska boundary dispute through arbitration in 1903 demonstrated Britain's decision to accommodate American power rather than resist it. By 1914, the two nations had achieved a level of mutual trust that, while falling short of formal alliance, provided the foundation for the wartime partnership that followed.

The Special Relationship: From the Two World Wars to the Second Trump Administration

The Two World Wars and the Forging of the Alliance: The First World War (1914-1918) tested and ultimately consolidated the Anglo-American partnership. The United States maintained formal neutrality until 2 April 1917. However, its economic and financial ties to Britain made sustained neutrality untenable. Britain absorbed the bulk of American war-related exports and borrowed heavily from New York banks (Abrahamson, 1983, pp. 89-120). When Britain's credit ran dry in late 1916 and Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, threatening American shipping and lives, President Woodrow Wilson requested a declaration of war. The American Expeditionary Forces contributed decisively to the Allied victory of November 1918. Addressing British officials in London in December 1918, Wilson cautioned against Anglo-Saxon complacency. He insisted that only "a community of ideals and of interests" could sustain durable Anglo-American ties (Wilson, 1918, as cited in Remini, 2008, p. 134). This was a prescient formulation of what Churchill would later name the Special Relationship.

The interwar years (1919-1939) were marked by significant bilateral tensions. The United States rejected the League of Nations. The protectionist Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 damaged transatlantic commerce. Franklin Roosevelt's abrupt withdrawal from the London Economic Conference of 1933 strained relations further (Abrahamson, 1983, pp. 121-130). Nevertheless, British foreign policy consistently prioritised the cultivation of American goodwill. London decided not to renew its military alliance with Japan. This reflected, as Wallerstein's (1974, p. 355) framework would predict, the strategy of a declining hegemonic power seeking to align itself with the rising hegemon. The Second World War (1939-1945) transformed the Special Relationship into an operational reality. President Roosevelt's Lend-Lease Act (1941) made the United States the "arsenal of democracy." The Act supplied Britain with the war materiel essential to its survival (Abrahamson, 1983, pp. 131-170). Technical collaboration extended to sharing intelligence on Nazi Enigma codes, proximity fuses, radar, and ultimately the atomic bomb. The wartime partnership between Churchill and Roosevelt was the most intensive Anglo-American cooperation in the history of the relationship. It was not without friction. Churchill vigorously opposed American pressure for Indian independence. Yet it established the template for the postwar partnership.

The Cold War Alliance and the Marshall Plan: The postwar period posed acute challenges for Britain. Six years of total war had left the United Kingdom financially exhausted, even as the United States enjoyed an exceptional economic boom (Abrahamson, 1983, p. 180). An emergency Anglo-American loan of $3.75 billion was agreed in 1946. It was a 50-year loan at 2 per cent interest. Britain made its final repayment in December 2006. The Marshall Plan of 1948-1951 channelled $3.3 billion of a total $13.3 billion into Britain. In return, Britain was required to balance its budget, control tariffs, and maintain adequate currency reserves (Abrahamson, 1983, pp. 181-185). Britain's Labour government, alarmed by the communist threat in the Balkans, persuaded the United States to take over the British role in supporting Greece and Turkey. This produced the Truman Doctrine of 12 March 1947: a commitment to support "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures" (Truman, 1947). The two nations then collaborated in founding the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on 4 April 1949. Under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949), an attack on any member is deemed an attack on all. American military power effectively guaranteed the security of western Europe throughout the Cold War.

Special Relationship under Thatcher-Reagan and the Post-Cold War Era: The election of Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister in May 1979 and Ronald Reagan as American President in January 1981 is widely regarded as the high point of the modern Special Relationship (Remini, 2008, p. 200). The two leaders were frequently described as "political soulmates." They shared a commitment to free-market economic liberalism and a confrontational stance towards the Soviet Union. They cooperated closely in their dealings with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev (Campbell, *The Iron Lady*, 2009, p. 234).

Ronaid Reagan with close ally and personal friend Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s

Figure 8. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan. Their political partnership in the 1980s is widely regarded as the apex of the modern Special Relationship (Source: britannica.com, accessed 1 April 2025).

The post-Cold War era tested the durability of the relationship. The Gulf War of 1991, in which the United States and Britain provided the two largest national contingents to the coalition army that liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, demonstrated its continued operational vitality. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 killed sixty-seven Britons among the 2,977 victims. Prime Minister Tony Blair became the most prominent international supporter of American-led military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. He

subsequently supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a decision that generated intense domestic controversy in both countries. President George W. Bush told a joint session of Congress: "America has no truer friend than Great Britain" (Bush, 2001).

Special Relationship from Obama to Trump's Second Term

Prime Minister David Cameron and president Barack obama at the bilateral meeting during the G20 Summit in Toronto, Canada, 2010

Figure 9. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Gordon Brown at the White House, 3 March 2009 (Source: whitehouse.gov, accessed 1 April 2025). The Obama administration (2009-2017) maintained the institutional framework of the Special Relationship while adopting a more multilateralist posture. During a joint press conference with Prime Minister Theresa May in January 2017, President Obama stated: "The bottom line is that we don't have a stronger partner anywhere in the world than the United Kingdom" (Obama, 2017). During his first White House visit in March 2009, Prime Minister Gordon Brown presented Obama with a pen holder carved from the timbers of HMS Gannet, a vessel associated with Britain's anti-slavery patrols. The gift carried symbolic weight on the occasion of the first African-American presidency (BBC News, 2009).

Prime Minister Theresa May and President Donald Trump conduction a press conference at the East Room, 2017

Figure 10. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Theresa May, 27 January 2017. May was the first foreign leader hosted by Trump at the White House (Source: whitehouse.gov, accessed 1 April 2025). The first Trump administration (2017-2021) introduced turbulence into the relationship. While Prime Minister Theresa May was the first foreign leader Trump hosted at the White House, the administration's withdrawal from multilateral agreements, its protectionist trade stance, and its dismissive approach to NATO allies created persistent friction with British partners (Runciman, *How Democracy Ends*, 2018, p. 45). Trump's presidency was accompanied by sustained popular protests in Britain.

Prime minister Liz and president Joe Biden conduction the bilateral meeting in new York City, 2022

Figure 11. President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the G7 Summit, Carbis Bay, Cornwall, 11-13 June 2021. Biden's first overseas trip was to Britain (Source: whitehouse.gov, accessed 1 April 2025). The Biden administration (January 2021-January 2025) moved to restore the rhetorical warmth and institutional substance of the Special Relationship. President Biden's first overseas trip was to the G7 Summit in Cornwall, England, in June 2021. He and Prime Minister Boris Johnson signed the New Atlantic Charter, committing both nations to cooperation on cyber security, emerging technologies, global health, and climate change (The White House, 2021). Biden explicitly "affirmed the Special Relationship" during the summit. On 20 January 2025, Donald J. Trump was inaugurated for a second term as President of the United States, following his victory in the November 2024 presidential election. The second Trump administration has signalled continuity with the first in its scepticism towards multilateral institutions. The United Kingdom, now led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer following Labour's general election victory of July 2024, has sought to maintain productive bilateral relations while pursuing closer engagement with European partners. The trajectory of the Special Relationship in the second Trump term remains an open question. It is shaped by Brexit's legacy, transatlantic trade disputes, and divergent approaches to Ukraine and NATO.

Economic and Commercial Dimensions of the Relationship

The economic dimensions of the Special Relationship are as significant as its political and military manifestations. US Secretary of State John Kerry made this clear at a press conference in London on 9 September 2013: We are not only each other's largest investors in each of our countries, one to the other, but the fact is that every day almost one million people go to work in America for British companies that are in the United States, just as more than one million people go to

work here in Great Britain for American companies that are here. So, we are enormously tied together. (Kerry, 2013, as cited in US Department of State, 2013)

More than 4.5 million British nationals visited the United States annually before the COVID-19 pandemic. They generated approximately $14 billion in economic activity. Approximately 3 million Americans visited the United Kingdom each year, contributing around $10 billion (VisitBritain, 2019). The three major American carriers, American Airlines, United Airlines, and Delta Airlines, operate direct services between the United States and the United Kingdom. American Airlines serves routes from multiple US hubs to London Heathrow, including from New York (JFK), Dallas, and Philadelphia, as well as to Edinburgh. United Airlines operates nonstop flights from Newark to London Heathrow, Edinburgh, and seasonally to Glasgow . Delta Air Lines offers up to fifteen daily nonstop flights from London Heathrow, London Gatwick, and Edinburgh to American hubs including New York (JFK), Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles. The London-New York axis remains the primary route. Services to Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow reflect the depth and commercial importance of the bilateral relationship across its regional dimensions.

CONCLUSION

This research work has traced some aspects of British influence on the American colonies from the Jamestown settlement of 1607 to the political conjuncture of 2025. Through the twin analytical lenses of Bhabha's postcolonial theory and Wallerstein's world-systems framework, this research work revealed that the influence of the British on the American colonies derived from many factors. First, the structural mechanisms of British colonial governance were not exogenous irritants. The Navigation Acts, the system of royal governors, and the fiscal impositions of the 1760s were constitutive features of a world-economy whose logic predictably generated the very resistance it sought to suppress. The colonists' resentment of economic exploitation was structural rather than incidental and the British attempts to tighten imperial control after 1763 were perceived as tyranny. American founders were simultaneously the most thoroughly British of subjects, in language, law, political culture, and religious formation, and the most determined opponents of British authority. Along with this, the Declaration of Independence (1776) was written in the idiom of British Enlightenment thought. It invoked principles inscribed in English common law and it was precisely this appropriation of metropolitan discourse that gave it its universal resonance and its revolutionary force. The postcolonial relationship between the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland demonstrates the enduring power of historical, cultural, and institutional bonds. The special relationship, imperfect, contested, and asymmetric as it is, remains the most institutionally dense bilateral partnership in contemporary international relations.

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