

GENTLEMEN'S DIPLOMACY:
THE FOREIGN POLICY OF LORD LANSDOWNE, 1845-1927

A Dissertation

by

FRANK WINFIELD WINTERS IV

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2006

Major Subject: History

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ABSTRACT

Gentlemen's Diplomacy:

The Foreign Policy of Lord Lansdowne, 1845-1927. (December 2006)

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As British Foreign Secretary from November 1900 to December 1905, Lord Lansdowne operated on a long-held coherent body of principles on which he based his foreign policy. Throughout his political life, in fact, he pressed for the renewal of an enlightened—if informal—'Concert of Europe' which he hoped could be implemented worldwide. His 'policy of the entente,' which reflected his belief in the efficacy of reasonable and 'gentlemanly' diplomacy to settle outstanding disputes, left him ill-suited, however, to manage Britain's position as a world power during this period of perceived relative decline.

If Lansdowne did indeed have some innate talent for diplomacy, he aspired not to be the next Talleyrand, of whom he was reputedly a descendant, but to become an appropriately detached liberal-minded arbiter. He was the true gentleman-diplomat who, as enlightened reason dictated, always wished to play *cartes sur table*. In these waning years of the supremacy of British power, the marquis believed in an empire forged no longer through fire and sword, but through the example of free institutions, just administration, and the influence of English culture. He certainly believed that foremost

it was these aspects of Western civilization that brought Pax Britannica to the Khyber Pass. In pursuing his 'policy of the entente,' Lansdowne presumed initially at least that his fellow European gentlemen would aid him in the higher mission of preserving civilization, and consequently, although secondarily to the Foreign Secretary, the status quo. This, however, proved not to be the case.

Lansdowne was perhaps the right man to administer the empire, in much the same manner he dutifully tried to look after and maintain his great estates and care for his many tenants and servants. He was, however, not the right man to charge with its preservation and defense. Fortunately, his policy proved impossible to carry out fully. He received little cooperation from the leadership of other great powers, and in the end the path of British foreign policy was impossible to guide or engineer in the direction he wished.

For my wife, Susan

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There are many persons who deserve some mention for making the completion of this work possible. Foremost, I must thank R. J. Q. Adams for his guidance, encouragement, friendship, and superior skills as an editor. It does not go too far to say that I was truly blessed to find myself under his tutelage through these formative years. It must also be said that I owe similar debts of gratitude to the other members of my doctoral committee, namely, Professors James M. Rosenheim, David McWhirter, Arnold Krammer, and H. W. Brands. All were instrumental in the successful completion of my studies. Dr. David Vaught deserves special thanks for the countless hours of assistance and words of wisdom he has given me over the years, while the aid of Professor Lyle McGeoch, the senior Lansdowne scholar in whose footsteps I now walk, was invaluable.

My fellow graduate students have been no less important both professionally and personally on this long road and I would be remiss if I did not mention the support I received from Larry Smith and Joseph Duhon. Moreover, I would not have completed this work without the daily support of the staff of the Department of History at Texas A&M University, so I must sincerely thank Judy Mattson, Mary Johnson, Barbara Dawson, Kelly Cook, Jude Swank, and Robyn Konrad for all of their efforts on my behalf.

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in London. I would especially like to thank the late Dr. R. A. H. Smith and Dr. William Frame of the British Library for making my examination of the Lansdowne papers both possible and effortless.

Finally, I must thank my family. My mother, father, step-father, brother and sisters all helped to shape my character, and set me on this particular path in life. My mother, in particular, deserves greater thanks than can be expressed adequately. Lastly, but surely a privileged place with regard to acknowledgments, my wife Susan has endured all that I have done in this process, and deserves therefore as much credit for this work as might be thought due the author.

NOMENCLATURE

BD	<i>British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914</i>
BP	Balfour Papers (British Library)
GDD III	<i>German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914, Vol. 3</i>
LP	Lansdowne Papers (British Library)
PRO FO	Foreign Office Private Papers, Lansdowne Papers (Public Record Office, microfilm)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The symbolic and in many ways real end to Britain's policy of "splendid isolation" came with Lord Salisbury's surrender of the Foreign Office portfolio in November 1900. Believing the Prime Minister's failing health and "masterly inactivity" in the face of Britain's relative economic and military decline in the world necessitated a change in the direction of British foreign policy, the Cabinet forced Salisbury's removal.¹ Still First Minister, however, Salisbury remained a force in foreign policy decisions for two more years. Reacting to a draft proposal of an Anglo-German alliance put forward in May 1901 by his hand-picked successor at the Foreign Office, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, the fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, he continued to champion his erstwhile policy of maintaining Britain's 'free hand', arguing that "it is impossible for us to judge whether the 'isolation' under which we are supposed to suffer, does or does not contain in it any elements of peril." Pressing for caution—and effectively quashing any approach to Germany for the time being—he asserted, "It would hardly be wise to incur novel and most onerous obligations, in order to guard against *a danger in whose existence we have no historical reason for believing.*"²

This dissertation follows the style of *Albion*.

¹ J. A. S. Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1964), p. 322.

² Salisbury memorandum, May 29, 1901, Public Record Office: Foreign Office Private Papers 800/128. Hereafter cited as PRO FO.

Lansdowne's response came some five months later and he spoke for a majority in the Cabinet when he openly questioned the assumptions on which British foreign policy had heretofore been based. He noted that though "this country has until now fared well in spite of its international isolation . . . we may push too far the argument that, because we have in the past survived in spite of our isolation, we need have no misgivings as to the effect of that isolation in the future."³

Lansdowne was a primary author of a new direction in British foreign policy, what became known as the 'policy of the entente.' This policy would remain in place—with some adjustment—under the marquis's Liberal successor, Sir Edward Grey. When war broke out in August 1914, however, the 'policy of the entente' came under immediate attack by liberal intellectuals such as J. A. Hobson, Norman Angell and the mathematician philosopher, Bertrand Russell. Noting the policy's complete and utter failure to preserve the peace, they revealed it now to be that same "foul idol" that John Bright had joyously if prematurely declared dead in the previous century—the 'balance of power.'⁴ Joined by future Prime Minister James Ramsay MacDonald they founded the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) in September 1914. The UDC blamed the outbreak of war on secret diplomacy and the formation of alliance systems which it perceived to be the direct result of foreign policy being conducted in accordance with the theory of the 'balance of power.' Moreover, they believed that the remedy for war was

³ Lansdowne memorandum, November 11, 1901 in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, Vol. II* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967), no.92. Hereafter cited as BD.

⁴ John Bright's speech in Birmingham on January 18, 1865, *The Times*, January 19, 1865, p. 9.

for the common people—who naturally abhorred war and therefore would never start one—to have a greater say in international affairs.

Prolific in his anti-war activities, Russell published a series of articles during the first years of the war in which he presented the liberal case against foreign policy as conducted by Grey and Lansdowne. In his essay entitled, “Is a Permanent peace Possible?,” he asserted, that “Ever since the conclusion of the Anglo-French *entente* in 1904 the war had been on the point of breaking out, and could only have been avoided by some radical change in the temper of nations and Governments.” Unfortunately, he noted, it was the diplomatist who was “the chief obstacle to internationalism,” because “The mental atmosphere in which he lives is that of the eighteenth century, with its ‘Balance of Power’ and other shibboleths.”⁵ In his essay on the “Entente Policy, 1904-1915” Russell declined to personally blame Grey and Lansdowne for an “ancient” diplomatic tradition that they had merely “inherited,” but insisted that “if our foreign policy in recent years had been conducted with more courage, more openness, and more idealism, there is a likelihood that the present European War would never have occurred.” He saw little difference between German and English policies over the previous decade, maintaining that they had both been “immoral in aim and brutal in method, each in the exact degree which was thought to be to the national advantage.” Employing the idea of ‘false consciousness,’ he argued that the “English people,” had they been conscious of “such a policy as its chosen rulers have carried on for the last eleven years,” would never have tolerated it. For Russell the turning away from a

⁵ Bertrand Russell, “Is a Permanent Peace Possible?” in Bertrand Russell, *Justice in War-Time* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1916), pp. 83, 98.

democratic foreign policy that worked “in furtherance of peace and freedom” began with Gladstone’s retirement and the subsequent “closing up of the ranks among the governing classes of England.” “Generosity and wisdom,” according to Russell, should have urged a great and powerful country like England towards a more worthy and honorable foreign policy that might “lead the nations [of the world] peacefully along the road to freedom.” Standing in the way of such an enlightened policy, however, was the “money market and aristocratic prejudice.”⁶

Russell’s liberal interpretation of the ‘policy of the entente’ lays the groundwork for the principal questions this essay considers. Foremost among them is the idea that Lansdowne was the epitome of Russell’s aristocratic diplomatist who stood in the way of a more progressive and peacemaking British foreign policy. Although much of Russell’s moral admonition and progressive preaching has disappeared from the dry scholarly monographs of modern diplomatic historians, a residue of this original liberal interpretation has remained in the historiography. Of course, there has been scholarly advancement. In his work, *The Policy of the Entente*, Keith Wilson challenged parts of the existing narrative that in many ways were still by-products—although distant ones perhaps—of that initial liberal wartime interpretation of events. Specifically, Wilson sought to focus more attention on the complexities involved in foreign policy decisions, and in this questioned both the assertions and approach of George Monger, J. A. S. Grenville, and Zara Steiner among others. Wilson asserted that there must be greater “appreciation that the sources reflect several layers of reality—not only in the sense that

⁶ Bertrand Russell, “The Entente Policy, 1904-1915: A Reply to Professor Gilbert Murray,” in Russell, *Justice in War-Time*, pp. 123, 137, 209-210, 212, 215.

some participants in the policy-making process had a firmer grasp than others of what the policy was, but also in the sense that cynicism lay below expressions of devoutness, despair behind confidence and bombast.” Moreover, in broader strategic terms, Wilson noted that these earlier historians perceived in the Foreign Office an “adjustment of priorities . . . from the British Empire to the European continent,” which coincided rather conveniently with a supposed realization in the Foreign Office that Germany presented the greatest threat to British power. Wilson argued, however, that “the makers of British foreign policy,” including Lansdowne, in fact remained “less interested in Europe than in their Empire.” It was fear for the empire and fear of Russia, he maintained, that focused Lansdowne’s attentions on the (not so newly formed) European alliance groups.⁷

This essay will reaffirm that when formulating policy, preservation of the empire was Lansdowne’s foremost concern, although he certainly made reference to the grouping of European powers as a reason for ending Britain’s isolation. These factors alone, however, do not explain fully his foreign policy. Answers must be sought elsewhere, in, for example, the foundations, predispositions, and character of the man. To date, and despite the countless but mostly perfunctory references to the marquis’s great Whig heritage, this aspect undoubtedly has been the least emphasized in those diplomatic studies concerned directly with his policies. While this essay will not focus

⁷ Keith Wilson, *The Policy of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy 1904-1914* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1-3.

exclusively on this neglected facet of Lansdowne diplomacy, it will attempt to redress the balance.

Throughout his political career—as a member of mostly Conservative governments—Lansdowne never strayed very far from Whiggism or from William Ewart Gladstone’s six principles of a moral and upright liberal foreign policy, namely, to “reserve the strength of the Empire . . . for great and worthy occasions,” “preserve to the nations of the world . . . the blessings of peace,” “cultivate and maintain to the utmost the concert of Europe,” “avoid needless and entangling engagements,” “acknowledge the equal rights of all nations,” and lastly to ensure that the “foreign policy of England should always be inspired by the love of freedom.”⁸ It should be remembered that Lansdowne did not leave the Liberal Party because his political views had suddenly transformed, but because he was one of the propertied “Ten Thousand” that the Grand Old Man inveighed against and that the party eventually left behind.⁹ Moreover, Lansdowne never abandoned what Gladstone held to be the most important of his principles, which was respect for the equal rights of nations, and the forging of a new more enlightened, if less formal, ‘Concert of Europe.’ It is thus worthwhile to consider whether Lansdowne’s conception of the ‘policy of the entente’ actually differed very much from the liberal foreign policy ideals as espoused throughout the nineteenth century by Richard Cobden, Bright, and Gladstone, or in the early twentieth century by Russell and the UDC.

⁸ Gladstone’s speech during his Midlothian Campaign on November 27, 1879, *The Times*, November 28, 1879, p. 10.

⁹ Peter Stansky, *Gladstone: A Progress in Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), p. 132.

In order to assess that question as well as appreciate the “layers of reality” beneath foreign policy decisions that Wilson asks us to consider we must first attempt to know the mind and character of those who formulated policy. Notwithstanding the vast number of existing monographs and articles devoted to this crucial period in British foreign relations, very few even attempt to fully assess the beliefs that lay behind Lansdowne’s foreign policy, much less the mind and character of the man. Despite the marquis’s long and prestigious career, during which he held some of the most important and coveted posts of the British Empire—governor-general of Canada (1883 -1888), Viceroy of India (1888-1894), and most importantly, Foreign Secretary (1900- 1905)—there is a stunning dearth of published studies about his life. The official—and only—biography of Lansdowne was published in 1929 by Lord Newton, a friend and Unionist colleague. Writing a mere two years after the marquis’s death, even Newton lamented that his subject’s abilities, even among contemporaries, “were to a great extent unrecognized,” while his name “has perhaps already been almost forgotten by the unthinking mass of Englishmen.”¹⁰ In Algernon Cecil’s grand assessment of all of England’s Foreign Ministers from Castlereagh to Grey—published the year Lansdowne died—the foremost question with regard to the marquis’s tenure at the Foreign Office that the author found himself unable to answer was whether to attach the three page summary to the end of the chapter on Salisbury, or to the beginning of the one on Grey.¹¹

¹⁰ Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 496.

¹¹ Algernon Cecil, *British Foreign Secretaries 1807-1916: Studies in Personality and Policy* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1971, c.1927), p. 311.

Indeed, whether Lansdowne in fact ever really directed foreign policy at all is still an open matter for debate. He was judged by some of his closest political colleagues to be a cipher under the command of Arthur Balfour. Lyle McGeoch has gone so far as to assert that the existing evidence points to Balfour himself as “a leader in Lansdowne’s political ostracism and character assassination” following the publication of the marquis’s infamous and so-called ‘Peace Letter’ of November 1917, in which he sought to press the warring parties to consider a negotiated end to the First World War.¹² Specifically, at a luncheon held by Balfour in 1926, he and Austen Chamberlain were overheard agreeing that Lansdowne’s portrait did indeed belong among a display in the Foreign Office of the “six famous Foreign Secretaries,” but only because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Anglo-French Entente, and notwithstanding that at the time “he hardly realized what he was doing.”¹³

Chamberlain, a lifelong friend of Lansdowne, did his friend’s legacy a further disservice when, in his autobiography, he argued that it would not “detract from Lansdowne’s services as Foreign Secretary to say that his chief accomplishments would never have been achieved but for the constructive mind of Balfour and the constant support he gave him, not only in executing his foreign policy, but in conceiving and shaping it.”¹⁴ If, as Chamberlain asserts, Balfour helped conceive, shape, and execute Lansdowne’s foreign policy, the marquis’s standing in the whole process is rendered

¹² Lyle A. McGeoch, “Balfour and Lansdowne after the ‘Peace Letter’ of 1917” (unpublished paper delivered at the Western Conference on British Studies meeting at Las Cruces, New Mexico, October 26-27, 1984), p. 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9; Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary, Vol. 2* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 93-94.

¹⁴ Sir Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1935), pp. 209-210.

marginal and perhaps ultimately undeserving of a major study. If one discounts Chamberlain's implication that Lansdowne lacked a foreign policy conception altogether, however, his remarks could lend credence to the idea that the marquis's foreign policy actions and goals simply differed in a fundamental way from his colleagues in the Cabinet.

The general conclusion of Lansdowne's contemporaries that he was at best of secondary importance in the direction of foreign affairs does appear to have carried some weight in such seminal works as George Monger's *End of Isolation* (London, 1963) and J. A. S. Grenville's *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy* (London, 1964). Monger's work remains one of the most straightforward and thorough monographs addressing Lansdowne's time at the Foreign Office. While many of the Foreign Secretary's actions are portrayed as calculated and thoughtful, however, far too often the author's insight into the workings of Lansdowne's mind is entirely speculative. Monger attributed most of the marquis's foreign policy successes to his being "extremely lucky," and notwithstanding Wilson's criticisms he also noted that Lansdowne never truly understood the implications of his diplomacy, namely "the estrangement from Germany." According to Monger, the marquis was an "unremarkable" and unoriginal man with the lone redeeming virtue, ascribed to him in part by Balfour, of a Whiggish detachment, "free from both prejudice and emotion."¹⁵ While this assessment might yet hold true, it is still in need of elucidation.

¹⁵ George Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1963), pp. 233-235.

Similarly, Grenville credits Lansdowne for recognizing Britain's new position in the world and the need for a new course in British diplomacy, but finds that "in fact there was no 'master plan,'" and that his numerous "piecemeal decisions" were not based on "settled principles" as Salisbury's had been. Moreover, Grenville concurred with Monger that Lansdowne "had no clear conception of what the final outcome of his policy would be."¹⁶ It is curious and unaccountable, however, that though there was no "master plan," there apparently was a "policy." Because these two works became the essential groundwork for many future foreign policy studies, these assessments in some form or another have endured, and if they are not wholly unwarranted, they remain to a degree unexamined.¹⁷

More recent scholarship bears this out. In his work, *Balfour and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 1997), Jason Tomes argued that Balfour set the foreign policy agenda of his administration while Lansdowne was competent enough to handle only the details.¹⁸ Where Balfour had once been Lansdowne's fag at Eton, their roles were deemed reversed when the latter became Balfour's Foreign Secretary. Since Lansdowne is mentioned in no more than twelve pages of Tomes' work, however, the author's conclusions, while persuasive in revealing the diplomatic and strategic philosophy of his subject, are less convincing with regard to Lansdowne. The marquis's actions as

¹⁶ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 434, 438.

¹⁷ Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 294.

¹⁸ Jason Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thought of a Conservative Statesman* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 13, 121.

Foreign Secretary require greater examination, even if only to demonstrate his irrelevance. Although others have been more positive in their evaluation, remarkably they have been no more satisfying in revealing more about the man or his foreign policy. In his essay on Lansdowne as Foreign Secretary in Keith Wilson's *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy* (London, 1987), P. J. V. Rolo concluded in a mere eleven pages that Lansdowne, while not an "artist," was a good and competent "craftsman" whose ability and intelligence were underrated by his colleagues and historians. Rolo even suggests that Lansdowne's tenure at the Foreign Office might serve as a template for how diplomatic work should be carried out in future.¹⁹ Within such praise one can discern a hope for future diplomacy conducted by upright gentlemanly diplomats working sincerely to engage the international brotherhood of nations in order to preserve the peace. The impression drawn from B. J. McKercher's article, "Diplomatic Equipose: the Lansdowne Foreign Office," is comparable.²⁰ Although both pieces—even in their errors—come closer to revealing the real Whiggish Lansdowne, they also both share the unsettling whiff of presentism. It would appear that for many scholars, however, the end-product of Lansdowne's liberal minded foreign policy—the outbreak of the First World War—so readily resembled that which might have been the result of traditional 'balance of power' diplomacy they did not bother to fully consider other alternatives.

¹⁹ P. V. J. Rolo, "Lord Lansdowne," in Keith Wilson, ed., *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: From Crimean War to First World War* (London, Croom Helm, 1987).

²⁰ B. J. C. McKercher, "Diplomatic Equipose: the Lansdowne Foreign Office, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the Global Balance of Power." *Canadian Journal of History* 24 (December 1989): 299-339.

One such alternative is that as far as Lansdowne conducted foreign policy, it was a policy based on a set of liberal principles that would have suited a Gladstone Ministry better than those of Salisbury or Balfour under which he served. Moreover, if one were to maintain as Russell did, that the inevitable denouement of the ‘policy of the entente’ was the outbreak of war in August 1914, then one might justly consider whether Lansdowne’s foreign policy simply reconfirmed the ineffectiveness of the liberal-humanist ideology to eradicate human conflict in the face of man’s inherent need to establish an identity in opposition to the ‘Other.’

In considering such a hypothesis, as well as those put forward earlier, this essay will follow new paths for analysis and discovery. These new paths have been hinted at in the historiography, but have as yet not been pursued. Almost offhandedly, Monger noted that in many foreign policy areas Lansdowne was “predisposed to believe in the need for a new departure,” yet he offered little in explanation of this predisposition.²¹ More recently, Avner Cohen, in seeking to discern why Joseph Chamberlain and Lansdowne took different paths in their attitudes towards Germany after 1901, concluded that the source of the growing differences between the two “probably originated in the differences in social background, personalities and general beliefs.”²² In order to move beyond the extant studies and interpretations of Lansdowne’s foreign policy, this work will follow this new path and in doing so encompass the marquis’s entire political career, searching out foreign policy relevancies. It will take a more than

²¹ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 51.

²² Avner Cohen, “Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Lansdowne and British Foreign Policy 1901-1903: From Collaboration to Confrontation” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (June 1997): 130.

cursory look at Lansdowne's social background, early life, personality, as well as his time spent on "the fringe of diplomacy" in Canada and India, in the hope that they might aid in revealing, if not a "master plan," then the aspirations or motivations of the man.²³

This essay is not intended to be a full reconsideration of the issues and events of British foreign policy during the period covered. Most of the major and even minor foreign policy issues during Lansdowne's tenure at the Foreign Office have been fully examined in many studies, many times over, since the Foreign Secretary's death. Over the last four decades, however, very few of these narrowly focused studies have even cursorily sought to address the whole of Lansdowne's diplomatic career, or with any confidence assess his particular impact on events. Through a synthesis of the existing secondary works, to be supplemented by primary research in the Lansdowne Papers—most recently deposited and maintained in the British Library—it is my hope that this essay will advance the historiography by contributing both new history as well as new interpretations of the issues and events addressed within.

²³ Lyle A. McGeoch, "The Role of lord Lansdowne in the Diplomatic Negotiations Connected with the Anglo-French Agreement of 8 April 1904" (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 1964), p. 206.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATIONS AND PREDISPOSITIONS

Ancestry

The origins of the Fitzmaurice family lay in Ireland, and in the Norman ascendancy, which was the foundation of their wealth and earliest nobility, reaching back over eight hundred years.¹ When Strongbow invaded Ireland in the twelfth century he was accompanied by Maurice Fitzgerald, ‘the Invader,’ and founder of the Fitzmaurice root of the Lansdowne family line. Fitzgerald’s third son would gain lands in the northern parts of County Kerry, and father the future Lords of Kerry and Lixnaw, as well as the future Earls of Desmond. Of the first eighteen Lords of Kerry only one married an English woman, and that marriage ended without issue, so that after four hundred years in Ireland the Fitzmaurices were of mostly Irish blood, Catholic in their religion, and had displayed a consistent streak of rebelliousness against the crown. In the mid-seventeenth century, however, the nineteenth Lord of Kerry took to English ways, became a Protestant, and left Ireland. Although he and his immediate descendants later sided with the Stuart kings in their battles with Parliament, by the end of the century the twenty-first lord had reversed course and made amends with William III, and was created first Earl of Kerry.²

¹ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 1.

² Sixth Marquis of Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitzmaurices* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 221-224.

Though the Fitzmaurice family line was ancient and noble from its beginnings, the lands and wealth that survived to support the Lansdowne Marquisate in the nineteenth century must be credited to Sir William Petty. Petty was author of the ‘Down Survey,’ a complete survey of Irish lands in preparation for Cromwell’s planned eradication of Catholicism and Catholic proprietors in Ireland. In the process, he managed to gain some 270,000 acres for himself, in part as compensation for his work. Most of this land was in County Kerry, and as Petty himself noted, it was the least desirable and most difficult section of Ireland to control.³ When his daughter Anne married Thomas, the twenty-first lord and first Earl of Kerry, the union marked an alliance between two of the greatest landholding families in the county. Moreover, the first Lord Lansdowne was of the opinion that it was Anne—though an unattractive woman—who “brought into the family whatever degree of sense may have appeared in it and whatever wealth is likely to remain in it.”⁴

The expansive Petty lands, along with the earldom of Shelburne, passed to Thomas and Anne’s younger son John in 1751 on the death of Sir William Petty’s son and last remaining heir in the Petty line.⁵ Upon his succession, John purchased the Bowood estate in Wiltshire and thereafter spent most of his time in England. John’s son, the famous Earl of Shelburne—briefly Prime Minister in 1782—was created first Marquis of Lansdowne. Although the original Fitzmaurice lands did not outlast the third

³ Ibid., pp. 4-8.

⁴ Shelburne quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 2.

⁵ Lansdowne, *Glanerought*, p. 225.

Earl of Kerry—who had sold the family legacy, settled in Paris, and lost everything in the Revolution—the ancient Kerry title remained.⁶ In 1818, this passed to the third Marquis of Lansdowne, now the twenty-fourth Lord of Kerry, and known to history as the great ‘Nestor of the Whigs.’ Notably, during his long political career, he refused the premiership in 1852, and turned down a Dukedom in 1857.⁷ The fifth Marquis’s father held the title for only three years, and spent much of that time speaking in the Lords on behalf of business interests in an attempt to improve the family’s finances. He had previously held the post of Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1856-1858) and was involved briefly in the failed attempt to set up a coalition government with Conservatives under the direction of moderate Whigs in 1866, in order to “protect England from the trade unionists, the democrats, and the equalitarian sentimentalists.”⁸

Education

The education of the fifth Marquis was quite traditional and ended in disappointment. At the age of ten, Viscount Clanmaurice, or simply ‘Clan’ (his courtesy title and the name of affection used by his closest friends until his death), was sent off to a private school at Woodcote, and from there on to Eton, where due to one of those interesting twists of fate, Arthur Balfour, the future Prime Minister under whom the

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 225.

⁷ *New York Times*, July 12, 1854, p. 4; Lansdowne, *Glanerought*, p. 126; It would appear that he was prepared to accept the title of Duke of Kerry in 1863 upon the marriage of the Prince Of Wales, but died before the honor was bestowed (*New York Times*, February 17, 1863, p. 5).

⁸ James Winter, *Robert Lowe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 229.

viscount would serve, would become his fag. Balfour would later recollect that his fagmaster was “rather strict.”⁹ After Eton, however, and for most of the last twenty-five years of his lordship’s life, their roles were reversed. During Clanmaurice’s abbreviated time at Eton, his tutor, Mr. Birch, found him a “talented” and “clear-headed but rather uncertain” young man. Most unflatteringly, though without malice, he noted that the young viscount was “without imagination.” Birch eventually suggested to Lord Lansdowne that if the young man was to be a scholar, he should be taken from Eton and prepared for university by a private tutor before the “boating set” he followed instilled in him a poor work ethic, and the seeking of pleasure became his main objective in life. In the hands of the Rev. Lewis Campbell, Clanmaurice was prepared for Balliol and showed signs of becoming a good classical scholar, but once again it was found that he had one troubling flaw—one which his new tutor thought might hamper his success later in life—and that was “a want of imagination.”¹⁰

Clanmaurice entered Balliol in 1864 and came under the personal and supportive direction of the most celebrated of tutors, and later master, Dr. Benjamin Jowett. Their relationship grew very strong and their friendship endured until the latter’s death in 1893. As Lansdowne’s true mentor in both politics and life, Jowett deserves some attention. Jowett was a liberal reformer at Balliol, favoring a broad and progressive Church, and made efforts to bring in poor students who otherwise would have been unable to afford a university education. Future Liberal Foreign Secretary, Lord

⁹ Balfour quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 4-5; Blanche E. C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour, First Earl of Balfour, K. G., O. M., F. R. S., etc, Vol. I* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), p. 336.

¹⁰ Birch and Campbell quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 4-6.

Kimberley, met the Oxford professor in September 1862, and believed him “the (perhaps) only liberal & agreeable don” he ever met. A classical scholar, Jowett was known to take special care of the wealthy and titled, so that he might sway them to use their power and influence for the good of society. Among the many he would take under his wing over the years were Sir Edward Grey, George Curzon, and Herbert Henry Asquith.¹¹ Jowett took an immediate liking to the young viscount and informed Lord Lansdowne that his son showed a “great deal of ability & promise” and with hard work was “making a good use of Oxford.” Moreover, he noted that there were “very few undergraduates to whose career I look forward with as much confidence as to his.”¹² By the summer of 1865, however, Jowett found reason to be greatly disappointed in his pupil’s study habits when the latter failed to achieve a first class result in moderations. Jowett acknowledged that his charge was “not a great student” though “not at all indisposed to read,” but never entirely understood why the young man could not achieve greater marks on his exams. Nevertheless, his support and affection for Clanmaurice did not waver. He requested Lord and Lady Lansdowne’s help in limiting any distractions from their son’s studies in order that he might obtain a first in his final examinations, which were still two years away. His prescription for academic improvement, if

¹¹ Geoffrey Faber, *Jowett: a portrait with background* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1957), p. 24; Angus Hawkins and John Powell, eds., *The Journal of John Wodehouse, First Earl of Kimberley, for 1862-1902* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1997), p. 75, entry of September 9, 1862. Hereafter cited as *Kimberley Journal*; Jowett was persecuted after the publication of his work *Essays and Reviews* (1860) that among other things advocated the “use of reason on the interpretation of Scripture” (John Jones, *Balliol College: A History, 2nd Ed.* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], p. 206; Jones, *Balliol College*, pp. 205, 207-208, 210, 221.

¹² Jowett to fourth Marquis, January 9, 1864, Lansdowne Papers, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893. Hereafter cited as LP.

Clanmaurice was to have a hope of achieving a first class, was a regimen of six hours of reading a day for nine or ten months for each of the next two years, as well as the whole month of September to be spent with Jowett at his retreat at a little inn at Tunnell Bridge in Scotland reading *The Republic of Plato* and *The Ethics of Aristotle*.¹³

It is unclear whether Clanmaurice simply tested poorly, or if Jowett's affections for his student colored his overall assessment, but at Tunnell Bridge the tutor again marveled at his pupil's abilities and taste. He wrote to Lord Lansdowne that he had "rarely known anyone quicker at apprehending a new or difficult subject: he sees the point of a thing in a moment." Jowett's praise, most certainly genuine, was inevitably followed, however, with a listing of the young viscount's defects. He found his pupil "wanting in interests about political & general subjects: & this indolence or shyness of mind prevents his doing justice to his abilities which are really excellent." Jowett remained full of hope that Clanmaurice might succeed in his studies, and "take a distinguished part in life," but the viscount's work never matched expectations.¹⁴ In April 1867, Jowett was forced to report to Clanmaurice, who was vacationing in Paris, that his most recent papers were "not well done & gave no real evidence of the ability that you show in your essays." Jowett generously chose, however, to credit this poor performance to his pupil's poor physical health at the time.¹⁵

¹³ Jowett to fourth Marquis, July 12, 1865, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

¹⁴ Jowett to fourth Marquis, August 7, 1865, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

¹⁵ Jowett to Lansdowne, April 2, 1867, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

For Clanmaurice, the path to a first class degree was only to become more difficult, and beset with even more obstacles, some of which were not of his own making. His father died suddenly in 1866, and he succeeded to the Lansdowne title, lands, and debts at the dangerously young age—dangerous for the landed elite—of twenty-one. Lansdowne (as the fifth Marquis will hereafter be styled in this essay) proved his commitment to his studies by spending yet another vacation with Jowett at Tunnell Bridge preparing for final examinations to be taken the following year. He was destined, however, to come up short once again.

Perhaps at his least supportive, Jowett wrote to Lansdowne in September 1867 shortly before exams complimenting his pupil on his “great talent for languages & uncommon quickness,” but still wished him to add to these qualities more “depth of mind,” and reminded him that “The object of reading for the schools is not chiefly to attain a first class but to elevate & strengthen the character for life.”¹⁶ After the last of his written exams in November 1867 Lansdowne reported to his mother that he had “no good account to give” of his “performance.” As for Jowett’s high opinions and expectations for his pupil, Lansdowne wrote that he wished he could “confirm” them, but “for myself I have absolutely no hopes, and I am not a bad judge.” He could not help but feel that “a very great prize has been almost within reach, and been missed by my own fault.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Jowett to Lansdowne, September 14, 1867, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

¹⁷ Lansdowne to his mother, November 28, 1867, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 8-9.

The sense of looming disappointment proved justified as Lansdowne missed his first class. In his letter of condolence, Jowett first placed blame on unfortunate circumstances—which included that wondrous potential the marquis possessed, but seemingly never displayed—and reassured Lansdowne that he had “failed not from want of ability but from a certain want of interest & from the cares of this world coming upon you too soon.” The tutor also blamed himself for having failed to make his pupil “understand the amount of interest & of hard work which was required.” Jowett’s faith remained, however, and he stressed to Lansdowne that he was certainly not fated to “settle down ‘second class’ for life,” and in his estimation had “far greater ability than many first classmen.”¹⁸

It is impossible to judge Jowett’s true influence on Lansdowne’s political philosophy, beyond that his instruction favored an aristocratic bearing, responsibility, and sense of greater purpose. It seems likely that his influence would only have reinforced in the marquis Whig paternalist values, reminding him that “wealth and rank are means and not ends, and may be the greatest evil or the greatest good as they are used.”¹⁹ Notwithstanding Lansdowne’s disappointing second class, Jowett still assumed a future public life for his former charge, and pointed out that “though always willing to act with a party,” a man “should still keep his mind above party feelings and motives,” and that “reticence, self-control, freedom from personal feeling, are the qualities to be aimed at.” Jowett had added, however, that he did not object to “a touch of idealism or

¹⁸ Jowett to Lansdowne, January 15-22(?), 1868, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

¹⁹ Jowett to Lansdowne, April, 1867, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 7.

speculation also if kept in its proper place.”²⁰ In later life, Lansdowne was known to display all of these qualities, and if he did display touches of idealism, or even passion, in his political career, it was expressed somewhat ironically toward those emotionally detached ideals of which Jowett preached. It was an idealism that would manifest especially with regard to the efficacy of diplomacy, but in the main the marquis carried on his political duties well within the confines of a Whig sense of progress in a world still run by the gentleman amateur.

Early Political Career

Jowett’s proffered advice, both personal and political, would continue on into the years when Lansdowne had taken up public office. In 1869, Jowett wrote to the twenty-four year-old and soon-to-be-married nobleman that he should carefully consider how to “use this great wealth & rank for the highest purposes,” and that “almost anything may be accomplished for the agriculture, for the houses & above all for the people.”²¹ It is notable too that both Jowett and Lansdowne soon experienced the opening of a breach between themselves and the party of reform. Over the years, Jowett had had the opportunity of engaging in rather direct and argumentative discussions with the Grand Old Man, William Ewart Gladstone, especially with regard to Ireland. After one such occasion while the premier was in Oxford in November 1883, Jowett reported to Lansdowne—disapprovingly—that the Prime Minister believed the country to be

²⁰ Jowett to Lansdowne, January 15-22, 1868, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

²¹ Jowett to Lansdowne, August 8, 1869, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

heading towards “a sort of mild socialism” and that he was “not at all afraid of democracy.” In a personal aside, the aging Balliol Master noted with surprise that as he got older, he found that he grew more conservative.²²

Prior to this, however, it would appear that Jowett played some part in encouraging Lansdowne’s political career in the Liberal Party. It should be remembered that Lansdowne never had the chance to stand for election to the House of Commons. Due to the early death of his father, he would spend his entire public career in the House of Lords. There is nothing to suggest that he regretted this circumstance. As he noted to Lord Knollys, on the occasion of the latter’s elevation many years later, the House of Lords was “quite a pleasant resort.”²³ Moreover, with the passage of a new franchise reform bill the year after his father’s death, it would now be increasingly difficult to secure the election of his own man to the Commons to sit for what had been the Lansdowne pocket borough of Calne. His brother, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, however, did manage to sit for Calne as a Liberal virtually unopposed for the next seventeen years.²⁴

In November 1868, while Lansdowne was in France visiting relatives and also the court of Napoleon III at Compiègne, Jowett took it upon himself to encourage his former pupil to enter politics. He argued that “a man of energy & character ought to find

²² Faber, *Jowett*, p. 350; Jowett to Lansdowne, November 29, 1883, LP Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893. Gladstone actually played an important, though indirect, role in Jowett’s election as Master of Balliol in 1870. The Prime Minister, who admired Jowett’s intellect if not his positions on the issues, offered the current Master of Balliol the Deanery of Rochester, thus opening the way for Jowett’s election as the new Master (Jones, *Balliol College*, pp. 211-212).

²³ Lansdowne to Knollys, July 9, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary, Private Letters: Court, f69.

²⁴ Winter, *Robert Lowe*, p. 157.

some real work to do,” beyond the usual occupations of “society or hunting.” Jowett suggested that Lansdowne “contrive” his way into office, especially with a new Gladstone ministry about to be formed, reminding him that his grandfather, the ‘Nestor of the Whigs,’ had been Chancellor of the Exchequer at nearly as young an age. He advised, however, that he “‘make love’ to any office as a beginning.” Noting that Lord Granville had in the past spoken to him with “great regard & enthusiasm” about the young marquis, Jowett suggested that either Lansdowne or his mother approach his lordship about a post, as Gladstone was likely to consult him as to the new cabinet. Jowett also observed that it was quite the norm to get others to put one forward for office, and that Lansdowne should not think it improper.²⁵

Within weeks of returning from France, Lansdowne approached Granville and the latter wrote to Gladstone seeking—as a personal favor—to have the marquis installed as one of the Queen’s Lords in Waiting. Granville noted that though young, Lansdowne had “more manner, conversation, and general information than most men 10 or 15 years older.” The offer Lansdowne actually received from Gladstone and then quickly accepted, however, was that of Junior Lordship of the Treasury.²⁶ According to

²⁵ Jowett to Lansdowne, November 17, 1868, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

²⁶ Granville to Gladstone, December 16, 1868, quoted in Agatha Ramm, ed, *The Gladstone—Granville Correspondence* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), document no.3; Lansdowne to Gladstone, ?December 16, 1868, LP, Further Correspondence, William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1883. Lansdowne actually included in his letter of acceptance to Gladstone the fact that he had spoken to Granville himself about getting a public post. There is no evidence, however, to deny that Lady Lansdowne might also have had a word with Granville on the subject.

Newton, Lansdowne was able to secure such an appointment because the Liberal Party was at the time desperate for any young peer deemed capable of holding a minor post.²⁷

The core principles and beliefs that Lansdowne brought to his new political life were evident from the beginning of his government service. Within three months of accepting his post, he offered to resign over the government's position in a debate on a financial bill. Gladstone asked him to wait until the issue under discussion was put in its final form before deciding whether or not he could in good conscience remain at his post.²⁸ Lansdowne remained, but four months later he again almost scuttled his fledgling political career, only this time not by choice. Quite inexplicably, he had returned to Oxford for dinner with friends and, in what Jowett could only later surmise was a "mad freak," entered the Dean of Christ Church's garden with Lord Blanford and upturned many of the plants. Jowett wrote to his former pupil in order to confirm the rumor of the incident that had been circulating in both Oxford and London. Jowett at first thought the rumor a mistake, but learning the truth, he implored Lansdowne to send a written apology to the Dean.²⁹ It would appear from the correspondence that the marquis initially hoped that his tutor would resolve the issue for him, but Jowett told him that he had to resolve it himself and then hopefully the matter would be "finished & forgotten." If Lansdowne persisted in doing such things, however, Jowett warned him

²⁷ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 13.

²⁸ Gladstone to Lansdowne, March 11, 1869, LP, Further Correspondence, William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1883.

²⁹ Jowett to Lansdowne, June 21, 1869, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

that he would get the unfortunate and unhelpful reputation of “being a ‘delightful person, but quite mad.’”³⁰

In the midst of struggling to answer questions in the Lords concerning the government’s financial decisions, of which he knew very little, Lansdowne married Lady Maud Hamilton, the youngest daughter of the Duke of Abercorn. Newton credits Lady Lansdowne’s “dignity and charm” as being of “incalculable value in the discharge of the high offices of state” the marquis would hold during his lifetime. The marriage was considered a happy and contented one for the whole of its duration, and there has been nothing uncovered since to prove this assessment false. It is extremely difficult, in fact, to find a single word spoken against Lansdowne personally, outside of political rhetoric, even by the staunchest of political foes. Lord Ernest Hamilton’s near hagiography of his brother-in-law—printed as an appendix in Newton’s official biography—cannot easily be impugned even after seventy-odd years. Hamilton asserted that “most people in society would, I think, have nominated [the marquis] as our representative in any international competition for gentlemen.” He added though that beyond a seemingly rigid veneer, Lansdowne was far from the cold and formidable man that he might have appeared to outsiders.³¹ Ten years earlier, Colonel House, the personal envoy of the American President Woodrow Wilson and an unlikely admirer, came to a similar assessment of the man, noting in his journal that Lansdowne was indeed a “great gentleman,” but “not merely in intellect and character, nor for having for

³⁰ Jowett to Lansdowne, July 6, 1869, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

³¹ Hamilton’s sketch in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 506-511.

a background an ancient and distinguished lineage, but in manner and in that intangible and indefinable air which comes as a gift from the gods.”³² Lansdowne was, as Newton described him, “a fastidious Whig of the highest quality,” but softened and molded by the progressive path of nineteenth century English liberalism.

For example, Lansdowne’s first political speech in the Upper chamber not having to do with Treasury business dealt with the Marriage with a Deceased Wife’s Sister Bill. The arguments against the bill, founded in religion, history, as well natural law, all fell short of persuading him. With regard to the religious objection, he believed that “a large section of the community would, where such issues were at stake, be reluctant to admit they were tied and bound by the merely literal interpretation of the Levitical law.” As for the historical arguments against the bill—drawn from antiquity—Lansdowne felt they had no place in nineteenth century legislation, and that the natural laws which quite rightly barred consanguineous marriages could certainly not be applied to the marriage of a widower and his sister-in-law. Moreover, he dismissed fears that this was but the “thin end of the wedge” for further bills legalizing marriage between other relations. He declared, therefore, that he would vote for a second reading, not the least in order to legitimize the children of such unions and “promote the happiness of families.”³³

Two years later, at the age of twenty-seven, Lansdowne accepted the office of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War. He questioned his abilities for the post, and for the first time but certainly not the last, considered his state of health before

³² Charles Seymour, ed., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. 3* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p. 232, entry of November 14, 1917. Hereafter cited as *Colonel House Papers*.

³³ Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCI, May 19, 1870, columns 911-913.

accepting it. Newton observed that the marquis was “Always a delicate man,” and for the remainder of his life Lansdowne would battle one ailment or another, which at times left him completely debilitated. The most prominent of these was chronic sciatica that developed as early as the late 1870s, and which could on occasion lay him up for weeks.³⁴ Lansdowne accepted the new post only after assurances from Viscount Cardwell, the Secretary of State for War, that his “complete ignorance of War Office matters” would not “interfere seriously with the workings of the department.”³⁵ These qualities of self-effacement and even self-reproach stayed with Lansdowne throughout his career and no doubt had a great deal to do with the respect accorded to him by members of all political parties. The very same qualities, however, might also have led, deservedly or not, to his reputation as a political and intellectual lightweight. Lord Selborne, who liked and greatly respected Lansdowne, would many years later describe him as “the most perfect gentleman in the world, of great experience ability & good sense,” but “ridiculously diffident” and possessing only “some vision.”³⁶ J. S. Sandars’s assessment that Lansdowne was “the most scrupulous—if not meticulous” of all the Ministers he knew sounded a similar respectful, if somewhat dismissive, tone.³⁷

Lansdowne spent two unremarkable years at the War Office, ending when the Gladstone Ministry fell in early 1874. It was thus as a member of the political

³⁴ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 16-17, 122; The earliest reference to the marquis’s chronic sciatica is in Lansdowne to Edward Bouverie, February 7, 1879, LP, Further Correspondence, Edward Bouverie [?] 1872-1830.

³⁵ Lansdowne to his mother, April 24, 1872, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 16-17.

³⁶ Selborne Notes 1916, Selborne MS 80, f289.

³⁷ Sandars to Lady Newton, 1928-1929, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c.771, ff71-72.

opposition that Lansdowne made his first public forays into the foreign policy arena by speaking out against Beaconsfieldism. In April 1877, with Russia and the Porte drifting towards war—which Lansdowne predicted was not too far away—he echoed his mentor, Lord Granville, in criticizing the government not only for failing to put more pressure on the Turks, as the government’s own representative at the Constantinople Conference, the Marquis of Salisbury, had wished, but for lacking a firm policy altogether.³⁸ Disraeli and his Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Derby, were caught having to appear concerned over the plight of Christians in lands under Turkish sovereignty, while more importantly blocking any Russian advance to Constantinople, something on which both parties would have agreed.³⁹ Speaking in the Lords, Lansdowne charged that the government “from the outset hesitated between two lines of policy,” these being “complete abstention” and “active interference.” He argued that by choosing neither, the government had put the Balkan Christians in danger, and undermined the peace of Europe.⁴⁰ In this view, Lansdowne might have found some common ground with Salisbury, who privately derided his own government’s policy as floating “lazily downstream, occasionally putting out a diplomatic boathook to avoid collisions.” Salisbury did not understand the irrational fear of Russia displayed by many in England, or the point of “sticking to the carcasses of dead policies” such as propping up the Porte.

³⁸ The derogatory term “Beaconsfieldism” refers to Disraeli’s foreign policy, which Gladstone and the Liberals believed to be overly-aggressive and immoral; Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCXXXIII, April 16, 1877, columns 1180-1192, 1201-1206.

³⁹ Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Orion Books Ltd., 1999), p. 166.

⁴⁰ Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCXXXIII, April 16, 1877, column 1206.

For his part, Disraeli abhorred those who would prefer a “policy of crusade” to the greater “imperial policy of England.”⁴¹ What Gladstone and the Liberals really sought, however, was to find a third policy option where Britain would not have to choose between the Turk and the Russian, and establish a Balkan region free from both powers.⁴² There is no question that Gladstone’s policy preference was high-minded, if lacking the greater practicality of a crusade.

Lansdowne’s next pronouncement on foreign policy came after the army’s disastrous defeat at the hands of the Zulus at Isandhlwana in January 1879. At the direction of his party, Lansdowne submitted a resolution stating that the House of Lords regretted the ultimatum sent to the Zulu King Cetewayo, which was “calculated to produce immediate war,” as well as the subsequent “offensive war . . . commenced without imperative and pressing necessity or adequate preparation.” The resolution also noted surprise that even after censure by the government, Sir Bartle Frere, British High Commissioner in South Africa—the man deemed responsible for the whole unfortunate affair—remained at his post. Lansdowne’s speech on the resolution laid blame for the whole episode squarely on British actions over the past number of years. He argued that the annexation of the Transvaal had put Britain in the place of the Dutch Boers and threatened the Zulus with an unacceptable encirclement. Believing that the government’s policy should have been to avoid conflict with the Zulus, he bemoaned a failure of diplomacy in settling such outstanding disputes. Lansdowne asserted that the

⁴¹ Salisbury quoted in Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 170-171, 173.

⁴² Stansky, *Gladstone*, p. 124.

British demand for the Zulu Army to disband, as it was “the pride and plaything of this savage despot,” was sure to have scuttled any negotiation. He specifically regretted that such an ultimatum was given to the Zulu Envoys “who, it is said, belonged to the Peace Party.”⁴³ With regard to foreign policy, Lansdowne was not a reluctant Gladstonite, and his famed Whiggish detachment from irrational passions never prevented him from searching out and nearly always finding the ‘peace party’ in what was to his mind a rational world under the purview of, and administered by, a brotherhood of civilized nations.⁴⁴

Considering the future path of the marquis’s career, it is also of interest to note his description of the responsibilities of imperial representatives throughout the empire, in the context of Sir Bartle Frere’s shortcomings. He charged that as “the Representative of Imperial discipline and Constitutional authority in the South African colonies,” Frere had “shown himself indifferent to discipline and superior to Constitutional authority.” He added:

It has been incidental to that [colonial] system that English administration has been found in all parts of the world in contact with independent races—races whose ideas of civilization and morality differ widely from ours. Hitherto our endeavour has been to extend our influence, not by fire and sword, but by the example of free institutions, by just administration, by good government, by the assimilating influences of culture and education. If these good practices are to be given up—if in our eyes independence is to be a crime, if all over the world the representatives of this country are to be allowed the arbitrament of peace and war—then I am afraid the day will come when, if it be said that the sun never sets on the Dominions of the Queen—it will be said

⁴³ Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCXLIV, March 25, 1879, columns 1606-1617.

⁴⁴ J. P. Rossi, “The Last Whig: Lord Hartington as Liberal Leader, 1875-1880,” *Canadian Journal of History* XXI (August 1986): 181-182.

also that it never ceases to look down on the strife and suffering for which our policy will have made itself responsible.⁴⁵

There are echoes of the Grand Old Man in these words, but what Gladstone might have uttered with unmistakable sarcasm, Lansdowne spoke with absolute sincerity.⁴⁶ The dissonant notes sounded by Lansdowne are almost too many to address. Britain was of course only in contact with such independent races because of previous extensions of the empire by way of “fire and sword.” Moreover, although Lansdowne stated his abhorrence of violence as the means to assimilate these independent races to British good government, education, and superior English culture, his support for assimilation is clear.

In later years, when as Viceroy of India he was faced with the continued intransigence of non-assimilating peoples, his commitment to a more civilized—liberal—world achieved without resort to “strife and suffering” was sorely tested. The ultimate irony, however, was that—in a sense—Lansdowne already occupied an imperial post and had been in close contact and repeated conflict with such an independent race for most of his life. He was after all one of the largest landowners and landlords in Ireland. The continued strife and suffering taking place in that country put the more grandiose claims of liberal beliefs that the marquis espoused in public to a very

⁴⁵ Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCXLIV, March 25, 1879, columns 1619-1620.

⁴⁶ Speaking in the Commons on the Eastern Question in May 1877—and tangentially on British Imperialism—Gladstone asserted that imperial conflicts only occurred “due to the stupidity of those people who cannot perceive the wisdom of coming under our scepter.” He added that Britons were “endowed with a superiority of character, of noble unselfishness, an inflexible integrity which the other nations of the world are too slow to recognize; and they are stupid enough to think we—superior beings that we are—are to be bound by the same vulgar rules that might be justly applicable to the ordinary sons of Adam” (Gladstone’s speech of May 7, 1877, quoted in Stansky, *Gladstone*, pp. 128-129).

personal test. Moreover, the Irish Question helps to put into focus the lines drawn in Lansdowne's multifaceted belief system that simultaneously encompassed the Liberal and the Whig.

It was the Irish Question in fact and the choices it forced Lansdowne to make that initially set the path of his future political career. If the Earl of Granville, Lansdowne's Whig mentor, had assumed the leadership of the Liberals as his protégé had hoped, or if Lord Hartington, the last Whig leader of the Liberals, had held on to that post, the marquis's path might have been different. Gladstone, however, reinvigorated from his great Midlothian campaign, returned to lead his party in 1880. Lansdowne's foremost concerns at this stage of his career centered around not only his desire for political office and steady work to fill his days—even if that meant the normally unpopular post of Viceroy of Ireland as was rumored—but also the need of funds.⁴⁷ The “Bad Times” in Ireland, which at their worst lasted roughly three years beginning in 1879, hit Lansdowne's finances particularly hard. The marquis was one of only three men in the country who owned over 100,000 acres, including a 95,000 acre estate in County Kerry. The top fourteen landowners in Ireland, including Lansdowne, together accounted for one-twentieth of all the land. It was as one of the ‘Ten Thousand’ in Ireland that Lansdowne's principles and beliefs came in direct conflict with Gladstonion progress,

⁴⁷ Lansdowne's letter of April 18, 1880, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 17-18.

and some background on the Irish Question and the Lansdowne family's place in it is warranted.⁴⁸

The lords of Kerry from the first marquis to the fifth had a conflicted relationship with Ireland. They admired the countryside and the land that provided their wealth, but had very few words of praise for the people. After a visit to his Irish lands in 1772, Shelburne, the first marquis, found to his dismay that the people reminded him of Scottish Highlanders, without the lone redeeming quality of "attachment to a chief." Moreover, he observed that among the Irish "no man is worse look'd upon for being a scoundrel and cunning adds to man's character."⁴⁹ As for the poverty of the Lansdowne tenants, Shelburne blamed the head tenants as well as the clergy.⁵⁰ He admitted that foreign rule over Ireland was "the shame of England," but found that the "real evil" of the absentee landlord in Ireland was the retardation of civilization and manners, and the absence of "many liberal improvements," which were naturally enhanced when proprietors are present.⁵¹ For Shelburne and his heirs the people of Ireland were of a different and poorer race, to be looked after, pitied, and kept at a distance, lest one be robbed or sued.⁵²

⁴⁸ Norman Dunbar Palmer, *The Irish Land League Crisis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 7, 10; Arthur Mitchell and Pádraig Ó Snodaigh, eds., *Irish Political Documents 1869-1916* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), pp. 30-31.

⁴⁹ Shelburne quoted in Lansdowne, *Glanerought*, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁰ Lansdowne, *Glanerought*, p. 69.

⁵¹ Shelburne quoted in *Glanerought*, pp. 106-107.

⁵² Lansdowne, *Glanerought*, p. 108.

Lansdowne's first experience of holding court, a durbar of sorts, came not in India but in Ireland in the fall of 1868 when he visited his Irish estates for the first time as lord and master. According to his brother Edmond he was met with "processions, addresses, triumphal arches, fireworks and banquets," and the fealty of his new tenants.⁵³ Lansdowne's worldview, a product of his upbringing and social position—the equivalent of being "reared in another planet" according to David Lloyd George—unquestionably had a profound effect on his political views when dealing with domestic affairs.⁵⁴ It also influenced significantly his foreign policy. Domestically, Lansdowne believed in his paternal role as landowner and landlord as well as that Whiggish ideal of leading the masses toward a better life and more civilized future, however long that process might take, and in some very important ways the manner in which he approached conflict in Ireland paralleled his approach to conflicts in foreign affairs.

In 1870 three-fourths of the farms in Ireland were still held as tenancies-at-will, and in hard times evictions were common. Such evictions could quickly make an already uneasy and tense peasant/landlord relationship explosive. Isaac Butt, leader of the Irish Home Rulers and leading Irish agitator, declared that "To evict a tenant in Ireland from his bit of land is to reduce him to beggary" under a system of laws more absolute in power than slavery. The historical context and persistent nature of the peasant/landlord relationship made the land issue intractable. Although so-called

⁵³ Fitzmaurice quoted in *Glanerought*, p. 188.

⁵⁴ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol. I* (London: Odhams Press Ltd, 1938), pp. 610-611.

“model” landlords such as Lansdowne could at times receive great praise, in the end they were still landlords and thus liable for hundreds of years of grievances.⁵⁵

The “Bad Times” which began in the late 1870s were the worst since the Great Famine, and yet many landlords refused to acknowledge that there was even a problem. In a speech at the Mansion House in November 1879, Disraeli reaffirmed common perceptions by asserting that although there were some difficulties in Ireland at the moment, they were not severe and the Irish were well known to be “an imaginative race.” A special commissioner of the London *Daily News* sent to Ireland in early 1880, however, observed that the Irish might indeed be prone to exaggeration about their sufferings, “but there was ‘no falsehood in their gaunt, famished faces, no fabrications in their own rags, and the nakedness of their children.’” Norman Palmer has argued that the eviction numbers for 1880 were in fact four times those of 1878, signaling that Ireland was indeed experiencing something more than mild distress.⁵⁶

Lansdowne in particular would come under great scrutiny and condemnation for his conduct during these times of economic hardship, not least due to the reports of the famous Nun of Kenmare who ran relief efforts in Kerry. Her widely disseminated descriptions of the suffering in that county and the lack of help from the great landlords put the marquis up for severe criticism. Michael Davitt, along with other ex-Fenians, seized this opportunity of agricultural despair to create the Land League to agitate for “Ireland for the Irish and land for the people.” The land issue, they calculated, could

⁵⁵ Palmer, *Irish Land League*, pp. 17, 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 76-77.

unite the Irish, unlike the movement to repeal the Act of Union. With the two issues linked they concluded that the greater goal of independence from Britain might be achieved by first pressing the more explosive issue of the land redistribution. For this new movement, the attack on the landlords was an offensive against the “‘English garrison’ in Ireland.”⁵⁷ Charles Stewart Parnell found it politically wise to support the Land League, and in his famous “last link” speech in Cincinnati, Ohio in February 1880, he proclaimed that “When we give Ireland to the people of Ireland, we shall have laid the foundation upon which to build our Irish nation.” The landlords, he charged, were the “cornerstone of English rule,” and the “last link” which keeps Ireland bound to England.”⁵⁸ Of course, such firebrand rhetoric completely ignored the fact that the indebtedness of many Irish peasants was the result of the same folly farmers committed worldwide, namely excessive borrowing on their part during better times, which they could not later repay in bad times. Regardless, the ancient strains—found in the chanted slogans of some—calling for community ownership of land by the Irish people, would fade away when the great land transfer between 1870 and 1903 hit its stride.⁵⁹

Ireland’s great draw on Lansdowne, enough to pull him away from Bowood in Wiltshire, was his beloved residence at Derreen. Situated on his great estate in Kerry, and set between the Cahra Mountains and the Kenmare River estuary, it became his primary residence when in Ireland. He made alterations to the existing house in 1870 to

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 102, 106-109, 128.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 7, 110, 116, 124-125.

make it a more fit late-summer retreat, and by 1895 improved train service to Kenmare had shortened the forty mile trek overland from the nearest train station by half. Newton speculated, however, that those remaining twenty miles from the nearest telegraph office must surely have enhanced Derreen's allure for a man at the pinnacle of public service.⁶⁰ Although his frequent stays at Derreen were primarily for relaxation and the isolation it provided, Lansdowne did not believe that he in any way shirked his duty as landlord and protector. He spent the winter of 1879-80 in Ireland and on his return remarked on the condition of his tenants to lifelong friend and fellow Wiltshire Liberal Edward Bouverie. First making sure to keep his own costs down, he admitted that "the people are very poor, but there is no starvation about us, and the liberal terms [on loans] offered by Government [*sic*] enabled me to give an immense amount of employment." Moreover, Lansdowne argued that if it were not for his actions most of the 900 men he put to work on "their own land" when he left "would have spent their time in making believe to be busy without any result worth naming."⁶¹

It was in the midst of this agricultural crisis in Ireland that Lansdowne found that he was to have a place in the new Gladstone Ministry as Under-Secretary of State for India, with Hartington as his chief in the Commons. The marquis was one of a number

⁶⁰ Lansdowne, *Glanerought*, p. 189; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 128.

⁶¹ Lansdowne to Edward Bouverie, March 2, 1880, LP, Further Correspondence, Edward Bouverie [?] 1872-1930. Upon Bouverie's death in 1890, Lansdowne wrote to Lord Reay that his Wiltshire neighbor "was one of my oldest and truest friends" (Lansdowne to Lord Reay, January 1, 1890, LP, Papers as Viceroy 1888-1893, Correspondence with 11th Baron Reay, 1888-1902, (3) 1890-1902).

of Whigs appointed in order for Gladstone to show he was not a radical.⁶² The Gladstone Ministry's solution to the crisis in Ireland, new Chief Secretary for Ireland W. E. Forster's Compensation for Disturbance Bill, however, came as an affront to Lansdowne's belief in sacrosanct property rights, as well as his Whiggish pride that he was dutifully taking proper care of his people. The bill was a temporary measure intended to address the current Irish crisis and designed to protect tenants from eviction for non-payment of rent, if non-payment was the result of crop failure or the agricultural depression of the preceding couple of years. If a tenant was evicted and a court found the circumstances to be as noted above, a landlord would then be compelled to compensate his tenant. Moreover, the bill only applied to especially hard hit districts in the south and west of Ireland, and then was only to last through the end of 1881. Its measures, however, satisfied neither the Irish, nor many in Gladstone's own party. Those in opposition characterized the bill's essence as "payment by reason of non-payment."⁶³

Lansdowne's reaction to the bill was principled, unbending, and swift. Within ten days of the bill being put forward in the House of Commons he sent the premier his letter of resignation. Seeing the measure as merely the thin end of the wedge in Irish affairs as a whole, the marquis argued that in the districts affected under the bill "it will produce an immense amount of mischief, while its remoter consequences, extending as they will to the whole country and beyond the present time, will be most unfortunate."

⁶² J. P. Rossi, "'The Nestor of his Party,'—Gladstone, Hartington and the Liberal leadership Crisis; November 1879-January 1880" *Canadian Journal of History* Vol. 11, Issue 2 (August 1976): 194.

⁶³ Palmer, *Irish Land League*, p. 154.

He noted with fervor that his convictions compelled him to protest what was “an unjust, and impolitic proposal,” and his position as an Irish landlord and a member of the government could not be reconciled on such an important matter. Lansdowne regretted not communicating his thoughts sooner, but having taken the time to consider the bill thoroughly, he now “entirely condemn[ed]” it.⁶⁴ Gladstone replied that as an Under-Secretary, the marquis was “in no way responsible for what the Government are doing, outside your own department and your own House of Parliament.” He even suggested that if Lansdowne were to remain in office he was free to express his own personal opinions, and regardless he did “not yet know that the House of Commons will agree to the Bill.”⁶⁵ While such principled pragmatism allowed Gladstone to progress in his career from a Conservative defender of slaveholder’s property rights to a Liberal crusader for all the oppressed peoples of the world, the political loophole he offered Lansdowne had no effect and such a piece of nuanced ambivalence might very well have left the latter baffled. Even given the time to reconsider, the marquis resigned his post, writing to Gladstone that he could not continue on with the issue being publicly debated and “allow it to be supposed that my feeling was one of indifference.”⁶⁶ The premier’s further attempts to persuade him back into the fold were for naught.⁶⁷ Lansdowne’s

⁶⁴ Lansdowne to Gladstone (draft), June 28, 1880, LP, Further Correspondence, William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1883. This letter also is printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁵ Gladstone to Lansdowne, July 2, 1880, LP, Further Correspondence, William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1883.

⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Gladstone (draft), July 7, 1880, LP, Further Correspondence, William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1883.

⁶⁷ Gladstone to Lansdowne, July 9, 1880, LP, Further Correspondence, William Ewart Gladstone 1868-1883.

resignation, if not of tremendous importance at the time as he held a relatively minor post, was in Newton's words the "first visible rift in the imposing façade of the great Liberal party."⁶⁸ It was an example followed in the coming years by fellow Whigs, including Hartington—later Duke of Devonshire—who left the party over Irish Home Rule in 1886, and served with Lansdowne in the Unionist governments of Salisbury and Balfour.⁶⁹

The Compensation for Disturbance Bill was passed by the Commons, but was resoundingly defeated in the Lords, with enough Liberal peers opposed to have scuttled it alone.⁷⁰ Lansdowne's speech in which he explained his resignation notably impressed both Disraeli and Arthur Balfour.⁷¹ He told his fellow peers that he regretted not being able to vote for a bill that was designed to relieve distress in a country to which he was "bound by the warmest sympathy," but that the "just and generous intentions" behind it were not good enough, considering the long term effect. Moreover, he had no sympathy for those he thought most likely to reap the rewards of compensation. He warned the House to "Recollect you are not compelling the landlords to concede, in consequence of the failure of the crops, a general and proportionate abatement of their rents," but to compensate in "99 cases out of 100 . . . the worst and most improvident farmers, and the most careless cultivators, who have failed when their more skilful and thrifty neighbors

⁶⁸ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ Rossi, "The Last Whig," p. 172.

⁷⁰ Palmer, *Irish Land League*, p. 155.

⁷¹ Lord Beaconsfield to the Queen, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 19-20.

have kept their heads above water.” Lansdowne believed it impossible for a judge to determine how each individual tenant came to distress.⁷² Beyond such public criticism of the land bill, however, he did not otherwise intrigue against the government, and *The Times* would note two years later, on the occasion of his appointment to the governor-generalship of Canada (by Gladstone’s hand no less), that the marquis’s “subsequent refusal to do more than criticize was patriotic and statesmanlike.”⁷³

As for the dangers of Irish agitation, specifically with regard to Fenians and Home Rulers, Lansdowne dismissed them as ill-organized temporary movements that only had a “superficial hold upon the minds of the Irish people” and merely “gave expression to the vague aspirations of a sentimental and imaginative race.” The Irish were his people, but Lansdowne never considered himself one of them. What the marquis did fear was a breakdown of law and order if the government insisted on encouraging through lax enforcement of the law what were up until then the “vague aspirations” of poorly organized agitators. He warned that “a single step across the frontier which divides justice from injustice” could upset the basis of land tenure and society in Ireland. Lansdowne predicted that what was a temporary bill would soon become permanent, for there was always going to be distress in Ireland, populated as it was by hundreds of thousands of tenancies worth less than four pounds a year. The government, he argued, would in effect “open up a new branch of Irish industry—the manufacture of distress—and, instead of self-reliance and thrift, you will have perpetual

⁷² Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCLIV, August 2, 1880, columns 1870-1872, 1875.

⁷³ *The Times*, May 22, 1883, p. 9.

appeals for assistance at the public expense.” He concluded by declaring that the landowners were the foundation of the Union and to betray them now would be a grave mistake.⁷⁴

The verbal attacks on Lansdowne—as well as the physical ones on his agents in Ireland—continued for years. A delegation of English miners who journeyed to Kerry in July of 1881 declared that the lord’s tenants “have been to him as dumb cattle out of whom pelf was to be got.”⁷⁵ More harmful were the reports of a special correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, Charles Russell, who was sent to County Kerry in order to discover the true state of things. He drew a depressing picture of the conditions he found on the Lansdowne estates, contradicting his own paper’s previous claim that the marquis with “liberality and justice” had managed to produce “what may be called English comfort on Irish soil.”⁷⁶ Lansdowne took particular offense at this new attack and along with his brother launched a defense in the newspapers, later published at the marquis’s expense. In this defense, Lansdowne maintained that the cries and complaints of Irish tenants could never entirely be trusted, noting that fortunes as high as £1000 given as dowry for a farmer’s daughter were not rare, and not unlikely to come from “men who will demonstrate to any unsuspecting interrogator that their farming operations cannot

⁷⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Lords, Vol. CCLIV, columns 1872-1873, 1884, 1886.

⁷⁵ Palmer, *Irish Land League*, p. 191.

⁷⁶ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 498; Palmer, *Irish Land League*, p. 191. This undermines the argument found in Newton that the two sides were “arguing from different premises” because Russell was inexplicably looking for “standards of English comfort” (Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 498).

result otherwise than in annual loss.”⁷⁷ He also argued that tenants on his Iveragh estate were calculating rent rises, of which they were complaining, from the temporarily reduced levels of the Great Famine. Lansdowne could not help but regret that “in a country where *ex parte* evidence certainly does not require less careful sifting than it does elsewhere, Mr. Russell should have collected with avidity and published without hesitation so large a mass of such evidence.”⁷⁸ In the end, this kind of public dispute was not one likely to change minds or solve the larger issues of the Irish problem, but Lansdowne believed that his reputation as a responsible landlord demanded an immediate response.

When in May 1882 the new Secretary of State for Ireland, Lord Fredrick Cavendish, and his Under Secretary, T. H. Burke, were murdered in Phoenix Park, Lansdowne wrote to his mother that the former “will not have died quite in vain if his tragical end has served to tear the scales off the eyes of the fatuous idiots who believed so readily in the new millennium.”⁷⁹ There was no new millennium in Ireland, but neither was there any respite or reasonably just compromise for the landowner. Lansdowne was well aware of the near intractable position Irish landlords were in, and though he stuck to a firm principled stand when it came to property rights, he was wont to believe that there existed eventual solutions. He wrote to his friend Lord Spencer in

⁷⁷ Letter to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, November 21, 1880 in Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, *Mr. Charles Russell, Q. C., M. P., and The Lansdowne Estates in Kerry* (London: William Ridgway, 1881), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸ Letter to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, December 14, 1880, in Petty-Fitamaurice, *Mr. Charles Russell*, pp. 32, 34.

⁷⁹ Lansdowne to his mother, May 8, 1882, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 23; Sally Warwick-Haller, *William O’Brien and the Irish land War* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), p. 62.

1886 that no measure of agrarian reform could be successfully undertaken while the law in Ireland was being openly flouted. Once tenants were free to withhold their rents, he argued, they would not likely pay it ever again unless forced. Indeed, Lansdowne believed there was a need for new acts to enforce the law; “sooner or later what people are pleased to call ‘coercion’ must be resorted to.”⁸⁰ He did not blame the English people, however, for not standing for more coercive measures, but put it squarely on successive governments for their “shilly shallying between courses of action instead of applying measures which after all meant merely the adaptation of the civil and criminal law to the protection of life and property that being it is commonly supposed the *raison d’être* of all Govts.”⁸¹

Nevertheless, in this same year that the Hawarden Kite was let fly, Lansdowne could not deny the reality he saw before him and wrote to fellow Liberal peer Lord Spencer that “public opinion appears to be steadily setting towards expropriation,” which “has always appeared to me the inevitable end.” The difficulty, he observed, was how to achieve justice for the landowners in a climate where “political expediency requires that the question of the land should be disentangled from the question of the union.” He maintained that “Till the rent problem has been disposed of we shall never get at the exact dimensions of the Home Rule difficulty.” It was a coming battle that he thought “could not be fought upon more treacherous ground than the landlord’s

⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Lord Spencer, February 13, 1886, LP, Further Correspondence, M. 2. Lord Spencer 1884-1887.

⁸¹ Lansdowne to Lord Spencer, February 19, 1886, LP, Further Correspondence, M. 2. Lord Spencer 1884-1887.

estates.”⁸² Lansdowne believed that the Home Rule and independence movements lacked widespread support, but Spencer had discovered the merit of government policy and moved in the direction of considering concessions toward Home Rule once thought impossible. Lansdowne was not pleased and argued that he had “never been able to see the force of the argument . . . that there is no alternative between coercion of the most stringent kind and a ‘wider concession in the direction of Home Rule than we have yet thought possible’ whatever that concession may be.” He took this opportunity to outline a reasonable alternative which he copied straight from a letter that the pre-converted Spencer had written him the previous August. Lansdowne argued that Ireland might be given wider local government in the form of local county boards, but not a central one that might then speak for the country as a whole. Moreover, he proposed dealing in general more liberally with Ireland, the reform of Queen’s College, greater access to education for Catholics, and abolition of the viceroyalty. These, along with other moderate reforms, he argued, “‘might win over such a body of people in Ireland that an independent party in favour of law and order and the present constitution will be formed and battle with the Parnellites.’” Even before this route was attempted, however, Lansdowne stressed, in agreement with Spencer’s views of the year previous, that the government should wait to see what current measures produced. He was even hopeful at

⁸² The phrase “Hawarden Kite” refers to Herbert Gladstone’s leak to the press in December 1885 that his father was contemplating putting forward a Home Rule Bill; Lansdowne to Lord Spencer (draft), February 13, 1886, LP, Further Correspondence, M. 2. Lord Spencer 1884-1887.

the rumored signs of a “split in the Parnellite camp, and of antagonism between the labourers and the tenants.”⁸³

Lansdowne refused to believe the elected Parnellite members of the House of Commons truly represented the people of Ireland, citing doubts as to the “mature and deliberate judgment of the country” in such present circumstances, and arguing that the “new electors are entirely without knowledge or experience.” He noted that “most of them never read a newspaper article or listened to a speech except of the kind to be found in the Nationalist press,” and that the peoples’ votes were “obtained partly by a direct appeal to their cupidity.”⁸⁴ Their unreasonable behavior in the Commons provoked the marquis to refer to them as “Irish savages,” and “cur dogs.”⁸⁵ Lansdowne was hardly a political tyro by this point in his career, yet his disbelief when faced with what must have been the true sentiment of a good many of the Irish populace, and the demagoguery of the Nationalists, points to a gentlemanly amateurishness that the marquis never entirely outgrew. By November, Lansdowne believed that further correspondence with Spencer on the matter would not prove fruitful and suggested that they no longer discuss the issue. Nevertheless, after having thus closed off debate, he proceeded to make a few additional points on the matter anyway.⁸⁶ In hindsight, it

⁸³ Lansdowne to Lord Spencer, February 19, 1886, LP, Further Correspondence, M. 2. Lord Spencer 1884-1887.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Lansdowne to his mother, January 29, 1881, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 22.

⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Lord Spencer, November 9, 1887, LP, Further Correspondence, M. 2. Lord Spencer 1884-1887.

would seem that the middle road that Lansdowne wished to travel in Ireland, in fact, never existed, as it did not exist in his debates with Lord Spencer either.

The Irish problem plagued Lansdowne for decades to come, severely reducing his income from those estates, which were at one point worth over £32,000 per annum.⁸⁷ The attacks of the Land League would even follow him across the ocean to Canada, but he had learned to harden himself against such public abuse, as well as the difficulties of defending oneself in the press.⁸⁸ Although the marquis's Whiggish sensibilities would through the years cause him stress and much inner turmoil, especially when faced with the domestic agenda of the New Liberalism in the early years of the twentieth century, his principles of foreign policy remained unscathed and undoubted right up to the ignominious end of his public career. With the publication of his Peace Letter in November 1917, Lansdowne revealed to all that although the road was long—and not without many false dawns proclaimed by “fatuous idiots”—his sympathies had always lain with those who believed in the “new millennium.”

After his break with the government over Ireland, when Lansdowne chose to speak in the Lords it was with a particular interest in foreign affairs. In January 1881, he forced himself to give a speech on current Afghan troubles before an audience of only thirteen. The speech was all the more difficult for it was bound to displease his fellow

⁸⁷ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 25, 497.

⁸⁸ Lansdowne to Lord Reay, then Governor of Bombay, June 11, 1889, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, *Papers of the Marquis of Lansdowne (1845-1927) as Viceroy and Governor-General of India from 1888 to 1894: Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 1, no.289. Hereafter cited as *Letters to and from Persons in India*.

Liberals.⁸⁹ The question at hand centered on the possible retention of Kandahar as a forward base necessary for the defense of India. This was a contentious detail within the greater partisan row over the previous Conservative administration's controversial Afghan campaign, which was now in the hands of a Liberal government not entirely sure what to do next. To Lansdowne's mind the government had two rather poor choices. It could either give up the forward position at Kandahar and admit the waste of money and lives that were required to obtain it, while leaving anarchy in the wake of a British withdrawal, or it could adopt a policy it had previously condemned, by recognizing that the city commanded "the principal military and commercial avenues to our Indian possessions, and its retention would add greatly to the estimation in which the power of this country was held in India."⁹⁰

While admitting that the latter course might embroil Britain in the endless costs of neighboring tribal disputes, in choosing to retain Kandahar Lansdowne saw an opportunity for the future security of India's frontier, and to improve Britain's overall relations with Russia. He declared that he would "rejoice" if Britain could use her current dominating position to advantage in its dealings with Russia, asserting that relations "had lived too long in the region of vague understandings, which no two people understood in the same sense." Earlier understandings, he pointed out, had dissolved into "lecturings, suspicions, and recriminations, anything but conducive to neighborly and mutually beneficial relations." He asked: "Why should we not endeavor to settle

⁸⁹ Lansdowne to his mother, January 29, 1881, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 22.

⁹⁰ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, Vol. CCLVII, January 28, 1881, columns 1606-1608.

these questions once and for all upon an intelligible basis?" "Both parties," Lansdowne argued, "were in a position from which they could negotiate without forfeiture of self-respect in their own eyes, or in the eyes of Native races by whom their conduct was narrowly watched." He hoped the government, which "had endeavoured consistently and successfully to maintain the European concert in Europe," could see its way to "create a European concert in Asia." This would be to the benefit of both nations as well as the native peoples under their control, Lansdowne argued, and such a settlement in the long term would allow British forces—one day—to retire from such forward positions.⁹¹ With peace predominant for the moment in Europe, Lansdowne rather foolishly represented it as a settled matter, and then implied that such a European concert was easily transplantable to a different continent and entirely different circumstances. Of course, the Russian advantage in Asia lay precisely in those vague understandings, misunderstandings, and forward positions, which placed unrelenting pressure on British forces in the region, and caused ever increasing alarm among British military planners. It was a geographical advantage that the Russians could not have given up even if they wished, and notwithstanding the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, they never really did.

Even a minor episode this early in Lansdowne's long political career, such as his chairmanship of the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the Channel Tunnel in the spring of 1883, reveals—however dimly—something of the liberal optimism that was almost always manifest in Lansdowne's approach to international relations. The Committee was charged with assessing the

⁹¹ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, Vol. CCLVII, January 28, 1881, column 1609.

feasibility of a channel tunnel, its potential economic benefits, and whether it could be rendered militarily secure. The issues considered thus included a review of current European relations with regard to the possibility of future wars, and specifically Britain's future relations with France.

Thoughts about, and realistic proposals for, a possible cross-channel tunnel stretched as far back as the first decade of the nineteenth century, and by 1876 two companies, one English and one French, had convinced their respective governments that a tunnel was indeed feasible. A treaty was very nearly signed, but the English backed Channel Tunnel Company failed to follow through on its commitments, and the window of opportunity on the signing of a treaty lapsed. New backers soon came forward however, and Gladstone's government was forced to address the matter.⁹²

The government was to find that as in the past the greatest opposition to a tunnel came from the War Office. Adjutant-General, Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, in particular, was adamantly opposed. In his memorandum on the proposed tunnel, Wolseley argued that it would necessitate universal conscription in Britain as existed in the major continental powers, for in effect, if Britain were connected to France by a tunnel, it would itself then be a continental power. Those in the War Office who favored the tunnel project, however, stressed the diplomatic positives that might result. Colonel Sir Andrew Clarke, Commandant of the School of Military Engineering, viewed the tunnel as a foundation upon which to rest a new Anglo-French alliance, and argued that

⁹² Keith Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions 1850-1945: Dreams and Nightmares* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 20-21.

“if the industrial and social progress of our country, and the larger interests of humanity can be promoted by a work of this kind, it is not the *rôle* of the soldier to check the aspirations of his country.” Wolseley scoffed at such arguments, wondering if “human nature [had] so utterly changed that it has become certain that what has been may never be again?” “Surely, John Bull will not endanger his birth-right, his liberty, his property, in fact all that men can hold most dear,” he maintained, “. . . simply in order that men and women may cross to and fro between England and France without running the risk of sea-sickness.”⁹³

Lansdowne, not surprisingly, believed the benefits of a tunnel too good to be passed over. In his final draft report on the Joint Select Committee’s findings, the marquis stressed the economic benefits of a tunnel and found the fears expressed by the military baseless, if not downright ridiculous. At their worst, he argued, they were “purely political.”⁹⁴ Lansdowne found it hard to fathom the scenario put forward by the military chiefs of a sneak attack on the tunnel in a time of relative peace, without an official declaration of war, and without any foresight of potential crises.⁹⁵ Moreover, in his earlier testimony before the Committee, Wolseley had given assurances that a force of 50 at the tunnel’s mouth, which would be located within the grounds of the fort at

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 22-27, 33-35.

⁹⁴ *Report from the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the Channel Tunnel; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix* (London: Hansard and Son, July 1883), pp. ix section 3, xiii sections 41,42, and 47, xiv sections 49 and 50, xvii section 79.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. xix sections 94, 95, and 97

Dover, and given notice of alert, could halt an invading army of 100,000.⁹⁶ Faced with Wolseley's contradictions and yet continued opposition to the project, Lansdowne asked the general as to the likelihood of five or six thousand men in an amphibious assault in the dead of night being able to move through the streets of Dover without the alarm being raised. Wolseley was forced to admit that with the tunnel in place, the inconvenient but sensible practice of lifting the drawbridge at night to avoid such an assault on the barrack gates might indeed be introduced as a precautionary measure. As for blowing up the tunnel in an emergency, Wolseley argued soundly, however, that he doubted that any colonel or lieutenant-colonel put in charge would readily take it upon himself given the alarm of a policeman, sentry, or any other warning to destroy such an expensive tunnel in time. Wolseley asked the committee to assume the worst. What were the chances, he argued, of the tunnel being blown if the government were to come under the control of man with the "character" of John Bright, who, he was quick to add, he respected as "a great orator."⁹⁷

Lansdowne agreed with the military opinion that there could be no absolute guarantee of security, but maintained that this did not offset the benefits of the tunnel.⁹⁸ His inquiries and arguments were almost exclusively designed to amplify those benefits and downplay the risks. At the conclusion of the hearings, however, Lansdowne could

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. xx section 98.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 445 section 4960, 473 sections 5233-5239, 447 section 4980, 448 section 4991.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. xxv section 119.

only gain the support of his three fellow Liberal committee members.⁹⁹ One member's final draft report went so far as to cite as reason for his opposition the invasion "scares to which the country would be liable to be subjected, whether rationally or irrationally."¹⁰⁰ Since a majority report could not be given, the idea of a channel tunnel died once again.

With regard to the channel tunnel, Lansdowne's liberal instincts were rather innocuous, but in larger foreign policy arenas such as India and the Foreign Office his ability to master and even manipulate the details of a particular issue at the expense of larger strategic considerations would hold greater potential consequences. It is perhaps far too early to draw any broad conclusions about the marquis's tendencies, but what we can begin to assess—or at least take note of—is the sort of reasoning process by which Lansdowne made policy decisions.

Wolseley had argued on both practical and sentimental terms when he sought to preserve the sense of security Britain had always derived from that twenty mile wide "silver streak." It had proved a blessing in the Napoleonic Wars, and though since then Britain had been connected by what the Duke of Wellington had referred to as "an isthmus of steam," and by a telegraph cable in 1851, the "silver streak" remained an obstacle that any foreign army would at least have to float across.¹⁰¹ If a tunnel were built, an invading army could march all the way to London. For many it meant that England would henceforth be a continental power, in need of a large standing army fed

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. xliv.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. xliii.

¹⁰¹ Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, pp. 3, 23.

by universal conscription. The British Empire, however, already had long, nearly indefensible land borders in both the Americas and Asia, and the pressures on imperial forces were already great. Lansdowne soon left England to administer that empire, first as governor-general of Canada, and then as Viceroy of India, and although engaged as he was, merely on the “fringe of diplomacy,” his time overseas provides further insight to understanding his tenure at the Foreign Office.¹⁰²

¹⁰² McGeoch, “The Role of Lord Lansdowne,” p. 206

CHAPTER III
FROM PROCONSUL TO CABINET MINISTER:
CANADA, INDIA AND THE WAR OFFICE

Canada

Although it was Gladstone who offered Lansdowne the governor generalship of Canada in May 1883, the choice was really that of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby. Derby informed the Queen that beyond being of a suitable rank—which was immensely important, for the “Colonies were not content,” noted Joseph Chamberlain, “unless a person of high rank and remarkable distinction was appointed”—Lansdowne’s greatest qualifications for the post were that he was “respected by all parties in England,” was “moderate in his opinions,” and had “manners” that were “unusually prepossessing.”¹ The marquis’s decision to accept, however, was due overwhelmingly to financial distress. His penury was so widely known that it was the only reason reported in the *New York Times* for his accepting the post.² Lansdowne was still servicing a debt of some £300,000 he had inherited from his father seventeen years before, and the income from his Irish estates had decreased almost to nil due to the agitation of the Land League.³ A few months before setting sail for Quebec, the marquis was forced to sell a

¹ Derby to Queen Victoria, May 8, 1883, excerpted in John Lee Gordon Jr., “Lord Lansdowne in Canada, 1883-1888: The Office of Governor General in a Self-Governing Dominion” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Vanderbilt University, 1972), p. 41; Joseph Chamberlain quoted in David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 589.

² *New York Times*, June 11, 1883, p. 4.

³ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 25.

Rembrandt portrait from the gallery at Bowood to a wealthy American collector for £5,000.⁴ It would not be the last time that a well-timed sale of artwork would be made in order to provide maintenance for the family. The lifestyle he would maintain while in Canada also pointed to the demand for fiscal restraint—relative of course to the normal living standards of a marquis. One long-time society gossip—the wife of a Canadian Judge—revealed that while the Lansdownes kept “up a fine show” and “do things magnificently . . . close economy is the everyday rule.” It would appear that Lansdowne was able to put away at least some of his £10,000 a year.⁵

After a brief stay at Derreen, Lansdowne, and his wife and four children, journeyed to collect his ‘outdoor relief,’ arriving in Quebec City in late October 1883. There was a good deal of fear and a great many rumors that the marquis’s Irish troubles might follow him to Canada, and that Fenian terrorists might make an attempt on the new Governor General’s life. Fortunately these fears proved largely unfounded, although in January 1884 a package bomb was mailed to Lansdowne at Government House. Its rather poor construction, however, rendered it harmless.⁶ At his swearing-in ceremony in Quebec, before a crowd mostly of French-Canadians, Lansdowne was greeted with much enthusiasm, that much greater thanks to his nearly flawless French. His arrival and welcome in Ottawa also proceeded smoothly, but the capital and its

⁴ *New York Times*, July 1, 1883, p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, February 21, 1887, p. 5; Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 595.

⁶ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 26, 28; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How The British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 136; *New York Times*, October 23, 1883, p. 4; Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” pp. 58-59.

people did not impress.⁷ In a letter to Derby, Lansdowne referred to the city as a “lumberyard.”⁸

More upsetting than Ottawa’s significant lack of cultivation, however, was the marquis’s need of a summer retreat to substitute for Derreen over the next five or six years. Lansdowne’s predecessor, Lord Lorne, had established a lodge on the banks of the Cascapedia River in the Gaspé Peninsula and leased fishing rights from the Quebec Government. He had intended for these to be transferred to the new Governor General, but the provincial government prematurely leased the fishing rights to an American, to whom Lorne then felt constrained to sell the lodge as well. Attempts to find Lansdowne a new and suitable situation proved difficult because most all of the prime locations seemed to be in the hands of other well-to-do Americans.⁹ Still without a place in March and with the summer fast approaching, the Governor General went so far as to protest to the Minister of Public Works. Endeavoring to speak “frankly,” he complained that if he was not to have his “predecessor’s cottage, or his river, or his summer quarters,” he could only conclude that he was being “rather hardly used.”¹⁰ The next month a suitable place on the Cascapedia was found, which, as Lansdowne acidly noted, had not been bought up by the “liberal expenditure of money” and even “intrigue” of millionaires

⁷ Lansdowne to his mother, October 23, 1883, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, 26-27; Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” pp. 67-68.

⁸ Lansdowne to Derby, May 30, 1884, quoted in Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” p. 68.

⁹ Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” pp. 70-71.

¹⁰ Lansdowne to Langevin, March 19, 1884, quoted in Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” p. 72.

from America. He happily named his new retreat New Derreen.¹¹ For several months out of each year in his new home he could once again enjoy the pleasures of some of the finest salmon fishing in the world.¹²

Such annoyances notwithstanding, Lansdowne was pleased with his post and did not regret his decision. Balliol College even took notice of his appointment and permitted him to take a Bachelor's and Master's degree in 1884 by accumulation.¹³ In his administrative capacity, Lansdowne got along well with Canada's Conservative Prime Minister, Sir John Macdonald—who remained in power for the duration of Lansdowne's tenure as Governor General—and met with him nearly every day when both were in Ottawa.¹⁴ Despite his old tutor Jowett's counsel that the Governor General did not necessarily have to be a "mere figure head," this was largely Lansdowne's role.¹⁵ The Canadian colony was by this time largely self-governing and beyond frequent meetings with the Prime Minister the responsibilities of the Governor General were minimal. After Confederation in 1867, and the drawing up of revised instructions for the Governor General in 1878, the latter could at most "warn and advise" the Canadian

¹¹ Gordon, "Lord Lansdowne in Canada," p. 72; Lansdowne to Granville, May 18, 1886, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 41-42; Lansdowne to his mother, July 15, 1884, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 30-31.

¹² Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 29.

¹³ Jowett to Lansdowne, November 29, 1883, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

¹⁴ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 29. As a party the Conservatives were nationalist and anti-American in their tendencies (Gordon, "Lord Lansdowne in Canada," 30); *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁵ Jowett to Lansdowne, November 29, 1883, LP, Further Correspondence, Jowett (Nightingale) 1862-1893.

Cabinet, or on extraordinary occasions—and then only on orders from London—reserve a bill passed by Parliament. The Governor General remained Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, but his most important role was as a buffer between the Canadian Government and the Colonial Office, a role for which, according to David Farr, Lansdowne was a “model . . . whom future holders of the position could profitably emulate.”¹⁶

The everyday duties of the Governor General too often revolved around his role as the social and cultural leader of the country, amounting to a continuous series of fêtes, ice carnivals, and official ceremonies, for which Lansdowne could usually raise little enthusiasm.¹⁷ In its summary of the marquis’s achievements after five years as Governor General, *The Times* noted prominently that he had “acquired a skill [at ice skating] rare among even Canadians.”¹⁸ Lansdowne also had occasion to entertain the poet Matthew Arnold and his wife during their visit to Ottawa in early 1884. In the late 1840s Arnold had served as private secretary to the third marquis. As he did with many of his guests, the Governor General took them to ride the toboggan run at Government House, where they “courteously” refused a second run—no doubt a wise decision considering Arnold’s weak heart. Lansdowne’s rather light duties were not entirely without hazard however. Four years later at an outdoor fête and ice carnival hosted by

¹⁶ Davis M. L. Farr, *The Colonial Office and Canada, 1867-1887* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), pp. 54, 57.

¹⁷ Lansdowne to his mother, January 18, 1884, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 29.

¹⁸ *The Times*, May 22, 1888, p. 4.

the Governor General, six people—including two Canadian MPs—were seriously injured in a toboggan accident.¹⁹

Lansdowne declared shortly after his arrival in Canada that he had “been cherishing for some time the hope that I may be the first Governor General to cross the Rocky Mountains on Canadian metals.”²⁰ In late 1885 he got his wish as he traveled the nearly completed Canadian Pacific Railway across the vast western plains, through the Rocky Mountains, all the way to the Pacific. At a time when only four percent of Canada’s four and a half million people lived west of the province of Ontario, the cross-continental railroad was meant to imitate the American experience by opening up the West to further settlement and development.²¹

Lansdowne’s month long journey was not without its share of seemingly trivial incidents which afford us a glimpse of the marquis’s world, the vantage point from which he drew his rarefied impressions. For example, his brief stop in Winnipeg was marred when many leading citizens reportedly refused to attend his drawing room reception as it required evening dress, and separate entrances had been arranged, “one for the gentry and the other for the common folk.”²² The *Winnipeg Free Press* was forced “most unwillingly”—and without ill will toward the Governor General personally—to declare that, “The unreverend and unhonourable and unbetitled and

¹⁹ Lansdowne to Mrs. Humphry Ward (Mary Augusta Arnold—Arnold’s Niece), February 16, 1910, Thomas Humphry Ward MSS; *The Times*, April 17, 1888, p. 10; *Ibid.*, March 1, 1888, p. 5.

²⁰ Lansdowne’s speech quoted in *The Times*, May 22, 1888, p. 4.

²¹ Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” p. 16.

²² *New York Times*, September 19, 1885, p. 3.

unwashed, with a surprising lack of appreciation of local government house etiquette, and of small official snobbishness, not to say caddishness, decline to subject themselves, much less their wives and daughters, to the humiliation of seeking his Excellency's presence through the back door."²³ To his credit, and as he noted proudly to his mother, Lansdowne did manage to contain his laughter when he greeted the natives of Alberta who bore such names as "Bad Dried Meat" and "The Louse," and wore soup plates as necklaces.²⁴

At first glance, Lansdowne's time in Canada does not appear to provide the most fertile ground for an exploration of the foundations of his foreign policy. The most difficult diplomatic issue he would face as Governor General was the continuing fisheries dispute with the United States, and even these negotiations were turned over to London's special envoy, Joseph Chamberlain. Nevertheless, Lansdowne's responsiveness to Canada's treaty rights and reaction to American-style diplomacy—specifically that of US Secretary of State, Thomas F. Bayard—are informative to an extent, namely as to the marquis's near instinctive devotion to diplomacy conducted justly and straightforwardly.

The fisheries dispute centered on the rights of United States citizens, originally secured by John Adams in his negotiations at Paris in 1782, to fish off the Grand Banks, the coasts of Newfoundland, and in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Adams secured for American fishermen the "liberty" to fish the coasts, bays and creeks of Canada, as well

²³ *Winnipeg Free Press* commentary quoted in the *New York Times*, September 19, 1885, p. 3.

²⁴ Lansdowne to his mother, October 1, 1885, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 34-37.

as the right to dry and cure fish in any of the unsettled bays, harbors and creeks of Labrador, Nova Scotia and the Magdalen (Madeleine) Islands. Canadian complaints about fleets of American fishermen crowding the fishing grounds, including in the Bay of Chaleur, however, began as early as 1792.²⁵

After the War of 1812, the British claimed that the war had abrogated the Peace of Paris, and British warships began seizing American fishing vessels within Canada's inshore waters. Making use of the multiple definitions of "liberty" that thirty years before in Paris they had insisted did not exist, the British sought to forge a better agreement for themselves and Canada. In the Anglo-American Treaty of 1818 the United States gave up rights to fish in certain parts of Canada's inshore waters, while gaining areas to cure and dry fish along uninhabited coastline. American fishing vessels would also be admitted to the bays and harbors in the restricted areas, but only "for the purpose of shelter and of repairing damages therein, of purchasing wood, and of obtaining water, and for no other purpose whatever."²⁶ Vessels caught "preparing to fish" in restricted waters would be subject to forfeiture. The restrictions meant that American fishermen would not be able to purchase bait in Canadian harbors, and they were forbidden from landing their catches in Canadian ports for transshipment. The British and their Canadian subjects were also disposed to interpret the terms of bay loosely and to the greatest benefit of the Canadian fishing industry. When the fishing industry hit hard times after 1830, Canadian and British officials further defined the

²⁵ Charles Callan Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 2-3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

restrictions against American fishing vessels and drew lines from headland to headland of the bays of Fundy and Chaleur which American fishermen would be forbidden to approach within three miles. In May 1843, Canadian authorities went so far as to seize and auction an American schooner anchored some ten miles offshore in the Bay of Fundy. The United States and Britain soon faced the prospect of open conflict over the contentious matter, and in 1852 President Millard Fillmore ordered Commodore Matthew Perry to the fishing grounds in anticipation of imminent trouble.²⁷ Neither government sought open warfare, however, preferring instead to settle the matter diplomatically.

After two failed attempts to resolve the dispute by treaty, the second of which was terminated by the United States in July 1885, Canada once again began to seize American fishing vessels. These renewed seizures put the Governor General in the delicate position of balancing Imperial and Canadian interests. Charles Tansill argued that despite Lansdowne's "deep affection for Canada . . . he never forgot that Canada was merely one portion of an empire on the seven seas, and at times he insisted upon lifting the gaze of Sir John Macdonald from Dominion considerations to the distant horizons of imperial goals."²⁸ While much of this assessment might hold true, Lansdowne in fact actively sought to show a firmer front in dealing with the United States than the Colonial Office wished, and at one point his Whiggish detachment from

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 5 n.14, 5-7.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-14.

partisan passions seemed to waver in the face of American rhetoric and what he considered the shabby diplomacy of Bayard.

Throughout his entire political career, Lansdowne was wont initially at least to show a firm front in any dispute, but almost always with the full expectation that this would in due course lead to a complete resolution of the matter at issue. When the Canadian cruiser *Lansdowne* seized the American fishing schooner *David J. Adams* for buying ice and eight and a half barrels of bait in the port of Digby, Nova Scotia, Lansdowne wrote to MacDonald encouraging conciliation, but only so far as to suggest that he “concoct a mollifying dispatch” to Sir Lionel Sackville-West, British Minister in Washington, “explaining Captain Scott’s conduct” in seizing the ship.²⁹ When the MacDonald Government then attempted to pass legislation to expand its enforcement powers against American fishermen, however, Lansdowne wished to avoid further “bitterness” between the two nations and advised the Canadian Prime Minister to adopt a policy of moderation.³⁰ He did not want the actions of overzealous Canadian customs officials to “accumulate against ourselves such a volume of irritation as to render a reasonable settlement unattainable.”³¹ Lansdowne was “convinced” after all that “Reasonable public opinion on both sides of the frontier” was in favor of opening

²⁹ Robert Craig Brown, *Canada’s National Policy 1883-1890: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 18; “American and British Claims Arbitration Tribunal: In the Matter of the David J. Adams” *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 16, No. 2 (April, 1922): 315; Lansdowne to MacDonald, May 14, 1886, quoted in Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 30.

³⁰ Lansdowne to MacDonald, May 20, 1886, quoted in Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 30.

³¹ Lansdowne to MacDonald, June 5, 1886, quoted in Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 36.

negotiations “for a final and complete settlement of all the matters in dispute.”³² On orders from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, the Canadian bill was reserved by the Governor General in June 1886. Notwithstanding his own call for moderation, Lansdowne remained upset that the Colonial Office did not seem fully to appreciate Canadian sensitivities.³³

In the early summer of 1886, with tensions near the breaking point—Canadian authorities boarded nearly 700 American fishing boats during the year’s fishing season—some senior officials in the United States were advocating a show of force by an American naval squadron. Parallel appeals on the Canadian side for the support of the British naval squadron at Halifax Station were led by Lansdowne.³⁴ The Governor General was also more than a neutral party transmitting a Canadian Government request, and further pressed the matter again while on a visit to Britain in August. He even wrote to MacDonald from London arguing that far from escalating tensions, “a firm front” was needed to push the Americans into serious negotiations.³⁵ Although requests for naval support had been granted previously in 1854 and 1871, Granville thought better of sending British warships to cruise Canadian coasts just to avail himself of this opportunity to placate Canadian sensibilities. Wanting no part in such a wanton escalation of tensions, the government would only promise the support of one cruiser for

³² Lansdowne to Granville, May 18, 1886, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 41.

³³ Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, pp. 34, 34 n.53.

³⁴ Brown, *Canada’s National Policy*, 28; Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, pp. 36-37, 39.

³⁵ Lansdowne to MacDonald, August 20, 1886, quoted in Brown, *Canada’s National Policy*, p. 36.

the next year's fishing season if no agreement had by that time been reached with the US.³⁶

In his defense of Canada's interests, the Governor General also appeared to have absorbed a little of the anti-Americanism inculcated in all Canadians from birth. Disputing accusations from Whitehall that Canadian customs officials were quite probably precipitating trouble by unjust and unfriendly treatment of American fishermen, Lansdowne shifted the blame to men like the American captain of the *Mollie Adams*, "a person so illiterate," he declared, "that he appeared not to have been qualified to make out the ordinary entry papers on his arrival in a Canadian port." Moreover, the Governor General noted, the captain's statements, "many of which bear upon the face of them evidence of their own untrustworthiness, appear to have been accepted *in globo* without question by the [American] Secretary of State."³⁷ Lansdowne's countervailing aspersions, however, did not persuade. A Foreign Office memorandum written in February of the following year stated that it was "clear that Canada is now asserting her rights in a more stringent manner than on any previous occasion in the history of the question, with the object of forcing the United States to conclude a Reciprocity Treaty; and though there can be no question that in the main Canada is within her strict Treaty

³⁶ Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, p. 34; Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 43; Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor General, November 26, 1886, printed in H.C.K. Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquis of Lansdowne, *Correspondence Relative to the Fisheries Question 1885-1887* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1887), p. 162 no.151. Hereafter cited as *Correspondence Relative to the Fisheries Question*.

³⁷ See Governor General to Stanhope, December 28, 1886 and Lansdowne to Sir Henry Holland, March 9, 1887, *Correspondence Relative to the Fisheries Question*, pp. 182-184 no.169, and 228-231 no.187; Lansdowne to Sir Henry Holland, April 2, 1887, *Correspondence Relative to the Fisheries Question*, pp. 238-239 no.191.

right, it may be that she will lose more than the United States by too harsh a policy, and the result may be extremely dangerous for this country.”³⁸

When the matter was subsequently referred to a special Joint High Commission the next year, Lansdowne was disappointed in the Commission’s instructions empowering it “to consider and adjust all or any questions relating to the rights of fishery in the seas adjacent to British North America and Newfoundland which are in dispute . . . and any other questions which may arise.”³⁹ Thinking the wording too vague, the Governor General had hoped—and thought he had been led to believe—that the Commission would be entrusted to deal with “every outstanding dispute between Great Britain and the United States, including even such questions as that of the Nicaraguan isthmus.”⁴⁰ If Lansdowne was perhaps overzealous in his desire to show a firm front in disputes, even at the risk of open conflict, it was always with such grand hopes and expectations for subsequent peace.

Lansdowne’s expectation of gentlemanly diplomacy from the representatives of first-rate nations, and his honest surprise and indignation at encountering shabby dealing instead, was also evident in his reaction to what transpired and belies the usual characterization of Lansdowne as the epitome of Whiggish detachment. His sentimental

³⁸ “Memorandum on the North American Fisheries Question” printed in Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print* (University Publications of America, 1987), Part I, Series C, Vol. 9, pp. 340-355 document no.221.

³⁹ Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 58; Salisbury’s “Instructions to her Majesty’s Plenipotentiaries at the Fishery Conference” October, 1887, printed in Sir Charles Tupper, *Recollections of Sixty Years* (London: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1914), pp. 186-190.

⁴⁰ Lansdowne to MacDonald, September 18, 1887, quoted in Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 58.

attachments lay not with nations or peoples, but with what he judged to be higher things. The Commission began its deliberations in Washington in November 1887, with Joseph Chamberlain leading the British contingent, accompanied by Sackville-West, and Sir Charles Tupper, the Canadian High Commissioner.⁴¹ On being shown a report from Tupper that the American delegation refused to expand the scope of the Commission's deliberations, Lansdowne charged Bayard with duplicity, and later confessed to MacDonald his disbelief at "How Bayard can without blushing, after all that took place between himself and Sir Charles Tupper, state gravely that he cannot discuss commercial relations without . . . an extension of his own instructions, passes my comprehension." He could but conclude that there was "a disingenuousness throughout [Bayard's] argument which lowers him in one's estimation."⁴² Of course Lansdowne had wanted more than just an extension of discussions to commercial matters, and had come to expect more from Bayard based on correspondence he had seen between the American Secretary and the Canadian High Commissioner. In his memoirs Tupper maintained that the conference in its original arrangement was supposed to have encompassed the Behring Sea seal fisheries as well as the Alaska Boundary dispute. The correspondence between Tupper and Bayard in the early summer of 1887—copies of which the former then passed on to Lansdowne—does not, however, entirely bear out the rather extreme charge of duplicity.⁴³

⁴¹ Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 65.

⁴² Lansdowne to MacDonald, December 10, 1887, quoted in Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 69.

⁴³ Tupper, *Recollections of Sixty Years*, pp. 177, 182-183.

After they met in Washington earlier in the year, Bayard wrote to Tupper in May 1887 that “The immediate difficulty to be settled is found in the treaty of 1818,” and that the only way to “attain a just and permanent settlement” was “by a straightforward treatment on a liberal and statesmanlike plan of the entire commercial relations of the two countries.”⁴⁴ Tupper concurred and proposed in response that “Her Majesty’s Government should be invited to depute a Canadian statesman to negotiate with you a ‘*modus vivendi*’ to meet present emergencies, and also a permanent plan to avoid all disputes.”⁴⁵ While Tupper and Lansdowne might have hoped for the inclusion of Behring sea seal fisheries dispute, it was certainly a stretch to think that discussions on the proposed inter-oceanic canal and the Alaska boundary had been disingenuously implied by Bayard. Moreover, Chamberlain’s opening letter to Tupper with regard to the upcoming event referred quite narrowly to “the new Fishery Commission.”⁴⁶ In the end, even the government’s instructions to the British commissioners empowered them only to “consider and adjust all and any questions relating to the rights of fishery in the seas adjacent to British North America and Newfoundland,” adding that they were permitted to discuss “any other questions that may arise,” but only if the American plenipotentiaries were authorized to discuss it (the Behring Sea seal fisheries being the only issue Prime Minister Salisbury gave as an example).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Bayard to Tupper, May 31, 1887, printed in Tupper, *Recollections of Sixty Years*, pp. 177-180.

⁴⁵ Tupper to Bayard, June 6, 1887, printed in Tupper, *Recollections of Sixty Years*, pp. 181-182.

⁴⁶ Chamberlain to Tupper, September 4, 1887, printed in Tupper, *Recollections of Sixty Years*, p. 183.

⁴⁷ Salisbury’s “Instructions to her Majesty’s Plenipotentiaries at the Fishery Conference” October, 1887, printed in Tupper, *Recollections of Sixty Years*, pp. 186-190.

The final treaty produced by the Commission removed the more extreme bay restrictions, limited the acts that would result in the penalty of forfeiture, allowed American fishing vessels informal entry into Canadian ports on any and all occasions, and permitted American fishermen to purchase bait and other supplies through the purchase of an annual license obtained for a relatively small fee. Chamberlain and Bayard were both satisfied with the final arrangement, and Tupper led the fight for its passage in the Canadian House of Commons.⁴⁸ Although Lansdowne approved of the main points of the treaty, he warned Chamberlain that it would be “difficult to induce [Canadian fishermen] to look at the matter from the broader point of view of Imperial interest.”⁴⁹ In any event, the treaty went down to defeat in the US Senate, and many Republican Senators took the opportunity to attack Britain and its people in general. Much of the treaty’s substance survived, however, as the basis of a *modus vivendi* renewed every two years beginning in 1888 and continuing into the next century.⁵⁰

It is difficult to ignore that while the widower Chamberlain returned home from his trip to North America with a new American wife, Mary Endicott, the daughter of President Cleveland’s Secretary for War, and in time became Parliament’s foremost ‘Member for America,’ Lansdowne never fully embraced the Anglo-American ‘special relationship.’ After nearly five years in Canada, Lansdowne had found American fishermen beneath contempt, American statesmen less than honest, and the American

⁴⁸ Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, pp. 76-77, 78 n.70.

⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, January 3, 1888, quoted in Brown, *Canada’s National Policy*, p. 76.

⁵⁰ Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations*, p. 82; Gordon, “Lord Lansdowne in Canada,” p. 489.

press—which did not necessarily reflect upon the American people—“abominably personal and offensive.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, one should not attach too much significance to so few incidents, for however much Lansdowne recoiled at the improprieties of unreasonable gentlemen, they never overwhelmed completely his passion for gentlemen’s diplomacy and his particular pursuit of a policy of entente.

Lansdowne nearly departed Canada in January 1887 upon requests from Salisbury and Hartington that he join a Conservative/Liberal Unionist coalition government. Depending on whom one believes, he was offered the post of Lord President of the Council, or his choice between the Colonial Office and War Office.⁵² His “first impulse,” he wrote to his mother, was to begin packing his trunks, but with the Canadian Parliament on the verge of unpredictable new elections, and with the government still in the midst of the fisheries wrangle, which he considered a matter that he had “rather taken in hand,” it was his duty to remain. He also noted that he “was in complete ignorance of the policy of the [Salisbury] Govt. on many important points, notably as to Ireland.”⁵³ Another and more abrupt resignation certainly would have been supremely embarrassing, and meanwhile, Lord Rosebery’s occupation of Lansdowne House was helping to pay for the marquis’s war against the Irish Land League. Without that additional income, Lansdowne predicted that there would most likely have to be

⁵¹ Lansdowne to Sir D. Fitzpatrick, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, February 3, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 9, no.56.

⁵² Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 426; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 43. Newton suggests the latter two offices were offered; *The Times*, January 7, 1887, p. 5. *The Times* reported only that he was offered the War Office.

⁵³ Lansdowne to his mother, January 6, 1887, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 43-44.

“another raid upon the pictures.” He was quite fearful that when his time in Canada was at an end he would be forced upon his return to England to “live in a corner of the house at Bowood,” which he confessed “would be a dreary re-instatement.”⁵⁴

Fortunately for him, on the last day of December 1887 Lansdowne received a telegram from Salisbury offering him the viceroyalty of India.⁵⁵ In his own estimation it was a “magnificent post, the most responsible and honourable in the service outside England,” and due to continuing Irish troubles he would have accepted it even over a place in the Cabinet. Although the posting probably meant another five years away from home, Lansdowne informed his mother that it would allow him to save Lansdowne House by continuing to let it out, and reduce the family debt by living entirely off the income of his new post.⁵⁶ His salary would be nearly double that of his Canadian post, it would be untaxed and also include an entertainment allowance.⁵⁷ Lansdowne was not necessarily happy with his lot and wrote to his friend Bouverie that it was “a great wrench to go away again,” but as he maintained to his mother, it offered him the chance, if he performed “reasonably well in India,” to have accomplished something to his credit when he was called on “to give an account of . . . [his] stewardship,” and he did not regret the decision.⁵⁸ After spending a mere five months back home in the summer of

⁵⁴ Lansdowne to his mother, November/December (?), 1887, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁵ Salisbury to Lansdowne, December 31, 1887, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁶ Lansdowne to his mother, February 8, 1888, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 50-52.

⁵⁷ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 595.

⁵⁸ Lansdowne to Bouverie, September 2, 1888, LP, Further Correspondence, Edward Bouverie [?] 1872-1930; Lansdowne to his mother, February 8, 1888, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 50-52.

1888, during which he set his various houses in order, consoled his mother, and consulted with Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India, Lansdowne set off “to begin another term of banishment.”⁵⁹

India

The news of Lansdowne’s appointment as Viceroy met with the approval of many in England and India, and he would not be without friendly support. The Permanent Undersecretary of State for India, J. A. Godley, who Lansdowne knew from Balliol days, wrote to Lord Dufferin, the outgoing Viceroy, that “it would have been impossible for the government to have made a better choice.”⁶⁰ Dufferin, also a longtime friend, was understandably quite pleased with the choice, while Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay, believed that Lansdowne was “in every respect *the man* for the post.”⁶¹ Lansdowne had his misgivings, however, and as early as June had revealed to Dufferin that he was “getting a little frightened” at what lay ahead.⁶²

⁵⁹ Lansdowne to Bouverie, September 2, 1888, LP, Further Correspondence, Edward Bouverie [?] 1872-1930; Marc Jason Gilbert, “Lord Lansdowne in India: At the Climax of an Empire, 1888-1894, A Study in Late Nineteenth Century British Indian Policy and Proconsular Power” (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles, 1978), p. 76; Lansdowne to his mother, February 8, 1888, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 50-52.

⁶⁰ Godley to Dufferin, February 10, 1888, quoted in Rajesh Kumar Perti, *South Asia: Frontier Policies, Administrative Problems, and Lord Lansdowne* (Oriental Publishers, 1976), p. xiv.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. xiii, xiv; Reay to Dufferin, February 12, 1888, quoted in Perti, *South Asia*, p. xiv.

⁶² Lansdowne to Dufferin, June 1, 1888, quoted in Gilbert, “Lord Lansdowne in India,” p. 76.

The Lansdownes landed at Bombay on December 3, 1888, then by rail crossed the breadth of the subcontinent to the capital, Calcutta.⁶³ After receiving an informal four-hour briefing from Dufferin, two days later Lansdowne was installed as Viceroy and put on the 'Star of India.'⁶⁴ From Burma in the east to the ill-defined borders of Afghanistan in the west, Lansdowne now ruled in the Queen's name over 250 million people. While Calcutta, in the new Viceroy's opinion, was a most "unIndian capital" with its Classical style government buildings and Lord Wellesley's baroque Government House palace, he could not say the same for the climate, which he noted was pleasant and livable only from the first week of December to the second or third week of March. For the rest of the year it was customary for the Indian Government to take to the hills in the annual mass exodus to Simla, some 150 miles north of Old Delhi and 100 miles north of the nearest railway station at Ambala.⁶⁵ The government compound at Simla sat atop a 3,000 foot hill, and could be seen from at least sixteen miles away as one approached by carriage. Surrounded by snowcapped mountains, its main attraction was the cooler climate it afforded during the summer months. On his first visit there in early 1889, Lansdowne's relief was palpable as he exclaimed in a letter to his mother: "but oh! the joy of feeling the cool pure air entering one's lungs again and the emancipation from

⁶³ Lansdowne to his mother, December 3, 1888, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 56-57.

⁶⁴ Marchioness of Dufferin & Ava, *Our Viceregal Life in India: Selections from my Journal, 1884-1888, Vol. II* (London: John Murray, 1890), pp. 341-346, entry for Thursday, December 13, 1888. Hereafter cited as *Lady Dufferin Journal*.

⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Lord Cross, October 24, 1890, printed in Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, *Papers of the Marquis of Lansdowne (1845-1927) as Viceroy and Governor-General of India from 1888 to 1894: Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.48. Hereafter cited as *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Forging the Raj: Essays on British India in the Heyday of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 108; Lansdowne to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Minister at Tehran, July 24, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.40.

ceaseless perspiration and thirst.” He remarked that he almost felt himself to be back in Ottawa again, and more importantly, his “finger joints which were becoming very painful and rheumatic at Calcutta are already better.”⁶⁶ When the India Office questioned the added expense of a good part of the government removing to Simla for the greater part of the year—suggesting that it at least remain in Calcutta from the first of November to mid-April—Lansdowne protested the idea that there was anything like a mass abuse of public funds and even secured the opinion of the Surgeon General and other doctors as to the ill-climate that existed in the capital during portions of those months.⁶⁷

The Viceroy’s residence at Simla, the so-called “viceregal lodge,” was in fact a stately English mansion built at Dufferin’s insistence, at a cost of over £100,000. The entrance-hall ascended three stories while the rooms were fully equipped with electric light, and it even had an indoor tennis court.⁶⁸ On the whole, the house adhered to Lord Valentia’s near dictum that India was “a country of splendour, of extravagance, and of outward appearances,” and so should “be ruled from a palace, not from a counting-house.”⁶⁹ Although Lansdowne noted that the house had “many good points,” he found

⁶⁶ Lansdowne to his mother, April 11, 1889, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 63-65.

⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Cross, January 8, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.6; Lansdowne to Cross, January 29, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.9; Lansdowne to Cross, March 13, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.16.

⁶⁸ *Lady Dufferin Journal*, pp. 294-296, entry for Sunday, July 15, 1888; Mark Bence-Jones, *The Viceroys of India* (London: Constable, 1982), p. 143.

⁶⁹ Lord Valentia defending the immense expenditures made by Lord Wellesley in building Government House in Calcutta in the early nineteenth century quoted in Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain’s Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 13.

that “the whole arrangement of the rooms and ‘anatomy’ of the building tell a tale of amateur architecture with its inevitable faults.” Moreover, he thought the furnishings “deplorable,” and could not quite figure out why such “hideous” carpets had been imported from Maples of London, when “such lovely ones are made here.”⁷⁰ It would turn out as well that the climate at Simla was not as pleasant as Lansdowne had first surmised. In her “unvarnished account” of the drizzling rain that often lingered at Simla, Lady Dufferin declared that it “falls in the most vicious manner, with the plain intent of entering our new house and of discovering every weak place in it [,] entirely hides our lovely views and rather spoils our angelic tempers.”⁷¹ Little more than a year into his reign Lansdowne discovered that one could suffer “rather an over-dose of Simla,” whose climate could be “extremely disagreeable during the rains.” Indeed, he maintained that it was “much harder to bear than the heat of Calcutta.”⁷² After having been in India for less than two years, the Viceroy began to speak of his time spent each year at Simla as “six months’ imprisonment . . . completely cut off from the rest of the world,” and envisioning himself to be “like Prometheus, although with a reasonably sound liver, chained to this rock.”⁷³

Lansdowne was also soon to have his doubts, “judging by the number of one’s friends on the sick list,” that the climate at Simla really was “as healthy as it ought to

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to his mother, April 11, 1889, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 63-65.

⁷¹ *Lady Dufferin Journal*, pp. 297-298, entry of Wednesday, August 8, 1888.

⁷² Lansdowne to Sir Drummond Wolff, January 9, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.18.

⁷³ Lansdowne to Wolff, May 1, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.237; Lansdowne to Connemara, October 11, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.167.

be.”⁷⁴ In the summer of 1890, Lady Lansdowne was forced to leave the country due to poor health and return to England for a few months because, according to the Viceroy, Simla did not agree with her very well.⁷⁵ Lansdowne himself, however, was usually the most prominent name on the sick list, and indeed one would not go too far in concluding that it was probably more of a surprise to ever find his name off of it. During his tenure, he would suffer from fever, ague, and lumbago (to go along with his rheumatic finger joints).⁷⁶ By far his worst affliction, however, was yet another nerve disorder, neuralgia in the eye—an acute pain radiating along the optic nerve—the rarest form of the disorder, and also extremely rare in one so young; Lansdowne was only forty-three years old. Making it impossible at times to do any serious work as it drove him “almost crazy with pain,” Lansdowne remarked that he had “never suffered any pain more difficult to bear,” and it was only assuaged by the administration of “big doses of quinine.”⁷⁷

Between ailments, the Viceroy did manage to take advantage of his exotic surroundings. Although he disliked Indian style horse racing, Simla had a small racecourse and Lansdowne was forced to admit that “on occasional evenings pony racing is, to my mind, the most attractive form which the sport can assume.”⁷⁸ For his

⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Sir Auckland Colvin, July 29, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.46.

⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Cross, July 21, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.33.

⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Sir J. B. Lyall, August 28, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.75; Lansdowne to Lord Reay, February 26, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 1, no.123.

⁷⁷ Lansdowne to General Sir Frederick Roberts, February 3, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 9, no.57; Lansdowne to Lord Wenlock, February 6, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 9, no.58; Lansdowne to Sir C. A. Elliot, February 7, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 9, no.62.

⁷⁸ Lansdowne to Lord Reay, June 23, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 1, no.314.

gardens at Derreen, he actively collected new and interesting plant seeds, as well as bamboos.⁷⁹ For sport, he was instructed as to the “mysteries in the art” of pigsticking, and went as well on the requisite tiger shoot, taking along his son Kerry, and his new son-in-law Victor Cavendish, Lord Hartington (later the ninth Duke of Devonshire). The latter two each got a tiger, while the Viceroy “put a bullet into the head of a miserable elephant,” but failing to bring it down, left the poor animal “still at large.”⁸⁰

Governing India, of course, engaged the majority of Lansdowne’s time, and before he had even left Canada he found himself nearly overwhelmed. After conducting a review of Indian affairs while still in Ottawa, Lansdowne found that “the number of questions, and of big questions” that required immediate attention was “appalling,” and it could not have escaped his notice that in India, as opposed to Canada, the responsibility for governing would rest more than ever in his hands alone.⁸¹ In his first address as Viceroy, at Bombay on the day of his arrival, Lansdowne told those assembled that a man about to assume such a post as he was about to do would have to be “infatuated if he does recognize that he is about to submit himself to an ordeal as severe as that to which any public man can expect to go through.”⁸² Even *The Times*,

⁷⁹ Lansdowne to Dr. G. King, Superintendent, Royal Botanical Gardens at Seebpore, March 22, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.205.

⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Cross, November 12, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.50; Lansdowne to Lord Harris, December 12, 1892, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 8, no.296; For the imperial symbolism of the tiger shoot see Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp. 115, 185.

⁸¹ Lansdowne to Godley, February 26, 1888, quoted in Gilbert, “Lord Lansdowne in India,” p. 71.

⁸² Lansdowne’s address to the Bombay Municipal Corporation, December 3, 1888, printed in Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, *Speeches by the Marquis of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor General of India, 1888-1894* (Calcutta: The Standard Press, 1895), pp. 1-3. Hereafter cited as *Speeches by the Marquis of Lansdowne*.

which predictably declared Lansdowne's stint in Canada a success, pointed out that "As Governor-General of Canada, Lord Lansdowne has had to exhibit a demeanour almost the exact reverse of that which will be incumbent on him as Governor-General of India." Specifically, it stressed that he would be "obliged to be an autocrat . . . [who] must make his weight felt in affairs."⁸³ David Cannadine has suggested that in fact, "In governing India, previous Canadian experience might even have been a positive disadvantage, since the one post required an inflexible figure-head, while the other—especially in its later phases—required different abilities."⁸⁴ As *The Times* noted, however, the Viceroy's powers were not entirely unrestrained and absolute and that thanks to the telegraph there was always a ready connection to London and the India Office.⁸⁵ Lansdowne's meeting with Lord Cross in the summer before he departed for India had not been very helpful though, as the Secretary of State avoided setting specific policy guidelines, and throughout his tenure retained a relatively hands-off approach to his duties. It was clear, however, that the next Viceroy would have two areas of foremost concern. First was the rising Indian nationalism in the country which was now embodied in the nascent and increasingly assertive Indian National Congress, while second was the continued need to improve India's defenses especially along its northwest frontier.⁸⁶

⁸³ *The Times*, May 22, 1888, p. 9.

⁸⁴ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 593.

⁸⁵ *The Times*, May 22, 1888, p. 9.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, "Lord Lansdowne in India," pp. 80-81, 85.

In domestic matters Lansdowne's viceroyalty was the epitome of moderate Whig governance. He immediately took up his Whig predecessor's scheme for reform of Indian Provincial Councils and the Viceroy's Supreme Council. A sort of "Reform Bill for India," the proposals put forward by Dufferin were to allow native Indians—who had been in some manner elected—to sit on both Councils, and also allow questions to be asked in the Supreme Council with regard to the budget. Echoing Dufferin's reasoning, Lansdowne hoped that "A timely concession of this kind would . . . take a great deal of the wind out of the sails of Congress, whereas, if the reform is delayed too long, it will be assuredly regarded as having been extorted from us."⁸⁷ It was not to be "anything like representation, in the English sense of the word," Lansdowne assured Cross, but he believed that such a small step would "do good . . . by showing that our attitude is not one of obstinate or uncompromising resistance to the demands for a moderate advance in the direction of institutions, more representative in character than those at present enjoyed by the people of this country."⁸⁸ The Indian Councils Act eventually passed in 1892, and contained language vague enough to allow the Viceroy to experiment with the elective principle in the Councils.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Lansdowne to Cross, January 1, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.5.

⁸⁸ Briton Martin, Jr., "Lord Dufferin and the Indian National Congress, 1885-1888" *The Journal of British Studies* Vol. 7, No. 1 (November, 1967): 85-86; Lansdowne to Cross, February 12, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.12; Lansdowne to Cross, December 11, 1888, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.1.

⁸⁹ R. J. Moore, "The Twilight of the Whigs and the Reform of the Indian Councils, 1886-1892" *The Historical Journal* Vol. 10, Issue 3 (1967): 412-413; "The Indian Councils Act" of June 20, 1892 and "Lord Lansdowne on the Constitution of Legislative Councils" of March 16, 1893 are printed in C. H. Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947 Select Documents* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), nos.19 and 20.

Against considerable native Indian opposition Lansdowne also pushed through a bill that raised the age of consent for girls from ten to twelve years old. The bill was prompted by the courts being unable to deal adequately with the recent case of a child-wife in Bengal dying from the consummation of her marriage.⁹⁰ Lansdowne admitted to Lord Connemara, the Governor of Madras, that it was quite “possible that legislation upon the subject may not produce any striking or immediate results,” but he did “not see why it should have the effect of impeding the cause of social reform.” Moreover, he had become convinced that “legislation on questions of this kind often has good results by accustoming the people to sound views.”⁹¹

Perhaps most revealing of Lansdowne’s general political attitudes was his correspondence with Allan Octavian Hume, a retired Indian civil servant, English “father” of the Indian National Congress and devotee of Madame Blavatsky’s theosophy.⁹² Hume had been a confidant of Lord Ripon, Viceroy from 1880 to 1885, and encouraged the latter’s reformist program.⁹³ It was the failure of Ripon’s promised reforms however—reforms that were “to supply legitimate outlets for those aspirations and satisfy those ambitions” of that “small class of highly educated natives”—which led

⁹⁰ Sarvepalli Gopal, *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1865), p. 192.

⁹¹ Lansdowne to Connemara, October 28, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.218.

⁹² This religious movement of mystics had, by Rudyard Kipling’s reckoning, “stole from freemasonry, looted the latter-day Rosicrucians of half their pet words, took any fragments of Egyptian philosophy that it found in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, annexed as many of the Vedas as had been translated into French or English [and] . . . would have adopted Voodoo and Obeah had it known anything about them” (Kipling quoted in Roderick Cavaliero, *Strangers in the Land: The Rise and Decline of the British Indian Empire* [London: I. B. Tauris, 2002], p. 189).

⁹³ Martin, “Lord Dufferin and the Indian National Congress,” p. 74.

directly to the creation of the Indian National Congress.⁹⁴ Hume had initially meant the Congress to be in partnership with the Government of India, providing it with a ready repository of educated Indian opinion, but this idea was rebuffed by Dufferin and Indian nationalism only grew more assertive.⁹⁵

Hume's first direct contact with Lansdowne came after the Bengal Provincial Government, acting "somewhat beyond those orders" issued by the central government in Calcutta, sent out a circular that not only forbid government officials from participating in Congress activity, but highly discouraged them from even attending Congress meetings or rallies.⁹⁶ After a not unfriendly meeting with the Viceroy, Hume, now General Secretary to the Indian National Congress, sent Lansdowne an admittedly unaltered and uncensored five-page screed that had simply "flowed" from his heart. As he also now considered himself "*amicus curiae*," he did not hesitate "to violate all sorts of official convenances" in speaking his mind. The initial purpose of the letter, wrote Hume, was to explain in advance why he and his Congress Party would in future be bound to denounce the Viceroy and his government. After challenging what he claimed were Lansdowne's self-proclaimed liberal credentials, and comparing the Indian Government's unfair boycott of the Congress with the troublesome boycotts of Irish

⁹⁴ Ripon to Kimberley, May 4 and July 10, 1883 and Ripon to Hartington, May 25, 1882, quoted in Martin, "Lord Dufferin and the Indian National Congress," p. 71; Martin, "Lord Dufferin and the Indian National Congress," p. 72.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 74, 77, 80-81.

⁹⁶ Lansdowne's and the government's admission contained in Colonel J. C. Ardagh, private secretary to the Viceroy, to Pherozeshah Mehta, president of the Indian National Congress, January 3, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.8.

agitators, Hume appealed to Lansdowne “—for the welfare equally of Great Britain and India—”:

To try somewhat to realize the strength of the feelings which pervade the educated classes, the *de-facto* leaders of the people on these subjects, and realizing it, devise some golden bridge—some scheme to reconcile contending factions. Be another witch of Atlas, kneading fire and snow together, and tempering the repugnant mass with ‘liquid love.’ Show strongly, unmistakably [sic], your sympathy with and love for the people; rise above the common place routine of official platitudes, and guarded, grudging, insincere official utterances; show the people that it is with them in their countless millions, in their sorrows and their sufferings, and not with the tiny clique of foreign rulers jealous of their power, their emoluments, and their supposed fallibility, that your heart is, and earn an undying nation’s gratitude—the reward of a good conscience and the final verdict of a higher tribunal; ‘well done, thou good and faithful servant!’⁹⁷

Despite the letter’s stunning violations of convention, its accusations, and strangely excessive familiarity, Lansdowne might not have been that surprised since he was informed by friends almost a year earlier that all that Hume “says and writes is to some extent tainted by his strange metaphysical belief, and that he will tell you, without moving a muscle of his countenance, that he has occult means, uncomprehended by Western civilization, of finding out what people think and are doing.”⁹⁸ Almost always universally courteous, the Viceroy politely declined to become “another witch of Atlas,” but noted that he could not recall a “single instance” in which he had “spoken or written in an intolerant spirit of the proceedings or aims of the Congress.” As for Hume’s plea that he interfere decidedly on the side of the “countless millions,” Lansdowne declared: “Of the duties of the head of a Government none are to my mind more important than

⁹⁷ Hume to Lansdowne, January 9, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.40.

⁹⁸ Lansdowne to Reay, February 20, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.110.

that of preserving what you have described as the character of a ‘purely independent statesman’ by an attitude of strict impartiality to all.”⁹⁹

A few days later, in a letter Lansdowne and his staff had “prepared with the utmost care” and in which “every word . . . was weighed,” Hume was informed that “The Government of India recognize that the Congress movement is regarded in India what in Europe would be called the more advanced liberal party, as distinguished from the great body of conservative opinion which exists side by side with it.”¹⁰⁰ Lansdowne had essentially declared the Congress a legitimate movement, though without official approval, and Hume subsequently published the letter and called for public thanks to be voted to the Viceroy.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Lansdowne’s true attitude toward the Congress had probably not changed from his initial thoughts formed soon after his arrival in India when he informed Cross that as long as the movement was “content . . . with the academical [*sic*] discussion” of such questions that were already openly being dealt with by the government, and avoided the dissemination of seditious materials, he believed that the authorities could “afford to treat its proceedings with good-humoured indifference.”¹⁰² His greatest fear was that the leaders of the Congress movement would

⁹⁹ Lansdowne to Hume, January 16, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.50.

¹⁰⁰ Lansdowne to Sir C. A. Elliot, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, January 22, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.74; Ardagh to Hume, January 19, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.61.

¹⁰¹ Hume to The Secretary of the Congress Committee, January 21, 1891, enclosed in Hume to Lansdowne, January 22, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.84.

¹⁰² Lansdowne to Cross, March 13, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.17.

“obtain for it a new motive-power by combining agrarian with political grievances,” as had already happened to such great effect in Ireland.¹⁰³

In their last substantive correspondence later that same year, Hume sent the Viceroy a copy of a speech he had made at Dulwich in England in which he expounded on the seeming curiosity that reforms that were once regarded as “wild and visionary” often had become acceptable or within the realm of the possible within one’s own lifetime. Lansdowne responded that he was

. . . almost tempted to add that, this being so, the reformers can afford to rely upon the inherent merits of their own cause, and upon the fact ‘that time is upon the side’ of the party of progress, without seeking to accelerate the pace by the use of what I should call inflammatory stimulants. I should have liked your speech better if my sympathy with your argument had not been at times alienated by what seemed to me to be uncalled for attempts to excite class hatred. These appeals to the employed against the employers, or to those who have not, against those who have, are becoming too fashionable, and will, I cannot help fearing, breed estrangement where there should be good-will, and mistrust where there might be hearty cooperation.¹⁰⁴

Hume, in his typically impolitic response, argued: “Of course a member of the aristocracy” with such an “*altiora peto* temperament, [was] incapable of conceiving such things without a practical acquaintance with them, from which your birth and position has saved you.” He asserted that the Viceroy simply had “no idea of the justice of our hatred of the tyranny of capital and wealth,” and moreover, the Viceroy mistakenly credited others with “honourable feelings like your own.” While Hume himself did “so wish to love all men,” when brought “face to face with the unmerited sufferings”

¹⁰³ Lansdowne to Cross, December 31, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.67.

¹⁰⁴ Hume to Lansdowne, December 18, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 6, no.390; Lansdowne to Hume, December 22, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 6, no.290.

inflicted by the “great bulk of plutocrats and employers,” he found he could not do so.¹⁰⁵ In essence, he had charged Lansdowne with being more gentle and sanguine than he. In its way, it is oddly reminiscent of Salisbury’s complaint of Gladstone’s “gorgeous, reckless optimism.”¹⁰⁶

While Lansdowne admitted Hume’s greater familiarity with “the relations of capital and labour in Great Britain,” and that he surely knew “many things which are unrevealed to those who have been watchers from a distance,” the Viceroy maintained that he would not be “squeamish about strong language when it was directed at proven facts and against convicted offenders.” What Lansdowne disliked, however, was “the assumption that capitalists, or employers, must be bad because they are capitalists and employers, or indeed that any one class of the community is bad ‘in the loomp.’”¹⁰⁷ This was not to say that Lansdowne found all generalizations as to class objectionable, as little more than five years before he had declared to his mother that the longer he lived the “more firmly” did he “believe in blood and breeding.” He was quick to concede, however, that “Many” of his own class were “poor, a good few disreputable, plenty idle and without sense of responsibility.”¹⁰⁸ The Viceroy’s direct association with Hume

¹⁰⁵ Hume to Lansdowne, December 25, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 6, no.407. “*Altiora peto*” means literally, “I seek higher things.”

¹⁰⁶ Salisbury to Lansdowne, June 27, 1890, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

¹⁰⁷ Lansdowne to Hume, December 28, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 6, no.309.

¹⁰⁸ Lansdowne to his mother, October-December (?), 1886, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 40.

soon ended, and four months into the new year the Government of India nearly took action against Hume for the circulation of seditious materials.¹⁰⁹

Although domestic matters certainly occupied much of Lansdowne's energies, India's defense and foreign policy were from the beginning of his reign, his greatest concern. One of the very first letters Lansdowne wrote as Viceroy was sent to Henry Mortimer Durand, his Foreign Secretary, to inform him that "Of all the high officials with whom I shall be in contact, you will, I have little doubt, be the officer with whom I shall be most immediately and frequently concerned during my term of office."¹¹⁰ Durand's position, however, was akin to that of the Permanent or Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, while the Viceroy was in effect his own foreign minister, directing Indian foreign policy in consultation with the India Office.¹¹¹

India's strategic situation in the late 1880s was best characterized by Lansdowne at his farewell dinner at the Royal Exchange in Calcutta. The retiring Viceroy reminded his audience that "the restlessness perceptible at different points of the frontier" during his reign was "merely the outward and visible sign of the fact that the Indian Empire is, owing to events beyond our control, passing out of the stage of isolation—out of the stage when it could afford to do without a definite frontier, into a new stage when it will be virtually conterminous with two, or perhaps three great Powers and when, whether we like it or not, the acceptance of definite frontiers and spheres of responsibility will be

¹⁰⁹ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 190.

¹¹⁰ Lansdowne to Durand, December 19, 1888, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol.1, no.23.

¹¹¹ Gilbert, "Lord Lansdowne in India," p. 205.

forced upon us.”¹¹² The end of India’s isolation was of course a different matter entirely from what Lansdowne would encounter as Foreign Secretary a decade later. The great powers that threatened, however, were the same, and between the press of the French into Burma in the east, and Russian expansion towards Afghanistan in the northwest, the latter’s threat to India’s borders and domestic stability was by far the most feared. Moreover, despite Lansdowne’s talk of this being a “new stage” for India, recognition and fear of the destabilizing effect that Russia could have on British authority in India—not to mention the fear of an actual Russian invasion of India—was not new at all.

Since the Napoleonic Wars, these two great powers had been engaged in a grand rivalry, the so-called ‘Great Game,’ played out in the wastelands and mountains of Central Asia, an ever decreasing buffer zone between Imperial Russia and British India. Prior to this, Russia and Britain had actually been considered the most natural of allies. In 1806, George III told the Russian envoy, Magnus Alopäus, that “since the geographical position that forms the foundation of their union [Britain and Russia] cannot change, their union must be eternal.”¹¹³ Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt seven years before, however, had awakened many in Britain to the land based threats to their possessions on the subcontinent. It was the genesis in many respects of Britain’s nineteenth century foreign policy tenet of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman

¹¹² Lansdowne’s farewell dinner speech at the Royal Exchange in Calcutta, January 23, 1894, *Speeches by the Marquis of Lansdowne*, pp. 383-406.

¹¹³ George III quoted in John LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700-1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 304.

Empire, the western bulwark of the glacis.¹¹⁴ In November 1814, six months after Napoleon's first abdication and four months before his return, Britain signed a defensive treaty with Persia, in which the latter promised aid against any invasion of India. It was clearly a treaty directed not against France, but Britain's ally, Russia.¹¹⁵

By the 1830s, the idea of implementing an active 'forward policy,' pushing forward into the Central Asian buffer zone to meet the Russian threat before it reached the outer borders of India, was already being discussed. Lord Bentinck, Governor General of India from 1828 to 1835, did not think a Russian invasion was probable but believed the establishment of military colonies further up the Indus River would in the long run provide greater security. Other East India Company officials, however, were just as certain that such a policy would only prompt the Russians to react in kind, which in the end would only bring the armies of both great powers that much closer, or would aid the Russians militarily by moving British forces closer to Russia's resource base and further away from their own.¹¹⁶ News of the unsuccessful Persian siege of the strategic

¹¹⁴ M. S. Anderson, *Britain's Discovery of Russia, 1553-1815* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 202. Unbeknownst to the British, in January 1801, on the heels of a newly established Franco-Russian friendship, Czar Paul I—the paranoid and supremely arbitrary son of Catherine the Great—unilaterally launched an invasion of India. After Paul's subsequent assassination the army of 22,000 Don Cossacks, charged to carry out this mad venture, were wisely recalled (Hugh Ragsdale, *Tsar Paul and the Question of Madness: An Essay in History and Psychology* [New York, Greenwood Press, 1988], pp. 96-99; LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, p. 302).

¹¹⁵ John Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain; A study of Interaction of Policy and Opinion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 37-38; LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, p. 306.

¹¹⁶ Lord Ellenborough to Bentinck, January 12, 1830, printed in Cyril Henry Phillips, ed., *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, Governor-General of India, 1828-1835*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), no.175. Hereafter cited as *Bentinck Correspondence*; Bentinck to Lord Ellenborough, August 25, 1830, *Bentinck Correspondence*, no.237; Sir Charles Metcalfe to Bentinck, October 9, 1831, *Bentinck Correspondence*, no.361; Bentinck to R. Campbell, December 15,

city of Herat in western Afghanistan in 1837—an attack that was known to have been supported and encouraged by the Russian representative in Tehran—prompted then Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, to argue that Russia had “opened the first parallels and it would not be wise in us to delay the defensive measures until she has reached the glaciis.” The Russian Foreign Minister, Nesselrode, attempted to calm British fears of an impending invasion of India, but such assurances went only so far for Russian actions tended to belie their verbal promises of peaceful intentions, and under Palmerston’s direction Britain initiated its forward policy. In 1838 British forces occupied Kabul, the Afghan capital, and set up a pro-British Amir. Four years later nearly the entire British mission—men, women, and children—were slaughtered while attempting to retreat from the country after the Afghan people rebelled.¹¹⁷

Britain’s forward policy met disaster in Afghanistan, but Russian expansion continued, and after the Indian Mutiny in 1857 British fears only heightened. Russian forces took Tashkent and Bokhara in 1866, Khiva in 1873, and Kokand in 1876, and it seemed inevitable that they would soon take Merv, and after that Herat.¹¹⁸ The response of the Disraeli Government in 1875 was to appoint the more aggressive Lord Lytton as Viceroy and once again adopt a more forward policy. Salisbury, Foreign Secretary at

1831, *Bentinck Correspondence*, no.383; Richard J. Popplewell, *Intelligence and the Imperial Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904-1924* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 20-21.

¹¹⁷ Graham Stephenson, *Russia From 1812 to 1945: A History* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 280; Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain*, p. 210; Harold N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836-1844* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 86.

¹¹⁸ Kenneth Bourne, *the Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 141-142.

the time, argued that it was “evident that this Russian avalanche is moving on by its own weight . . . [and] it is likely to go on, whatever diplomacy may do.”¹¹⁹ The ultimate incongruity for Salisbury—and many who came before him—was that he had come to the conclusion that at present a Russian invasion of India was not very likely or even feasible, but recognizing that Afghanistan would necessarily end up in either the Russian or British sphere and with British public opinion more than a little concerned over the fate of the jewel in Britain’s Empire, it was impossible to do nothing.¹²⁰ His hope then was to divert the Russian avalanche towards “the vast multitudes of China,” or at the very least keep it north of the Hindu Kush range of the Himalayas.¹²¹ The government, was unable to restrain Lytton, however, who believed that with regard to war with Russia, “If it is to be—better now, than later.”¹²²

When the Amir welcomed a Russian mission at Kabul in 1878, Lytton ordered British troops across the border. British victory against the Afghans was swift, the Russians departed, and a resident was placed permanently at Kabul in support of a new pro-British Amir. Three months after the resident’s arrival in July 1879, however, he and his entire escort were murdered by rebellious Afghan soldiers. A successful reprisal expedition was soon launched, but the disaster helped bring down Disraeli’s

¹¹⁹ Salisbury to Lord Northbrook, January 22, 1875, quoted in Gopal, *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, p. 75.

¹²⁰ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 83.

¹²¹ Salisbury to Lord Northbrook, January 22, 1875, excerpted in Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 75.

¹²² Lytton to Salisbury, October 25, 1876, excerpted in Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 80.

Government in 1880.¹²³ The new Liberal government under Gladstone returned all territories taken in the reprisal, including Kandahar, and Liberal policy on Afghanistan was to be complete non-interference in its domestic affairs, and cordial relations with the new Amir, Abdur Rahman.¹²⁴

Lansdowne's immediate predecessor, Lord Dufferin, somewhat reluctantly followed this policy, gave Rahman money and guns, and tried his best to ignore the potentate's brutal methods of governing. This won him the support of successive Liberal and Conservative governments. In the meantime, Russian advances continued. They occupied Merv in 1884, and forcibly took the Panjdeh from the Afghans in 1885. Since the Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Kimberley, both thought a treaty with Russia would be of no real use, a so-called "modified forward policy" was now contemplated. This would entail greater control of the border tribes on India's northwest frontier so as to provide a defensive shield, the building of more railway lines linking the west bank of the Indus River to more forward positions, and the formulation of military contingency plans in case Russia invaded northern Afghanistan, taking into account that no reinforcements were to be expected from London. The most prominent military contingency envisioned, backed by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India from 1885-1893, was to occupy a defensive position along a line running from Kabul to Kandahar, essentially the southern fringe of the Hindu-Kush. Due to the costs and risks involved in

¹²³ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, pp. 85-90.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

implementing such a modified forward policy however—which included possible alienation of Abdur Rahman thus pushing him into Russia’s arms, or even provoking further Russian advances—Dufferin thought it best to leave many matters undecided, and left the final policy decisions to his successor.¹²⁵

Lansdowne was almost immediately sympathetic to the new forward policy, writing to Roberts in February 1889 that he was “impressed with the necessity of ‘assimilating’ the frontier tribes as rapidly as possible.”¹²⁶ This, he hoped, would eliminate the unsettled tribal salient that at the time projected between the more settled areas of northern Baluchistan and the Punjab. There was a general criticism even at the time that Lansdowne quickly succumbed to “the powerful contagion of the forward policy,” or more specifically fell too easily under the influence of Roberts.¹²⁷ Durand for one was pleased to find that: “So far as India is concerned, anyone who troubles us will find we have a fighting Viceroy,” adding that the latter and “Bobs run neck and neck.”¹²⁸ Lord Kimberley was rather less pleased however, and judged Lansdowne to be “decidedly the weakest of the Viceroys of India with whom” he had to deal.¹²⁹ This no

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp. 134-139; Gilbert, “Lord Lansdowne in India,” pp. 251-252, 259.

¹²⁶ Lansdowne to Roberts, February 17, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 1, no.110.

¹²⁷ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 219.

¹²⁸ Durand to Sir Alfred Lyall, February 14, 1890, quoted in Bence-Jones, *Viceroys of India*, p. 154.

¹²⁹ *Kimberley Journal*, p. 502, entry of February 14, 1893. Kimberley, who served as Secretary of State during the reign of three different viceroys, also judged Lansdowne to be “a very efficient leader of the House of Lords, who was “Universally courteous and an effective speaker without eloquence” (*Kimberley Journal*, p. 489).

doubt had a great deal to do with Kimberley's belief that the marquis, while Viceroy, had been "a mere tool in Robert's [*sic*] hands."¹³⁰

This distinctly negative impression of Lansdowne as puppet has also found favor with modern historians, and it is all the more significant as it is a charge not limited to his time in India.¹³¹ Absent of evidence, however, a congruence of policies does not necessarily prove undue influence or manipulation of one actor over another. It is an impression that must lose a good deal of its force in fact if it can be shown that the reasoning behind Lansdowne's policy choices differed from that of the alleged manipulator. It should not be so surprising to find that Lansdowne was ill-suited to address the need for greater border security through masterly inactivity. He was in some manner throughout his life always the old Whig that the Earl of Crawford encountered in 1919, who had "to investigate everything, to leave nothing and nobody alone . . . always giving the impression that somebody has got to be corrected or something put right."¹³² At the conclusion of Lansdowne's reign he was boldly echoing to all who would listen Lytton's eloquent condemnation of India's previous and senseless frontier policy of

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 457, entry of March 7, 1898.

¹³¹ See Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 215, and Bence-Jones, *Viceroy of India*, p. 154.

¹³² John Vincent, ed., *The Crawford Papers: The journals of David Lindsay twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and tenth Earl of Balcarres 1871-1940 during the years 1892 to 1940* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 400-401, entry of February 23, 1919. Hereafter cited as *Crawford Papers*.

“alternate vengeance and inaction,” but no one would suggest this as an example of the undue influence exercised by the Viceroy’s archives.¹³³

Lansdowne was convinced of the correctness of a renewed forward policy on his month long tour of the northwest frontier in the fall of 1889.¹³⁴ The journey began on an unfortunate note with the Viceroy sustaining a rather severe thigh sprain while attempting to mount an “awkward pony” on the initial leg from Simla to Ambala, but he was able to continue by train on to Peshawar, the northern starting point of his frontier tour where he met up with Roberts; and together they toured the Khyber Pass.¹³⁵ Lansdowne was impressed with the “soldierlike” comportment of the native troops, as well as the miniature version of Pax Britannica that British authority had been able to establish on the caravan road. To the Viceroy’s mind, it produced the “edifying spectacle of gentlemen, who if they met each other on the mountain would most assuredly interchange shots or endeavour to stick a knife into one another, standing shoulder to shoulder in the most amicable manner in order to make their ‘salaam’ to us.”¹³⁶ From here the Viceroy and his party boarded a flotilla of twenty-three flat-

¹³³ See Lansdowne’s farewell dinner speech at the Royal Exchange in Calcutta, January 23, 1894, *Speeches by the Marquis of Lansdowne*, pp. 383-406 and Lansdowne to Lieutenant-General Brackenbury, January 15, 1894, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 10, no.435.

¹³⁴ Lansdowne to Wolff, February 13, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.103.

¹³⁵ Lansdowne to Cross, November 3, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.58; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 69.

¹³⁶ Lansdowne to Reay, December 2, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 2, no.286; Lansdowne to his mother, November 2, 1889, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 69-72.

bottomed barges at Attock, and lazily floated down the Indus River.¹³⁷ Lansdowne was impressed with the “most formidable barrier” the Indus provided, “even if we are to admit that it is to be only a second line of defence,” and best of all it came at no expense to the tax-payer.¹³⁸ After an excursion through the Zhob Valley to inspect the Gomal Pass, through which a commercial road was to be pushed as soon as the local tribes were brought under British authority, the Viceroy continued on to Quetta and an inspection of the railway being laid all the way to the new Chaman station at the Afghan border.¹³⁹ A reserve of rails and other materials were quietly to be stored at Chaman for an eventual extension of the rail line to Kandahar, either through an agreement with the Amir—presumably following “a satisfactory adjustment of the whole frontier question” that Lansdowne believed lay sometime in the near future—or when military necessity required unilateral action.¹⁴⁰

At Quetta, Lansdowne met with Sir Robert Sandeman, Agent to the Governor General, Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan, and author of the famous “Sandeman system,” under which border tribes were to be brought effectively under British influence. Specifically it was an open border system “of conciliatory intervention tempered by lucrative employment and light taxation,” as opposed to a closed border

¹³⁷ Lansdowne to his mother, November 3, 1889, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 72; Lansdowne to Lord Reay, November 3, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 2, no.257.

¹³⁸ Lansdowne to Cross, November 8, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.59.

¹³⁹ Lansdowne to Cross, November 3, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.58.

¹⁴⁰ Cross to Lansdowne, December 19, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.58; Lansdowne to Cross, January 14, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.3; Lansdowne to Cross, November 26, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.61.

system that invariably meant “non-intervention tempered by expeditions.”¹⁴¹

Sandeman’s critics, of course, referred to his approach as nothing more than simply “a gigantic system of disguised blackmail.”¹⁴²

Before a durbar comprising the chiefs of the numerous local tribes, Lansdowne congratulated Sir Robert on his great successes and told his native audience that given their “ample opportunity of learning what British rule means,” he hoped that they had learned that it was “founded on Justice; that the British Government neither exacts heavy taxes nor interferes with your private affairs; that it has no wish to meddle with your religion; [and] that it desires to respect your ancient customs so far as it is possible to do so without injustice to individuals.”¹⁴³ After meeting the tribesmen of the frontier Lansdowne was convinced that “Unless their countenances altogether belie them,” they were in fact “fit for something better than blood feuds and cattle-lifting.”¹⁴⁴ Refusing to pass up an opportunity to improve the house at Simla, before leaving Quetta Lansdowne requested that Sandeman send him a few of the old-fashioned fire-arms, shields, and swords he had seen the tribesmen carrying so he could decorate the “deplorably bare” walls of the viceregal lodge.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Thomas Henry Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on Our Indian Frontier. A Memoir, with Selections From His Correspondence and Official Writings* (London: John Murray, 1895), pp. 240-241.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹⁴³ Lansdowne’s address at the Durbar at Quetta, November 20, 1889, quoted in Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman*, pp. 216-217.

¹⁴⁴ Lansdowne to Reay, December 2, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 2, no.286.

¹⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Sandeman, December 16, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 2, no.315.

Lansdowne returned from his tour “with a strong impression that much which might have been done” in stabilizing relations with the frontier tribes “had been left undone.”¹⁴⁶ If he was to remain a little bit skittish as to Sandeman’s operations, however, it was because he hoped it could “be carried through without attracting much public attention, and without firing a shot.”¹⁴⁷ In his efforts to counter the Viceroy’s anxiety, Sandeman stressed the importance of his work as a matter of imperial defense. Not long after their initial meeting, Sandeman wrote to the Viceroy arguing that “If we do this now, when the time of trial arrives it will be found that [the tribes] will heartily identify themselves with us and place their services and the resources of their country at our disposal, as they did in Baluchistan during the late Afghan War.” In time, Sandeman concluded, his work’s “inestimable value to the Indian Empire” would be proven.¹⁴⁸ A few months later he reiterated that he considered “the question of the direction of our policy towards the frontier tribes as a matter of imperial importance.”¹⁴⁹

The greatest opposition within India to Sandeman’s actions came from the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, Sir J. B. Lyall. His province bordered the tribal salient on the north and adhered to a closed border system. Lyall justly feared that interfering with tribes over whom the Amir presumed some suzerainty might alienate the

¹⁴⁶ Lansdowne to Cross, December 31, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol.1, no.67.

¹⁴⁷ Lansdowne to Wolff, January 9, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.18.

¹⁴⁸ Sandeman to Lansdowne, December 28, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 2, no.439.

¹⁴⁹ Sandeman to Lansdowne, February 12, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.140a.

potentate, so he advised caution.¹⁵⁰ Lansdowne soon found himself in the role of referee between these two increasingly antagonistic government officials, and noted to his friend, Lord Connemara, the Governor of Madras, that “Lyall’s one idea is to build a wall which Sandeman will not be able to climb,” while “Sandeman is for as little masonry as possible, and at least one foot beyond the boundary line.”¹⁵¹ Even a closed door meeting of all three in the Viceroy’s rooms at Simla could not resolve the dispute, and Lansdowne was forced to make a final decision for all provinces on the frontier.¹⁵²

In the end Lansdowne backed Sandeman almost completely, and even had to disabuse Lyall of the notion that Sir Robert was allowed to get his way whether “right or wrong,” simply because he was “overbearing in argument” and “difficult and dangerous to thwart.” The Viceroy in fact thought that if anything Sandeman’s rather aggressive manner in debate tended to hurt his case.¹⁵³ On his tour of the frontier, Lansdowne had already been struck by “The extent to which the policy of abstention has been pursued by the Punjab Government in dealing with the tribes along that portion of the Frontier for which it is responsible,” but he now also took issue with Lyall’s “assumption that we wish or intend to go a great deal further than we have any intention of going.”¹⁵⁴ The

¹⁵⁰ Lyall to Lansdowne, May 29, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.436; Lyall to Lansdowne, May 30, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.438.

¹⁵¹ Lansdowne to Connemara, July 28, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.44.

¹⁵² Lansdowne to Lyall, July 30, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.51.

¹⁵³ Lansdowne to Sandeman, September 5, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.88; Lansdowne to Lyall, December 12, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.291.

¹⁵⁴ Lansdowne to Reay, December 2, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 2, no.286; Lansdowne to Lyall, August 28, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.75.

Viceory simply had far less faith than Lyall in the idea that Afghanistan could be indefinitely maintained as a true buffer state between the Indian Empire and Russia.¹⁵⁵

Lansdowne had therefore come to sympathize with Roberts's argument that British India's natural frontier was the Hindu-Kush, and that occupation of the Kabul-Kandahar line of defense should be implemented at the first sign of "fresh menace on the part of Russia." Maintaining that "Something will have been gained if this is accepted as an established understanding," Lansdowne proposed "if possible, to 'clinch' this with the Secretary of State."¹⁵⁶

There is no reason to deny that Roberts was a considerable influence on the Viceroy's final conclusions on frontier policy. It would indeed be odd if he did not take seriously the advice of his military commander, and Lansdowne certainly had a great deal of respect for his Commander-in-Chief's knowledge of India, a country with which, he noted, the general had "thrown in his lot so completely."¹⁵⁷ Over twenty years later, in late October 1914, when he was informed that another large contingent of native Indian troops was to be transferred to the "seat of war" in Europe, Lansdowne's anxiety with regard to Indian security, as well as his concern that the native troops might not "understand the rules of the game" as it was played in France and Belgium, led him to suggest to Lord Crewe that officials consult the then eighty-two year old Field Marshal

¹⁵⁵ Lansdowne to Wolff, February 13, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.103.

¹⁵⁶ Roberts to Lansdowne, July 12, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.40; Lansdowne to Roberts, July 13, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.22.

¹⁵⁷ Lansdowne to Connemara, July 28, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.44.

whom he declared “knows India better than all of us.”¹⁵⁸ Lansdowne even successively lobbied to have Roberts’ command in India extended, and then pressed for the award of a pension or grant for the latter on his retirement, although without success.¹⁵⁹ His concurrence with Roberts’s seemingly offensive minded ‘Kabul-Kandahar line’ military strategy, however, is once again misleading. It should be remembered that the Commander-in-Chief’s military advice concerning Afghanistan and a possible Russian invasion had changed considerably in its tone since the late 1870s when he advocated offensive action against Russia launched from Herat or across the Oxus River. It was subsequently made clear to the Government of India that if war with Russia were to break out they should not expect any reinforcements from Britain. This essentially put paid to any more talk of offensive operations.¹⁶⁰ In 1885 Roberts still contemplated advancing quickly and taking Herat before the Russians, but by the time of Lansdowne’s viceroyalty the taking of Kandahar was paramount in his thinking, along with the extension of the railway to that city from Quetta. When Lansdowne promised to attempt to “clinch” acceptance of the Kabul-Kandahar line with the India Office, it was now

¹⁵⁸ Lansdowne to Lord Crewe, October 22, 1914, LP, Further Correspondence, Lord Crewe 1906-1926. Crewe responded: “As you point out, it is in a sense a duplicated risk, because failure in Europe means far greater danger in India. But then, if we were really badly beaten in Europe, where would India be in any case? And is not this a reason for cramming our best troops into the area of crisis?” (Crewe to Lansdowne, October 27, 1914, LP, Further Correspondence, Lord Crewe 1906-1926). Roberts died in November 1914 “while visiting Indian troops in France” (Brian Robson, ed., *Roberts in India: the Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts 1876-1893* [Dover, N.H.: Allan Sutton, 1993], p. xxii. Hereafter cited as *Roberts Military Papers*).

¹⁵⁹ See Lansdowne to Cross, September 30, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.54; Lansdowne to Roberts, February 15, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 9, no.77.

¹⁶⁰ *Roberts Military Papers*, pp. xvi-xvii.

foremost a defensive strategy and limited to the southern half of Afghanistan.¹⁶¹ In this respect, Lansdowne's forward policy in India was not incompatible with his advocacy in early 1881 of retaining Kandahar on the chance that a "European concert of Asia" might be the end result. Lansdowne's first impulse was always to show a firm front, but unlike Lytton he did not desire war with Russia now rather than later or even think war to be inevitable, as did Roberts. Doing nothing, however, was not an option, and in this Lansdowne was in agreement with Roberts.¹⁶²

Roberts's influence on Lansdowne was perhaps greatest and most enduring in the impression the former gave that British India—the Empire's pre-eminent jewel—was in fact militarily indefensible. When Lord Cross requested in the summer of 1891 a memorandum from the Commander-in-Chief detailing what defensive measures might be taken if Russia launched a mere diversionary attack on India, Roberts practically refused to submit one, declaring that no defense was possible without reinforcements thus it would be "impossible" for him to "show *on paper* how it could be done." Moreover, he maintained that "Practically, the defence of India and the opposing an attack on Afghanistan by Russia is one and the same," and that "in either case the only course to pursue is to occupy the Kabul-Kandahar line," but that this had only "smallest chance of success, without the increase to the Army of India."¹⁶³ It was Roberts, as well, who in 1891 passed on to Lansdowne Alfred Thayer Mahan's immensely influential

¹⁶¹ Roberts to Sir Henry Rawlinson, May 3, 1885, *Roberts Military Papers*, no.214; Roberts to Salisbury, June 8, 1885, *Roberts Military Papers*, no.216.

¹⁶² Roberts to Lansdowne, July 18, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.54a.

¹⁶³ Roberts to Lansdowne, June 13, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.601.

work, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. With the book, the Commander-in-Chief enclosed a copy of a letter he had written to Sir Alfred Lyall—from whom the general had originally received the book—in which he noted that “the great advantages claimed for England’s ‘Geographical position’ . . . are considerably discounted now that the boundary of her Indian Empire has become conterminous with that of Russia in Asia.” He warned the Viceroy that “Her Majesty’s Ministers must not shut their eyes to the dangers at present hidden by our undisputed power, and must make up their minds that, cost what it may in men and money, Russia ought never to be allowed to approach one yard nearer to India.”¹⁶⁴

Simultaneously with promising to “clinch” acceptance of the Kabul-Kandahar line with the India Office, Lansdowne was echoing the opinion of Sandeman when he wrote to Wolff that, notwithstanding the Amir’s disapproval of current British actions in opening the Gomal Pass, “in the face of the events which are taking place on the western frontier of Afghanistan, we cannot afford to sit with our hands in our pockets, and I am doing all I can in a quiet way to increase our influence amongst the frontier tribes and to prepare for the steps which we may be forced to take before we are much older.”¹⁶⁵

Both the Viceroy and Roberts recognized the need for the cooperation of the Amir in all their efforts to stabilize the border and other measures for India’s defense. These

¹⁶⁴ Roberts to Lansdowne, April 20, 1891, and enclosed letter Roberts to Sir Alfred Lyall, April 14, 1891, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 5, no.454.

¹⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Wolff, July 12, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.21. Two weeks earlier Lansdowne had received from Lyall a copy of the latter’s recent correspondence with Sandeman in which Sir Robert wrote: “Again, I do not think the Amir’s being angry with the opening of the Gomal Pass ought to deter us from doing what is absolutely necessary for the defence of our Empire in India” (Sandeman to Lyall, May 24, 1890, enclosed in Lyall to Lansdowne, May 29, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 3, no.436).

included connecting India to Kabul by telegraph and building the new rail terminus at Chaman; the station would have to be on level ground, which would require it to be six or seven miles past the extant fort and therefore on land Abdur Rahman considered his. None of this could proceed much further, noted Lansdowne, “without explaining to the Amir what we are driving at, and inducing him to help us, instead of obstructing us at every turn of the road,” while Roberts admitted that “Notwithstanding the very serious difficulties we should undoubtedly have to encounter in making overtures of any kind to the Amir, the advantages of coming to a satisfactory understanding with him would seem to outweigh them.”¹⁶⁶ The most serious difficulty, however, was the Viceroy’s strained relationship with Abdur Rahman.

In his first month in India, Lansdowne explained to Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay: “The fact is that in the case of small and weak semi-barbarous States, placed between neighbors more powerful than themselves, it is often impossible to say with confidence that they can be properly described as the vassals or tributaries of any single ruler.” He maintained that these states “have in all probability at different times acknowledged different supremacies, and paid tribute to any one who was strong enough to extort it.”¹⁶⁷ From the start of his reign, Lansdowne was “impressed with the unsatisfactory relations with” the Amir, and thought that the Government of India had “scarcely any control over him.”¹⁶⁸ This lack of control meant there was an ever present

¹⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Roberts, July 13, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.22; Roberts to Lansdowne, July 18, 1890, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 4, no.54a.

¹⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Reay, January 2, 1889, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 1, no.43.

¹⁶⁸ Lansdowne to Cross, March 27, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.19.

danger that the Amir might anger Russia to the point of intervention, and thus force Britain into an unwanted international conflict. While the foremost fear in the Foreign Office and India Office was that the Amir's brutality and repression of neighboring tribes and his own people might present Russia "a pretext for interference" in internal Afghan affairs, or worse yet create trouble in Britain by producing "another edition of the Bulgarian atrocities scare," Lansdowne's concern appeared driven primarily by moral outrage at the atrocities themselves and the Afghan potentate's unnatural cruelty.¹⁶⁹ In the aftermath of putting down a rebellion in Turkistan, Abdur Rahman had subjected captured rebels—men, women, and children—to torture and starvation. His methods of torture varied from exposing his victims to snow-storms while having them doused with buckets of water, to having them blown from guns, disemboweled, or simply having their throats cut in the "usual manner." Many of the prisoners were tortured simply in order to extract property, rather than for any actual treasonous offense.¹⁷⁰ "Altogether, although one cannot help dreading what might happen if Abdur Rahman were to die," noted Lansdowne, it was "by no means clear that we might not do better with a more humane and less unmanageable ruler."¹⁷¹ Notwithstanding his rather comical tautology, Lansdowne's focus was clear.

¹⁶⁹ Cross to Lansdowne, March 8, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.17; Cross to Lansdowne, July 26, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.37; Lansdowne to Cross, March 27, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.19.

¹⁷⁰ "Memorandum on the disposal of the Turkistán prisoners by the Amir" enclosed in Lansdowne to Cross, August 16, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.46.

¹⁷¹ Lansdowne to Cross, March 27, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.19. Abdur Rahman suffered from a variety of ailments, including gout and sciatica, but Lansdowne had "always thought that he was quite as likely to meet his end from the bullet of an assassin as from any one of the numerous diseases from which he is supposed to suffer" (Lansdowne to Cross, November 19, 1890,

The Viceroy's first impulse, beyond waiting for the potentate's untimely death, was to send Abdur Rahman a strongly worded letter of rebuke for both his obstruction and cruelties; but Cross dissuaded him for fear of overly irritating the Afghan ruler. Lansdowne recognized the danger in such a letter, and agreed that they "might deal liberally with the Amir in regard to these if he is reasonable and accommodating," but he found to his extreme displeasure that Abdur Rahman was a most unreasonable, "cantankerous and suspicious old savage."¹⁷² The Viceroy therefore believed that the government "should stand no nonsense" from the Afghan ruler, and complained that they had "hitherto treated him too much as a spoilt child." Moreover, were Britain to continue to grant the Amir money and armaments, and to provide him with protection from attack, Lansdowne believed it ridiculous to allow him to "imperil the peace of the Indian Empire by his wrongheadedness and indiscretion—to say nothing of the abominable cruelties and acts of oppression of which he is guilty." Pending further instruction from London, however, the Viceroy informed Secretary Cross that "in the meanwhile I shall hold my hand."¹⁷³

In the interim, Lansdowne informed Sir Alfred Lyall that he had "given instructions for the preparation of a kind of *dossier* of the Amir's proceedings" upon

Letters to and from the Secretary of State, Vol. 2, no.51; Lansdowne to Cross, August 2, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.43).

¹⁷² Lansdowne to Cross, April 2, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.20; Lansdowne to his mother, January 19, 1893, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 106.

¹⁷³ Lansdowne to Cross, April 2, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.20.

which he could later base his “admonition.”¹⁷⁴ Over the next few months he pressed his case to Cross for some “plain-speaking” when dealing “with such a man as the Amir,” as it was better to leave him “under no misapprehensions.”¹⁷⁵ In July 1889, Lansdowne wrote again that he was “much exercised” by the continuing reports of Abdur Rahman’s “barbarities,” and that although the Amir had “always been a cruel ruler,” the most recent incidents rendered him unable to see how he could “any longer pass them by without notice.” Two weeks later, he even asked for permission to inform the Afghan ruler that the Queen herself was asking for an explanation of his atrocities—a request that was denied. Reluctantly admitting that it would be a mistake to permanently alienate the Amir, and not entirely sure whether or not his letter would have any beneficial effect, Lansdowne again told Cross that he would consider the matter further.¹⁷⁶ It was difficult for Lansdowne to remain silent, however, when such barbarities were committed by a man who owed his position entirely to Britain. In October, the Viceroy was finally permitted to send his rebuke and would later conclude that there was “a good deal of evidence to show that it produced some effect,” or at the very least had resulted in the Amir “punishing his subjects with less barbarity than before.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Sir Alfred Lyall, April 20, 1889, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 68.

¹⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Cross, June 21, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.36.

¹⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Cross, July 5, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.38; Lansdowne to Cross, July 19, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.41; Lansdowne to Cross, August 16, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.46.

¹⁷⁷ Lansdowne to Cross, September 6, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.50; Lansdowne to Cross, December 23, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.66. Cross

In the next year, following the Viceroy's tour of the frontier and after it had been concluded that the Afghan ruler's cooperation and support were needed above all else, the Government of India was busy applying "soft soap" in its correspondence with Abdur Rahman.¹⁷⁸ Lansdowne attempted fruitlessly to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the Amir, going out of his way to avoid needlessly offending the "surlly savage."¹⁷⁹ In October 1890, a formal invitation was sent to Rahman for a meeting in India in order to discuss frontier questions.¹⁸⁰ After some delay, in early November 1890, Lansdowne was led to believe that Rahman had accepted his invitation to meet him in India, but such hopes were quickly dashed when the Amir begged off, citing ill-health (noting his gout and sciatica) as well as urgent business of state.¹⁸¹ Lansdowne admitted later to Lord Kimberley, who took over at the India Office when Gladstone's final ministry came to power in August 1892, that he had it on "excellent authority" that the Afghan ruler had "never forgiven" and still "bitterly resented" the remonstrance that he had been sent. The Viceroy, however, asserted that he had "endeavored" to write it in the "most friendly and considerate manner."¹⁸²

relayed to Lansdowne his hope that the letter would help bring the "barbarian . . . to his senses" (Cross to Lansdowne, October 31, 1889, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 1, no.51).

¹⁷⁸ Cross to Lansdowne, July 4, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.27.

¹⁷⁹ Lansdowne to Cross, August 8, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.36; Lansdowne to Cross, September 1, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.38.

¹⁸⁰ Jagannath Prasad Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne (1888-1894)* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers PVT LTD, 1975), p. 45.

¹⁸¹ Lansdowne to Cross, November 19, 1890, *Letters to and from the Secretary of State*, Vol. 2, no.51.

¹⁸² Lansdowne to Kimberley, August 23, 1892, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 101-102.

In the following year, 1891, matters were at a standstill, and Abdur Rahman showed his true resentment toward the Government of India by launching his own forward policy and attempting to assert his suzerainty over various border tribes, including the Afridis, the dominant tribe in the Khyber Pass.¹⁸³ In August 1892, Lansdowne sought to send a mission to Kabul to be led this time by Roberts, but the Amir had no intention of welcoming the hero of the Second Afghan War, accompanied as he would be by a large military force, and so refused to fix a date for the mission. Lord Kimberley, who took over the India Office the same month, did not want the Afghan ruler to be pressed further, and blamed the Government of India's modified forward policy for the Amir's renewed truculence.¹⁸⁴

Lansdowne was at least initially "pleased at getting Kimberley" at the India Office, although he was admittedly unsure as to whether the latter would support him "in the Afghan imbroglio." His reaction to Gladstone's return to power, however, was one of seeming resignation that Britain was "but at the beginning of the triumph of democratic principles."¹⁸⁵ He wrote to Kimberley at the end of August informing him that he would "find a good many troublesome questions undisposed of," foremost of which was Abdur Rahman's hostility. Lansdowne dismissed the idea, however, that it all stemmed from the new forward policy or the railway extension at Chaman, arguing that he doubted whether the Amir "would have been our friend, or at all events a

¹⁸³ Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 47, 49.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52; Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 218.

¹⁸⁵ Lansdowne to his mother, August 20, 1892, Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 100-101.

trustworthy friend, if none of these things had been done.” Moreover, he believed that the “Amir’s friendship” was “under any circumstances, such an uncertain quantity in the calculation that I would not, for the sake of obtaining it, neglect any measure, which I considered of first-rate importance for securing our frontier.” Lansdowne maintained that the Afghan ruler had never really been Britain’s friend, and that there had “been no time when we could safely depend upon his good-will,” adding tellingly that, “We have been in the habit of addressing him too much in the language with which European diplomats are familiar.”¹⁸⁶ The Secretary of State’s response, noted Newton, “was not particularly reassuring,” as he informed the Viceroy that in his opinion there had been “an undervaluing of the importance of a good understanding with the Amir.”¹⁸⁷

This was not to be the only major disagreement between the Viceroy and the new Secretary of State. In December, Lansdowne was brought to the point of threatening resignation when Kimberley took steps to overrule the Government of India’s plans to bring some uniformity in British India’s numerous provinces with regard to a number of offenses that would be subject to trial by jury. This attempt at reform not surprisingly caused outrage, especially in Bengal, where it was determined that capital murder cases could no longer be trusted to juries.¹⁸⁸

When the Roberts Mission was finally determined to have fallen through in February 1893, the Viceroy resorted to withholding the Amir’s latest shipment of guns

¹⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Kimberley, August 23, 1892, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 101-104.

¹⁸⁷ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 104; Kimberley to Lansdowne, October 13, 1892, quoted in Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁸⁸ Gopal, *British Policy in India*, pp. 207-209.

and ammunition, to be released only upon receipt of Abdur Rahman's acceptance of a British delegation to Kabul.¹⁸⁹ There was also a renewed sense of urgency in getting the Amir to accept a mission, because the Russians had recently called on the Afghans to relinquish their control of provinces north of the Oxus, and London was anxious to get him to comply in order to avoid an even larger conflict. Abdur Rahman was informed in July of the new mission to be led by Durand, which the Amir finally accepted in September. Under the Amir's special protection, and accompanied by only five officers, Durand arrived in Kabul in early October 1893.¹⁹⁰

While Lansdowne believed that Kimberley and the Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Rosebery, were not firm enough with regard to "Russian aggression" over the Amir's Trans-Oxus possessions—an appeasing attitude he thought was "more likely to bring about a collision" than prevent one—he looked forward to a "great achievement" by Durand.¹⁹¹ Ultimately, Lansdowne wrote to Durand that he was willing to pay the Amir more money if it would "bring about a good 'all round' settlement, one which the Amir will accept ungrudgingly, and with the intention of abiding loyally by it," as then it could be "fairly expect[ed] that all the tampering with our tribesman will be put a stop to, and that they will fall into their places, under our 'influence' or his." With this in mind he

¹⁸⁹ Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, p. 53; Perti, *South Asia*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁹⁰ Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 54-55, 57.

¹⁹¹ Lansdowne to Durand, October 14, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 10, no.249. Lansdowne wrote to Durand that "The worst of Rosebery is that he puts his foot down, but does not keep it there" (Lansdowne to Durand, October 20, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 10, no.265).

urged his Foreign Secretary to return home soon having brought back “Peace with Honor.”¹⁹²

In the two separate agreements that were signed on November 12, 1893, the Afghans agreed to relinquish their claims to all lands north of the Oxus, and in the south agreed to a definitive border with British India, neither party to interfere with the tribes lying on the other side of the Durand Line, as the newly demarcated border was to become known. Moreover, the Amir was promised continued shipments of guns and ammunition, while his annual subsidy was increased from 12 to 18 lakhs of rupees.¹⁹³ Durand believed that Abdur Rahman had honestly desired a settlement, and it was his “deliberate opinion that, though madly jealous of his independence, and by nature very suspicious, the Amir is at heart true to the British alliance.”¹⁹⁴ This was despite the fact that the Afghan ruler had told him directly that he was forever Britain’s friend precisely because “The Russians want to attack India—you don’t want to attack Turkistan . . . Therefore, the Russians want to come through my country and you do not.”¹⁹⁵ Lansdowne informed Durand that he thought the settlement “a very satisfactory one,” although he knew some would view it as “too costly.”¹⁹⁶ There was no question, however, that the Government of India’s military expenditures during Lansdowne’s five-

¹⁹² Lansdowne to Durand, November 5, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 10, no.300.

¹⁹³ Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, p. 61; Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 217. This was an increase to the equivalent of over £100,000.

¹⁹⁴ Durand to W. J. Cunningham, January 1894, quoted in Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, p. 62.

¹⁹⁵ Durand to Marion Durand, October 31, 1893, excerpted in Gilbert, “Lord Lansdowne in India,” p. 319.

¹⁹⁶ Lansdowne to Durand, November 9, 1893, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 10, no.309.

year reign had increased steadily year after year.¹⁹⁷ Shortly before leaving India in January 1894, the Viceroy declared to Lieutenant-General Henry Brackenbury, Military Member of the Viceroy's Council, that he "hope[d] the Government of India will, now that we have come to an understanding with the Amir, find something better than the policy of 'alternate vengeance and inaction' which Lord Lytton so eloquently condemned."¹⁹⁸

Marc Jason Gilbert has declared that Lansdowne's reign as Viceroy constituted "a watershed in the history of British rule in India," at least in part because "it was during his administration that India's defense posture on its northwestern border marches was placed on a new firm foundation."¹⁹⁹ In this assessment he largely echoed his predecessors, Jagannath Prasad Misra and Rajesh Perti, both of whom were inclined to see Lansdowne's policies with regard to Afghanistan and the northwest frontier as successful. While Misra credited the success of the Durand Mission to Lansdowne's "patience and earnestness in coming to terms with the Amir," Perti argued that Lansdowne's "dogged determination" achieved the safe entry of a British mission to Kabul—a feat which had rather conspicuously eluded both Lords Auckland and Lytton. Moreover, in Perti's opinion, the Viceroy's actions "stalled the Russian plan of economic penetration in Afghanistan . . . [and] The latter, in short, remained within the

¹⁹⁷ *Summary of Measures Considered or Carried out in the Military Department of the Government of India During the Viceroyalty of the Marquess of Lansdowne December 1888 to January 1894* (Calcutta: Military Dept. Press, 1894), pp. 9-10.

¹⁹⁸ Lansdowne to Brackenbury, January 15, 1894, *Letters to and from Persons in India*, Vol. 10, no.435.

¹⁹⁹ Gilbert, "Lord Lansdowne in India," p. ix.

British sphere of influence.”²⁰⁰ Lansdowne’s personal assessment of his policies was also positive, and quite probably he would have argued that what had been achieved was far more than a stalling action. In his farewell address, in which the frontier was the major focus, he declared that with regard to Afghanistan he trusted that “All these heart-burnings and jealousies” were “now at an end,” and that his successors would “find in His Highness the Amir, who has, during the recent negotiations, evinced the strongest desire to arrive at an honourable settlement, and to remove all causes of ill-will between his Government and ours, a firm ally and a friendly neighbor, well content to abide honourably by the contract to which he has lately become a party.” Moreover, he declared that he was quite optimistic that an agreement with Russia over Afghanistan’s northern frontier was forthcoming.²⁰¹ As evidence of this, in the list of the twelve most important questions the new Viceroy would face, that he gave to his successor, Lord Elgin, “Russian Frontier Negotiation” ranked only third, while “Relations with Afghanistan” had been reduced to next to last.²⁰²

As early as 1895, however, Abdur Rahman was intriguing with the frontier tribes on the British side of the Durand Line, doing his best to keep the region in permanent disorder. To this day, the region, now part of Pakistan, is still an area of turmoil and subject to tribal authority. Notwithstanding continued Anglo-Afghan conflict, Russia

²⁰⁰ Misra, *The Administration of India Under Lord Lansdowne*, p. 62; Perti, *South Asia*, pp. 112-113.

²⁰¹ Lansdowne’s farewell dinner speech at the Royal Exchange in Calcutta, January 23, 1894, *Speeches by the Marquis of Lansdowne*, pp. 383-406. Lansdowne wrote to his mother following the speech that he was afraid that he “rather bored the audience, which doesn’t care as much as I do about the Frontier” (Lansdowne to his mother, January 24, 1894, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 122).

²⁰² Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 123.

was not particularly pleased with what appeared to be an even closer relationship developing between the Amir and British India, and it had no intention of leaving Afghanistan alone.²⁰³ The Russian threat to India was in many ways geographically determined, incapable of being disposed of through negotiation, and of course Russia did finally invade Afghanistan in 1980, thirty-three years after India's independence.

Newton asserted that it was "probable that no Viceroy ever welcomed the end of his rule with greater enthusiasm" than Lansdowne and that he "looked forward with the delight of a schoolboy to his approaching departure."²⁰⁴ The final letters he wrote to his mother from India certainly bear out that assessment. With three months left before his departure, Lansdowne took one last grand tour of British India, this time to Burma. Writing to his mother from Mandalay in late November, and realizing that Lord Elgin, his successor would be in India in a mere two months, he let loose a "Halleluja!" A little more than a week later while steaming "merrily" down the Upper Irrawaddy River toward Bhamo, Lansdowne declared that he hoped "never to be so far from Bowood again."²⁰⁵ At the end of January 1894 he got his wish, and he and his family set sail from Calcutta for home.

²⁰³ Perti, *South Asia*, pp. 108-110.

²⁰⁴ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 123.

²⁰⁵ Lansdowne to his mother, November 23, 1893, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 118-119; Lansdowne to his mother, December 2, 1893, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 120-121.

The War Office

The pure happiness that accompanied Lansdowne's return to Bowood and his beloved Derreen, where he could resume "breeding pigs and planting trees" to his heart's content, also came with a return to financial stability. This had been accomplished through the government subsidized sale under the Irish land acts of a great number of his Irish estates. If the Queen had had her wish, Lansdowne would also have been created Duke upon his return, but this was quashed by Gladstone.²⁰⁶ Sadly, little more than a year after the Marquis's return home, his mother passed away. By his own reckoning he had lost not only a mother, but an old friend to whom he told everything, "sharing joy and sorrow, sunshine and shade."²⁰⁷

In March 1894 Rosebery replaced Gladstone as Prime Minister, but his premiership lasted only until the following summer when the Conservatives were returned to power. Lansdowne along with fellow prominent Liberal Unionists such as Joseph Chamberlain, and the Duke of Devonshire (formerly Lord Hartington), were invited by Salisbury to join what was to be the first Unionist government. Lansdowne had in fact benefited by his long absence from the tumult of domestic politics, and as a leading Liberal Unionist he was offered the War Office, which he accepted. Unfortunately, it was to be the least successful period of his political career. Although he had previously served as Under-Secretary of State for War, this was his first Cabinet post, and he did not handle himself well. He inherited many difficulties at the War

²⁰⁶ Lansdowne to his mother (no date), quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 127; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 129.

²⁰⁷ Lansdowne quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 129.

Office which were only exacerbated by events in South Africa. Nearing the end of his term, and in the midst of the Boer War, Salisbury concluded that Lansdowne was “quite overdone and the work beyond him.”²⁰⁸

It cannot be said that Lansdowne’s tenure at the War Office was entirely without accomplishment. When he assumed the post, the Duke of Cambridge was due to retire as Commander-in-Chief after nearly forty years in the post. The opportunity was taken to reorganize the command structure by reducing the powers of the Duke’s successor, Lord Wolseley, and by creating of a five-member army board to give the War Secretary a greater variety of military advice.²⁰⁹ A year and a half later, Lansdowne battled the infamous fiscal parsimony of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and won a huge increase in funding for the army. He still felt compelled to threaten resignation, however, because despite his victory he had met stiff resistance in the Cabinet, with some members intimating that they would not defend his proposals.²¹⁰ Salisbury refused to accept the offer to resign, regarding it as “absurd” considering the Cabinet had in the end consented to what the War Secretary had wanted. He advised that in future Lansdowne not expect his colleagues to “accompany” their “submission [to his schemes] with a hymn of praise.”²¹¹ The marquis consented to remain, admitting

²⁰⁸ Salisbury quoted in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 750.

²⁰⁹ Keith Surridge, “Lansdowne at the War Office,” in John Gooch, ed., *the Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 23.

²¹⁰ Lansdowne to Salisbury, February 2, 1898, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 149-150.

²¹¹ Salisbury to Lansdowne, February 2, 1898, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

that the premier's logic was superior to his own, "which was," he confessed, "perhaps somewhat distorted by sentiment."²¹²

As War Secretary, Lansdowne was preoccupied foremost with events in South Africa. On December 30, 1895, some 500 men of the British South Africa Company under the command of Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, the Company's administrator in Bechuanaland, invaded the Transvaal Republic in support of a non-existent uprising by the British immigrant miners (Uitlanders) of Johannesburg. The "Jameson Raid" had been launched under the direction of Cecil Rhodes, the Cape Colony premier, and with the complicit approval of the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, both of whom wished to see all of South Africa federated under British rule. The utter failure and scandal of the Raid, however, threatened to postpone that dream forever.²¹³

Unfortunately for Jameson and his men, the Uitlanders failed to rise up, and the filibusterers were quickly forced to surrender. After being handed over to British authorities, Jameson and the five senior officers involved were tried for their actions, convicted and then imprisoned in Britain. Since these senior officers also held commissions in the British army or reserves, they were subject to additional punishment by the War Office. It was decided that they would be deprived of their commissions and immediately dismissed from the service, and while Lansdowne was in complete agreement with the punishment, he consented to let the officers resign instead of being turned out. Real difficulties for the War Secretary began in earnest, however, when

²¹² Lansdowne to Salisbury, February 3, 1898, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 151.

²¹³ Denis Judd, *Radical Joe: A Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), pp. 193-195, 199; Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 619-621.

interested parties began to question the harshness of the penalty and pressed for leniency. Lansdowne's reaction to their efforts shows just how much in the dark he really was regarding the truth behind the whole episode.²¹⁴

The Queen was the first to question Lansdowne as to whether more support should have been given to officers like Major Sir J. C. Willoughby, who had received fifteen months imprisonment and was now claiming to have been following the orders not only of Jameson, but of authorities in London. Lansdowne assured Her Majesty that she "need have no misgivings on the score of loyalty," noting that the Queen "can whenever she is advised to do so, say to any officer, 'I don't think you are quite the sort of man to suit me and I, therefore, propose to get rid of you: go quietly: if you don't, I will turn you out.'" Lansdowne admitted that this was "violent but indispensable," and that if proper "legal grounds" were to be required every time a "bad ticket" was to be got rid of "the army will come to grief." With the officers' new-found defense, he had little sympathy, arguing that "The five officers must make up their minds as to the line which they intend to take," and that even "If they have a defence, (hitherto not put forward) which on patriotic grounds they do not desire to put forward they must take the consequences." That was, he scoffed, if such "attenuating circumstances" as they now claimed, really "have any existence at all."²¹⁵

While the Queen had some innate sense of the disloyalty being shown to her subjects by the government, the extent of the War Secretary's ignorance is made clear by

²¹⁴ David Steele, *Lord Salisbury: A Political Biography* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 348.

²¹⁵ Lansdowne to Sir Arthur John Bigge, August 25, 1896, LP, Papers as Secretary for War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 Vols.) 1. Jameson Raid 1896, f37.

his minute in response to a suggestion by the Adjutant General that a final decision on the five officers should await a War Office enquiry. Lansdowne argued that he saw no reason for “altering a decision already arrived at,” especially in light of testimony not presented at trial. He was “quite ready to suppose that [Willoughby] may have been intentionally or unintentionally misled,” but did “not for a moment suppose that the raid was ‘directed by orders from home.’” He also sincerely doubted the advisability of questioning the officers, Balfour and Chamberlain, and then being put in the position of attempting to decide “between conflicting statements.” Conversely, Lansdowne observed that so long as the War Office should “follow the finding of the Court,” they were “on sound ground.”²¹⁶

In September, Salisbury—who by this time knew of Chamberlain’s complicity in the Raid and had decided to support him—reacted to Lansdowne’s minute, writing that he found it difficult to justify the officers “being turned out of the army for the offence of having believed the word of their superior officers.” He asked Lansdowne to consider, hypothetically of course, that had the government indeed ordered the attack, and Willoughby refused to obey because he did not to believe Jameson, and that “in consequence a critical operation had failed,” surely the officer would have been “very severely and very justly punished.” Intriguingly, the Prime Minister suggested that before any final decision was to be taken on the retirement of the officers in question, Chamberlain—against whom, he decried, “monstrous libels” had been “invented” and

²¹⁶ Lansdowne minute, ?September 5, 1896, LP, Papers as Secretary for War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 Vols.) 1. Jameson Raid 1896, f44.

backed by proof that had “been to a certain extent manufactured”—should be consulted to “hear how the matter strikes him.”²¹⁷

Lansdowne refused to countenance such artfully crafted excuses, however, insisting that “if Willoughby had exercised common prudence, he would have asked himself whether an order to invade a friendly state received from an official of the [British South Africa] Company was an order to be obeyed as unhesitatingly as if it had been given by his military superiors.”²¹⁸ Twelve days later he added that regardless of orders, “it is laid down on the highest military authority, that, even to his military superiors, an officer does not of necessity always owe unhesitating obedience (e.g. if he were ordered to do a shameful thing).” As ordered, Lansdowne consulted Chamberlain, and unsurprisingly, the Colonial Secretary concurred with the War Office’s determination that the officers’ resignations should be immediately accepted.

Lansdowne was quite pleased to have gotten his way both on the merits of the case, but also, as he declared to Salisbury, “because it is within my knowledge that there has been something like a conspiracy to procure for these officers treatment more lenient than they deserve.”²¹⁹ On the same day, a slightly more perceptive War Secretary wrote to Sir Robert Meade, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office—another who was probably aware of the extent of Chamberlain’s involvement in concocting the

²¹⁷ Salisbury to Lansdowne, September 5, 1896, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous); Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 635-637, 639-640.

²¹⁸ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 6, 1896, LP, Papers as Secretary for War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 Vols.) 1. Jameson Raid 1896, f45.

²¹⁹ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 18, 1896, LP, Papers as Secretary for War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 Vols.) 1. Jameson Raid 1896, f39.

Raid—that he hoped the whole matter was now concluded, and that any further developments might “not prove very troublesome, although when I recollect the kind of language which was used before the raid, I can well conceive that there may be some incautiously worded documents in existence.”²²⁰

The Jameson Raid inevitably led to an ever deepening distrust between the Boer Republics and Britain, which had held a nominal suzerainty over the former since the early 1880s.²²¹ Lansdowne’s military advisors now pressed for reinforcements to be sent to Cape Colony and Natal, both for defense and as a show of strength. The military believed war with the Transvaal was imminent, since after the Raid the latter would surely take the first opportunity to break free of British domination. Lansdowne rejected the request for extra troops, however, thinking it might just lead to war instead of prevent one; in this judgment he had the support of the Cabinet. Nevertheless, a year later, as relations between Britain and the president of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger, continued to deteriorate, Lansdowne—always with an eye on fiscal responsibility—relented but sent only 3,000 men to Natal. The following year, he yielded to his military advisors once again and agreed to push for the purchase of additional transport for South Africa. In August 1899, the War Office dispatched an additional 2,000 men despite the fact that both the Cabinet and the military believed that Kruger would eventually back down from his anti-English legislation and amassing of armaments. The only question that needed to be answered was how many British troops it would take to intimidate the

²²⁰ Roberts, *Salisbury*, 638; Lansdowne to Meade, September 18, 1896, LP, Papers as Secretary for War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 Vols.) 1. Jameson Raid 1896, f37.

²²¹ Steele, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 348.

Boers without accidentally provoking a war. According to Keith Surridge, the only difference between Lansdowne and the soldiers was “one of scale.” The War Secretary preferred “small additions [of troops], complemented by strong words.”²²² Lansdowne was not blind to the possibility of actual fighting, however, as at some point in late 1898 or early 1899 in discussions over the Dum Dum bullet, he “negatived” the suggestion that the British Army employ “two types of bullet—one for civilized the other for barbarian foes.” He maintained that “Public opinion won’t stand ‘mushrooming’ a nigger to an extent which would not be tolerated were the victim clad in a white skin—moreover it is sometimes just as necessary to stop a rush of white as a rush of coloured men.” Moreover, he noted, “two sorts of ammunition always lead to confusion and expense.”²²³

By late August 1899, war was almost certain and Salisbury complained to Lansdowne that it was most unfortunate that they would have to “act upon a moral field prepared for us by [Milner] and his jingo supporters.” He also made a point, however, of complaining about deficiencies in War Office planning, and was forced to point out that in his opinion “more departmental drilling is wanted.”²²⁴ In early September negotiations broke down completely, and the Cabinet authorized sending 10,000 more troopers to Natal. They arrived just in time to meet the surprise Boer invasion in October, and by November most were besieged in the town of Ladysmith. The forces of

²²² Surridge, “Lansdowne at the War Office,” in Gooch, ed., *The Boer War*, pp. 24-27, 30.

²²³ Lansdowne to Sanderson, June 22, 1899, LP, Named Correspondence, Sir Thomas, later Lord Sanderson, March 1896-February 1922.

²²⁴ Salisbury to Lansdowne, August 30, 1899, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 156-158.

the Transvaal and Orange Free State, amounting to only 35,000 men at the start of the war out of an Afrikaner population of some 220,000, quickly laid siege to the towns of Kimberley and Mafeking as well.²²⁵

The rise or fall of Lansdowne's reputation as War Secretary was in the end going to rest with the performance of his generals. Unfortunately, General Sir Redvers Henry Buller, who had only reluctantly accepted command of British forces in South Africa, lacked confidence in his own abilities, and less than two months into the war wrote to his chief that "Up to date we are hanging on by our eyelids."²²⁶ The general's telegrams were so disturbing that on December 8, Field Marshal Lord Roberts—at the Irish Command since 1895—informed Lansdowne that it appeared to him that Buller was "overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task imposed upon him," and that the telegrams he had seen caused him "considerable alarm." The sixty-seven year-old Field Marshal offered to take over supreme command in South Africa, declaring that "A serious reverse . . . would endanger the Empire."²²⁷ Lansdowne showed the letter to Salisbury, who thought Roberts far too old for such a task. It had also come a few days prior to the onset of the infamous Black Week, therefore Lansdowne informed the Field Marshal that while he agreed "as to the gravity of the outlook" and that "Poor [General] Gatacre's disaster makes it more serious still," "up to the present" Buller had "not made any mistake" and thus he did "not see that it would be possible to supersede him merely on

²²⁵ Surridge, "Lansdowne at the War Office," in Gooch, ed., *The Boer War*, pp. 28-29; André Wessels, "Afrikaners at War," in Gooch, ed., *The Boer War*, pp. 73, 91.

²²⁶ Buller to Lansdowne, November 25, 1899, quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 161.

²²⁷ Roberts to Lansdowne, December 8, 1899, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 161-162.

account of the gloominess of his views.” Moreover, Lansdowne had hopes for a “brilliant success on the Tugela [River]” in relief of Ladysmith in the next couple of days, and believed “that no one [could] say what turn of events may take.”²²⁸ Two days later, however, Lansdowne confessed to Chamberlain that he was “beginning to despair of our generals,” adding: “I had hopes for Gatacre and now!”²²⁹

Unfortunately what followed was the infamous Black Week of the British army in South Africa, which saw reversals on all fronts in their efforts to relieve the three besieged towns of Kimberley, Mafeking, and Ladysmith. The culmination was the repulse of Buller’s force along the Tugela River at the Battle of Colenso on December 15, with a loss of 898 men killed or wounded. Irreparably destroying his reputation, following the battle Buller not only suggested to the War Office that Ladysmith ought to be let go, but sent a message to the British commander of the town advising surrender on the best obtainable terms.²³⁰ According to Lansdowne’s own account, when news of the defeat reached the War Office on December 15, he immediately met with Balfour and Salisbury and suggested that Roberts be appointed as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, with Lord Kitchener as his Chief of Staff. Roberts was offered the command two days later on December 17. Later that same day Lansdowne also had to inform the Field

²²⁸ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 749; Lansdowne to Roberts, December 10, 1899, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 163.

²²⁹ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, December 12, 1899, LP, Named Correspondence, Joseph (and Austen) Chamberlain (2 Vols.), 2. Joseph Chamberlain, July 1899-May 1902, and Austen Chamberlain, October 1906-December 1926.

²³⁰ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 249-250.

Marshal that his son had been killed at Colenso.²³¹ Along with Roberts, who arrived in South Africa the second week of January, the government now despatched nearly all of Britain's available regular forces.²³²

Lansdowne lost all confidence in Buller after the latter's further defeat at Spion Kop in late January 1900, and after Buller, through several long dispatches home, attempted to lay the blame for all his troubles on the War Secretary, the two were soon openly feuding. It may be reasonably assumed that this row likely played not some small part in the marquis's subsequent public release of almost all of the Spion Kop military dispatches, which put Buller's competence as a general in serious question.²³³ Whether Lansdowne had even gotten Cabinet approval to publish the dispatches was also called into question. Salisbury was of the opinion that the Cabinet had actually decided that nothing would be published, and the incident led him to question whether the "traditional practice of not recording Cabinet decisions is a wise one."²³⁴ While the premier might have feared that Lansdowne would suffer at the hands of an official inquiry into the war, nevertheless, he had no qualms about generals justly being blamed for their own mistakes and military defeats.²³⁵

For the remainder of his time at the War Office Lansdowne backed Roberts in all his actions and requests in order to end the war as soon as possible. Roberts entered

²³¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 7, 1902, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 165-167.

²³² Surridge, "Lansdowne at the War Office," in Gooch, ed., *The Boer War*, p. 32.

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

²³⁴ Salisbury quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 184.

²³⁵ Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 760, 823.

Bloemfontein, the Orange Free State capital, in March 1900, and the state was annexed in May, while the capital of the Transvaal, Pretoria, was captured in June, and the South African Republic itself was annexed four months later. As early as April, however, elements of the coming guerilla war had begun. On September 2, Roberts informed Lansdowne that in the preceding twenty-four hours two trains had been derailed and burnt, “and the war is generally assuming a guerilla aspect.” To deal with this new problem, British forces adopted a scorched-earth policy. Roberts relayed to Lansdowne that in response to guerilla activity “the farms nearest the scene of any attempt to injure the line or wreck a train will be burnt, and that all other farms within a radius of 10 miles will be completely cleared of all their stock, supplies, &c.”²³⁶ At least in its initial stages Lansdowne had few complaints of such a harsh policy, and he telegraphed to Roberts that he “fully recognize[d] [the] necessity of the vigorous measures which the misconduct of the enemy has compelled you to adopt.”²³⁷ A month later Lansdowne reiterated his stance that “Severe measures are inevitable,” adding, however, that they were “in their ultimate result humane as tending to bring the war to a close.”²³⁸

In late August 1900, when it appeared the war was close to completion and major operations had all but ended, Lansdowne offered his resignation once again, this

²³⁶ Roberts to Secretary of State for War, September 2, 1900, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905: Irish Secretary, Board of Trade and War Office, f36.

²³⁷ Secretary of State for War to Roberts, September 4, 1900, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905: Irish Secretary, Board of Trade and War Office, f36.

²³⁸ Secretary of State for War to Roberts, November 7, 1900, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905: Irish Secretary, Board of Trade and War Office, f36.

time at least in part to anticipate the subject being raised by others.²³⁹ Salisbury again demurred—although he waited almost a week to respond—noting that with an election quite possibly in the near future, they “must all face it together.” Moreover, he observed that a resignation at this stage “would give the impression that we were falling to pieces.”²⁴⁰ The Prime Minister most certainly believed that the work of the War Office had overwhelmed Lansdowne, but as he informed the Queen, the “colossal difficulty” in advancing reform in that particular office had claimed many victims in the past, of which the marquis was merely the latest.²⁴¹ Reacting positively to reports that Lansdowne was in fact to be promoted to Foreign Secretary in the re-elected Unionist government, *The Times*—which had not shied away from openly criticizing his performance as War Secretary—concluded simply that it was to the marquis’s great “misfortune that the grave defects of organization and training which we have pointed out during many years should have been publicly demonstrated during his period in office.”²⁴²

²³⁹ Lansdowne to Salisbury, August 26, 1900, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 186; Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 3, 1900, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 187.

²⁴⁰ Salisbury to Lansdowne, September 1, 1900, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

²⁴¹ Salisbury quoted in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 756.

²⁴² *The Times*, November 1, 1900, p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

IN DEFENSE OF EMPIRE: THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Following the Unionist victory in the ‘Khaki’ Election in October 1900, Salisbury reshuffled the Cabinet. Lansdowne recognized that many considered his performance at the War Office less than stellar, and at age fifty-five he “fully expected to be relegated to an uneventful existence at Bowood.” To his surprise, and to the shock and horror of many in his own party, he was promoted to the Foreign Office. Although the steadily increasing work of that office had slowly worn on Salisbury, who served as his own Foreign Secretary, Lansdowne believed that the hard work that awaited might well be “less trying in many ways” than his current post. His time at the Foreign Office would, by his own reckoning in later years, be the most interesting of his life. Moreover, despite being asked to fill the place of a political giant, it was where Lansdowne left his greatest mark upon history.¹

Those in the Cabinet who desired an adjustment in the course of British foreign policy, realized that there would have to be a change at the Foreign Office. Salisbury had lost his wife in 1899 and this had left him even more remote and isolated from all but his immediate group of advisors. At seventy years of age his energy had significantly declined while his eyesight continued to fade, and the concern of family and his doctors could no longer be ignored. A lift had even been installed at the Foreign

¹ Lansdowne to the Queen, October 29, 1900 in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 190; John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power: A History of the Conservative Party Since 1830* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 187; Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 784; Lansdowne to Lord Roberts, November 1, 1900, in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 190-191; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 195.

Office so the Prime Minister would no longer have to climb the stairs, and often he could no longer remember lifelong friends by sight or even while in conversation with them. The Queen and Balfour both sought at the very least to persuade Salisbury to relinquish the Foreign Office. In justification of their actions Balfour pointed out to Aretas Akers-Douglas, Salisbury's friend and the former Conservative Chief Whip, that he had had to take over the Foreign Office twice in recent years due to his uncle's ill health. The unwanted job of confronting the Prime Minister, however, was left to Akers-Douglas, and to his great relief Salisbury gave in to family pressure without too much of a push.²

Salisbury informed the Queen that his only possible successor was Lansdowne. In this choice he had Balfour's support, the latter having assured Akers-Douglas that an arrangement that left Salisbury as Prime Minister and the Foreign Office "details" in the hands of Lansdowne would not alarm public opinion on the Continent. The Queen acquiesced in the marquis's appointment, but only after stipulating that all dispatches and telegrams were to be seen by Salisbury before being sent out. Moreover, the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary was to be Salisbury's eldest son, Lord Cranborne; and with Lansdowne's consent, the Prime Minister retained three large reception rooms in the Foreign Office. According to Lord George Hamilton, Salisbury would now spend more time in his former department than he had done before, which since at least 1896 had apparently been no more than one day a week. The new Foreign Secretary also inherited Salisbury's private secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir B. Eric Barrington.

² Steele, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 354; A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury 1830-1903: Portrait of a Statesman* (London: John Murray, 1953), pp. 328-329; Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. I, pp. 313-314; Balfour to Akers-Douglas, October 18, 1900, in Kenneth Young, *Arthur James Balfour: the Happy Life of the Politician Prime Minister Statesman and Philosopher 1848-1930* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, 1963), p. 191; Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 780-781, 785

Despite how it may have appeared, with his aristocratic bearing and spotless character Lansdowne had always fit comfortably within the ‘Hotel Cecil’, as critics dubbed successive Cabinets that were inevitably filled with many of Salisbury’s relatives.³

It is often noted how well suited Lansdowne was to his new post both in temperament and by blood, this despite the Lansdowne family motto, ‘*virtute non verbis*’ (‘by deeds, not words’). Through his mother, he was reputedly the great grandson of Talleyrand, and one suspects that in part based on this old family indiscretion, he has since been celebrated as the practitioner, par excellence, of his great-grandfather’s famous advice to young diplomats: “*surtout, messieurs, pas de zèle.*” It was Lansdowne’s upbringing, temperament, and experiences in government, however, which made him particularly suited for diplomatic work. Moreover, in his efforts to forge a new course in foreign policy he would have the support of Balfour and Joseph Chamberlain, as well as the newly appointed first lord of the Admiralty, Lord Selborne, and Secretary of State for War, St. John Brodrick.⁴

The commitment of all of the above to a new course sprang from a growing awareness that Britain had at some point in the preceding decade passed into a period of relative decline. They all believed that the increasing strength of other great powers, particularly Russia, the United States, and Germany, necessitated an adjustment to

³ Ibid., pp. 785-786, 788-789; Steele, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 356; Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power*, p. 188. According to Arthur Hardinge, from information that had come to him from Barrington, by 1896 Salisbury only came to London one day a week (Wednesdays) for Cabinet meetings and to see Ambassadors (Agatha Ramm, “Lord Salisbury and the Foreign Office” in Roger Bullen, ed., *The Foreign Office, 1782-1982* [Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984], p. 49).

⁴ Charles Mosley, *Burke’s Peerage & Baronetage* 106th Edition, Vol. II (London: Burke’s Peerage (Genealogical Books) Ltd., 1999), p. 1635; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 2-3; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 20.

Salisbury's preferred policy of the 'free hand.' That policy dictated that Britain should remain aloof from the great power groupings that had formed in Europe; the Franco-Russian alliance—the Dual Alliance—which had been formalized in 1894 was the greatest perceived threat to British interests at the time. Thus at Salisbury's direction, Britain would remain a neutral non-aligned power that awaited events and acted only on its interests. In contrast, the pro-alliance faction in the Cabinet, with Chamberlain very much in the lead, maintained that continuing as a non-aligned power that only attached itself to allies on a temporary basis was no longer a viable or wise course. Moreover, they concluded that an adjustment in foreign policy was the required remedy for the newfound inadequacies in imperial defense because financial strain made military expansion impossible to contemplate. Aaron Friedberg has rightly maintained that "It is, in fact, impossible to make much sense of British strategy and diplomacy after the turn of the century without reference to the presence of a pervasive feeling of fiscal constraint and the widespread fear of financial disaster."⁵

The British Empire reached the zenith of its relative economic and military power in the 1860s. By one estimate, Britain's share of world manufacturing output in 1860 was almost twenty percent, roughly equal to the combined output of the United States, Russia, and France. Britain had also managed to achieve such heights with minimal expenditure on its armed forces. It had secured a fair share of the world's landmass largely through complete naval dominance. In addition, since this

⁵ Ibid., p. 1; Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 90.

accumulation was uncontested by other powers throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, much of the empire could remain informal. With a rough balance of power existing in Europe for much of the nineteenth century, Britain was largely able to avoid messy continental entanglements and costly wars. By 1900 the British had forged the greatest empire the world has ever known, encompassing roughly twelve million square miles and close to a quarter of the world's population.⁶ Gladstone gave faint praise to "this little island" that had "conquered, planted, annexed, and appropriated at all the points of the compass, so that at few points on the surface of the earth is there not some region or some spot of British dominion at hand."⁷

Highly profitable British investment overseas, ironically, however, helped give rise to industrial and military competitors, and because Britain was the world's foremost economic and naval power, the expansion of rival powers in these areas affected it most. By 1900 Britain's share of the world's manufacturing output had not fallen much, remaining at nearly nineteen percent, but the United States' share alone was now over twenty-three percent, while Germany, a unified nation since only 1871, accounted for slightly over thirteen percent. While British industrial output remained steady and in some sectors even increased its production, the nation's overall lead in the production of coal, textiles, steel, and machine tools diminished or evaporated. Moreover, Britain's commitment to 'Free Trade,' which had benefited the country when it was the unchallenged leader in manufacturing and commercial transport, slowly began to work

⁶ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 151-155, 224.

⁷ Gladstone quoted in Stansky, *Gladstone*, p. 128.

against its economic lead. North American and continental European markets increasingly established high tariff walls around their domestic markets, while Britain imported more and more foreign goods. Overall, the British economy although weakened remained healthy, but the loss of such an immense economic advantage meant that the country could no longer hold on to such a wide naval advantage so easily if it were challenged.⁸

With the expanding power of rivals also came greater formality in empire. The drawing of boundaries between colonial possessions of the great powers necessitated greater attention to the defense of those borders. Britain's army and navy estimates in the last decade of the nineteenth century increased at a rate greater than almost all the other great powers. The Boer War only added to the strain and exposed the empire's military deficiencies. To end the conflict—after three long years—had required most of Britain's available ground forces, leaving other areas of the empire, particularly India, extremely vulnerable. The cost of the war, though great, was but one more addition to the nation's growing defense expenditures. As Hicks Beach made clear in an October 1901 memorandum, "it is undoubtedly a very serious matter that even if we were free from any extra charge for South Africa our ordinary expenditure would still require the continuance at a war rate [i.e. 1s 2d] in time of peace of a tax which has always been considered our great reserve in time of war." Austen Chamberlain, one of Hicks-Beach's successors at the Exchequer, would state even more forcefully in 1904 that "however reluctant we may be to face the fact, the time has come when we must frankly

⁸ P. Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, pp. 149, 224, 228.

admit that the financial resources of the United Kingdom are inadequate to do all that we should desire in the matter of imperial defense.”⁹

One solution to the problem would have been to increase taxes on Britain’s still enormous national wealth in order to keep pace with the military building of the other powers. Indeed, while overall expenditures had been rising, so were revenues gathered on the existing tax scale. According to Friedberg, by 1904 Britain was running a budget surplus, even while maintaining increased expenditure for the Army, Navy, and domestic programs. Perception and retrenchment ruled the day, however, and unsurprisingly the Conservatives sought to balance the budget using the traditional method of cutting spending. Balfour, for one, was convinced that there was a real limit on the amount of money the government could spend on defense. Writing to the King in December 1903, the then Prime Minister admitted that “the demands of the Navy are so great & so inevitable . . . The total cost of Imperial Defence threatens to become prohibitive.”¹⁰

If the Conservative leadership was not quite ready to alter traditional fiscal policy, traditional military policy did undergo a concealed adaptation to the strategic reality. The Two-Power Standard, first articulated by Foreign Minister Castlereagh in 1817, stipulated that Britain should maintain a navy at least equal to the navies of the next two greatest powers. In reality, Britain had always sought to maintain a fleet that

⁹ Ibid., p. 227; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 8; Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, p. 209; Hicks-Beach memorandum, October 1901, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 9; Austen Chamberlain Cabinet memorandum, April 4, 1904, quoted in Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁰ Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, pp. 92, 131-133; Balfour to the King, summary of Cabinet meeting, December 14, 1903, LP, Named Correspondence, A. J. Balfour, August 1895-January 1915.

was even larger than that. Formalized by Parliament in 1889, the Standard was seen as a sign of defensive preparedness specifically against Russia and France. Its flaw became apparent, however, with the growth of other great power navies which it could not account for, like those of the United States, Japan, and later Germany. In 1897 Lansdowne argued against increasing Britain's naval strength at Esquimalt, Canada's main Pacific naval base, because it was clear that if the Royal Navy sought to keep pace with the naval building of the United States as well as the other powers, "our Naval Estimates are likely to be a curiosity before we are much older." In November 1901 Selborne for the second time circulated a memorandum on naval expenditures maintaining that the "formula of 1889" was "no longer applicable to present conditions." He proposed that the Standard be revised to consider only first and second-class battleships, and to guarantee only the "reasonable certainty of success in a war with France and Russia." The revision was necessary in part, he argued, because "if the United States were to build such a navy as they can well afford, even the two-Power standard would become beyond our strength." He advised against stating any of this publicly however, "because an avowedly lower standard would be misunderstood and denounced." With the exclusion of expanding powers like the United States, and allies such as Japan, reliance on the Two-Power Standard became more myth than reality.¹¹

Notwithstanding the truth behind the Two-Power Standard, the Royal Navy could not have adequately defended the empire in its entirety regardless of the amount of

¹¹ Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, pp. 145, 147, 206, 299-300; Lansdowne Cabinet memorandum, January 8, 1897, excerpted in Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, p. 163; Selborne memorandum, "The Navy Estimates and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Memorandum on the Growth of Expenditure," November 16, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 1, Private Letters: Admiralty and Colonial Office, f5.

funds available for the building of new capital ships. Those of the “Blue Water” School, Balfour chief among them, were forced to recognize that conditions had changed. When in November 1906, Alberto Santos Dumont flew his airplane 722 feet through the air, Lord Northcliffe declared to his editor at the *Daily Mail* that the real news was not the number of feet that had been flown, but that “England is no longer an island.” Moreover, he warned that it meant “the aerial chariots of a foe descending on British soil if war comes.”¹² For those concerned with imperial defense, however, Britain had long ceased to be an island with its corresponding defensive advantages. The land border of British India stretched for hundreds of miles and every year it moved closer and closer to advancing Russian railways.

The economic importance of India to the Empire was not in doubt. By the 1880s the subcontinent was the destination of nearly twenty percent of British overseas investment, and it consumed roughly twenty percent of British exports. The defense of India, however, was problematic. In a memorandum sent to Lansdowne in December 1901, Balfour acknowledged that “The weakest spot in the Empire is probably the Indian frontier,” adding that “A quarrel with Russia anywhere, or about anything, means the invasion of India.” Moreover, he maintained that “In a war with Russia our military resources would be strained to their utmost to protect it, and, while the progress of events strengthens the position of Russia for aggressive purposes in this part of the world, no corresponding gain is possible on the side of the defence.” It was a strategic

¹² Alfred Gollin, *No Longer an Island: Britain and the Wright Brothers, 1902-1909* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984), pp. 193-194.

dilemma without any practical solution. Two years later Balfour instructed his Foreign Secretary that “even if India is too big a mouthful for [Russia] to swallow, her statesmen believe that if she could secure a position of strategical superiority along our Indian frontier we should be so much afraid of her in Asia as to be her very humble servant in Europe.” He confessed that “the result of this is that Russia’s game in the Far East is a very much easier one than that which we have to play.”¹³

The perceived threat of a Russian invasion had existed in the popular as well as the official mind since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was in many respects more important than the reality. Unfortunately for a century of Britain’s leaders, the threat of invasion and its use as a Russian diplomatic weapon was too sensitive a subject to be ignored. Given these seemingly immutable ground rules for the so-called ‘Great Game’ that Russia and Britain were playing in Central Asia, Balfour did his best to ignore the intractability of the problem and do only what could be done. One can detect the sober shadow of the uncle trailing the nephew in the latter’s reaction to George Curzon’s proposal made at the conclusion of the First World War that Britain should seek a British mandate in the Caucasus, an alliance with Persia, and a revised Afghan-Russian border so that India might be adequately protected. Balfour observed that every five years or so he was told that “there is a new sphere which we have got to guard, which is supposed to protect the gateways of India,” but “Those gateways are getting further and further from India, and I do not know how far west they are going to be brought.” Decades before, when a member of the Lords had declared his fear that a

¹³ Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, p. 219; Balfour to Lansdowne, Memorandum, December 12, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff159-179; Balfour Memorandum, December 21, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff118-124.

Russian invasion of India might well take place in a week's time, Salisbury had advised him to "use a larger map."¹⁴

The other remedy open to the government in answer to the fiscal strain of imperial defense was to abandon Britain's policy of non-alignment and seek help in bearing the burden of the empire's defense. Beyond asking for greater assistance from the colonies in their own defense, it was believed by the Chamberlain-led faction that an alliance with one of the existing great powers might alleviate the empire's newfound vulnerabilities and deter any future combination against Britain. It was toward this goal that a formidable majority formed in the Cabinet in opposition to Salisbury's seemingly outmoded belief that Britain's permanent interests could be defended without assistance. As part of that majority, Lansdowne recognized that Britain's "S[outh] African entanglements make it impossible for us to commit ourselves to a policy which might involve us in a war, unless we can assure ourselves that any obligation which we might incur would be shared by another Power."¹⁵ Such a statement, however, is misleading in that it makes it appear that Lansdowne was willing to act on 'balance of power' considerations alone. Lansdowne never initiated talks for the conclusion of an alliance during his tenure at the Foreign Office; he was always reacting to the approaches of other nations. With one or two exceptions, the same could be said of lesser ententes. He welcomed the chance to achieve lasting peace when the opportunity presented itself, and pursued agreements with the sense—which all too often bordered on conviction—that

¹⁴ Balfour excerpted in Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, pp. 57-58; Salisbury quoted in A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury*, p. 106.

¹⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 18, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

any future wars contemplated in those agreements could in fact never take place. Within the pro-alliance faction he stood virtually alone in his liberal faith that diplomacy itself—the ‘policy of the entente’—might solve outstanding disputes, secure peace, and preserve the Empire. Indeed, the most marked differences between the foreign policies of Salisbury and Lansdowne was the latter’s conviction that British power was no longer capable of preserving the empire alone, and his belief in the efficacy of diplomacy to alleviate that condition by means of enduring settlements of outstanding disputes.¹⁶

Before the new Foreign Secretary even officially took over his new post he made a point of sending a private letter to Sir Frank Lascelles, British Ambassador at Berlin since 1895. Writing from the Prince of Wales’s country house at Sandringham, Lansdowne disclosed that he would take up the duties of his new position “without, I hope, too many preconceived ideas, but I plead guilty to one = the idea that we should use every effort to maintain &, if we can, to strengthen, the good relations which at present exist between the Queen’s Govt. & that of the Emperor.” In the marquis, Lascelles was happy to find a fellow “optimist” with regard to Anglo-German relations. What would end up most striking in Lansdowne’s self-declared quest for a “complete

¹⁶ Paul Kennedy attributes the “assumption” that “diplomacy could solve most problems that arose in world affairs” to Salisbury and Grey specifically, but while one could certainly make an argument for the inclusion of the latter, it is Lansdowne that really deserves the credit for carrying out a policy based on the above rather liberal expectation (P. Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, p. 231). Grenville struck a different and much more persuasive note when he argued that Salisbury “took a realistic view of what could be and what could not be achieved by diplomacy” (Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 16).

understanding” between the two powers, was his sanguine persistence in the effort years after most others had given up.¹⁷

It is all the more remarkable—or quite possibly the inverse—because Lansdowne arrived rather late on the scene in what was an ongoing effort. He would find, however, that the impediments to the conclusion of an Anglo-German understanding would be the same that frustrated those who had made the attempt before him. The three most prominent obstacles were Salisbury’s belief that the government of a parliamentary democracy could not and so should not commit a future government to war, an ever-present and escalating antagonism between the two peoples, and the German demand that Britain join the Triple Alliance. When faced with the first obstacle, those in favor of a new course were willing to break with tradition, and they readily believed that the second could be overcome no matter how frustrating its effect sometimes proved to be. The last barrier proved insurmountable to all, and was best symbolized by Salisbury’s famous retort during negotiations in 1898 to German Ambassador Count Paul von Hatzfeldt; “you ask for too much for your friendship.”¹⁸

Salisbury was not above working with or leaning towards the Triple Alliance when it suited British interests, but sensitive to public sentiment, he could not foresee a day when Britain would join with Germany on a more permanent level. In response to a

¹⁷ Lansdowne to Lascelles, November 11, 1900 (the index for the file identifies this letter as sent on November 12, but the letter itself is clearly dated November 11), PRO FO 800/128; Lascelles to Lansdowne, November 17, 1900, PRO FO 800/128; Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 28, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

¹⁸ Salisbury’s pithy response according to Hatzfeldt, in a letter to the German Foreign Ministry, May 14, 1898, quoted in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 168.

German overture in 1890, for example, Salisbury willingly struck a bargain whereby Germany relinquished its claims to disputed lands in Africa in exchange for the small island of Heligoland in the North Sea. What the Prime Minister refused to do, however, was allow Germany to gain hegemonic power in Europe by securing British adherence to the Triple Alliance. Given such diplomatic and strategic backing the Kaiser would have been able to intimidate the French at will. In order to draw Britain into the Triple Alliance, over the next two decades some in Germany's leadership embarked on the seemingly counter-intuitive policy of surreptitiously frustrating and disrupting British foreign policy whenever possible in the hope that this would force Britain to come calling in search of a powerful ally. In the recklessness of that policy, approved and carried out by Kaiser Wilhelm II and his hand-picked advisors, lay much of the reason for the Great War.¹⁹

For many within Britain's leadership Germany was indeed the 'natural ally.' The pro-alliance faction led by Chamberlain doubled as the pro-German alliance group. Convinced that the key to Britain's future economic strength—upon which its military power would rest—lay in fair access to the China trade, Chamberlain ranged outside his portfolio at the Colonial Office and into foreign affairs. He fervently believed that an alliance with Germany in the Far East would serve British needs both by protecting the Open Door in China, and providing a barrier to further Russian encroachment. In late March 1898, with Salisbury ill and convalescing in France and the Foreign Office left in

¹⁹ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 16-17, 19. Heligoland had been in British hands since the Napoleonic Wars, and was of strategic importance to Germany because it sat opposite the outlets of the Elbe and Weser rivers, as well as the entrance to the soon to be built Kiel Canal; Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), pp. 254, 262.

the hands of Balfour, Chamberlain met informally with Hatzfeldt and openly told him that Britain had no choice but to abandon its isolation. He then abruptly put forward the idea of an alliance. With the primary focus of such an alliance being the defense of northern China against Russia, the Germans demurred. They understandably did not believe it worth provoking Russia with whom they shared a long European border. Though Balfour also favored an Anglo-German agreement of some kind and had not stopped his colleague from pursuing it, he informed Salisbury that Chamberlain had been “very impulsive” and “went far in the expression of his own personal leaning towards a German alliance.” On first hearing of the event, Salisbury had declared that “The one object of the German Emperor since he has been on the throne has been to get us into a war with France,” and added that he never could make up his mind however if that was indeed Chamberlain’s object too. The Prime Minister was certain that Germany would blackmail Britain heavily for its friendship. As it turned out he need not have worried because Hatzfeldt thought Chamberlain untrustworthy, and even the Kaiser understood that an Anglo-German Alliance in the Far East was far from desirable for Germany.²⁰

After he returned from France, Salisbury gave a speech on May 4 before the Conservative Primrose League in which he made clear that in his view Britain was not so desperately in need of friends that it should play the role of supplicant seeking aid. He declared to those assembled at Albert Hall that “upon the sea we fear no opponent”

²⁰ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 128, 153-154; Balfour to Salisbury, April 14, 1898, printed in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. 1, pp. 258-261; Salisbury to Balfour, April 9, 1898, printed in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. I, pp. 257-258; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 159, 161.

and that it was known to all in attendance that in defense of the empire “we shall maintain against all comers that which we possess, and we know, in spite of the jargon about isolation, that we are amply competent to do so.” He did not dispute that there were further trials ahead, but did not put his faith either in alliances or diplomacy to secure the peace of the world.²¹

If the premier’s speech was in part meant to put an end to Chamberlain’s efforts to establish a new course in foreign policy, then it failed. A little more than a week later at the annual meeting of the grand committee of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association, and without consulting Salisbury or the Cabinet, Chamberlain openly challenged Britain’s policy of isolation. He declared that “for some time past” there has been “a combined assault by the nations of the world upon the commercial supremacy of this country, and if that assault were successful our existence would be menaced in a way in which it never has been threatened since the time” of Napoleon. He argued that while Britain’s isolation during the preceding fifty years might have proved salutary, a “new situation” had now arisen where all the great powers of Europe had made alliances. Moreover, as long as Britain remained outside of those alliances and was “envied by all and suspected by all, and as long as we have interests which at one time or another conflict with the interests of all,” Chamberlain warned that the nation was “liable to be confronted at any moment with a combination of Great Powers so powerful that not even the most extreme, the most hotheaded politician would be able to contemplate it without a certain sense of uneasiness.” The remedy to such a threat, he asserted, was to be found

²¹ Salisbury’s speech before the Primrose League on May 4, 1898, *The Times*, May 5, 1898, p. 7. Salisbury was Grand Master of the League.

in closer ties within the empire, maintaining “bonds of permanent amity with our kinsmen across the Atlantic—he went so far as to suggest a future “Anglo-Saxon alliance”—and an end to isolation. Above all else, Chamberlain believed that a change was necessary in order that Britain be allowed a say in the fate of China. He declared that British “interests in China are so great, our proportion of the trade is so enormous, and the potentialities of that trade are so gigantic that I feel that no more vital question has ever been presented for the decision of a Government and the decision of a nation.” In order to protect British interests and enforce the Open Door he argued that “we must not reject the idea of an alliance with those Powers whose interests most nearly approximate to our own.” It said something of the difficulty of his task that Chamberlain felt free to mention America by name as he was assured of loud cheers, but neglected specifically to mention Germany. Salisbury was forced to dodge questions concerning Chamberlain’s defiance, and the Kaiser, from whom Chamberlain had hoped for a positive response, thought the speech unfortunate.²²

Nevertheless, Chamberlain persisted in his efforts and in June held a meeting at his house in Prince’s Gardens of those Cabinet ministers who favored a German alliance. Among those who participated were Selborne and Lascelles, who was on leave from Berlin, but there is no evidence that Balfour or Lansdowne were present or were even asked to attend. When Salisbury fell ill in August and once again left for the south of France, Lascelles approached the Kaiser with the offer of an Anglo-German alliance

²² Chamberlain’s speech at Birmingham on May 13, 1898, *The Times*, May 14, 1898, p. 12; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 170-172.

which he disclosed had been proposed by Chamberlain and had the support of many in the Cabinet. The alliance proposal he put forward was defensive in nature and would have only come into effect if either Britain or Germany were attacked by two powers. The Emperor appeared interested, but the possibility of future negotiations on the proposal were quickly put paid by Bernhard von Bülow, Germany's influential Foreign Minister and soon to be Chancellor.²³

The two countries did eventually sign a convention in August of 1898, but it concerned the future disposition of Portugal's African colonies should that country default on a joint Anglo-German loan. After the Germans had insisted on interposing on Anglo-Portuguese loan negotiations, the pro-alliance faction within the Cabinet forced Salisbury to negotiate. When he fell ill again, however, it was left to Balfour to negotiate the final treaty while the Prime Minister was out of the country. It was presented to Salisbury upon his return as "*a fait accompli*." Among the more interesting elements, the Treaty included the fact that by the time it had been signed the Portuguese had rescinded their request for a loan. Nevertheless, the Germans insisted on continuing negotiations. The treaty's secret clause therefore laid out the lines of partition between Germany and Britain of Portugal's African colonies should the latter default on any future joint loan. Balfour signed the treaty in order to improve Anglo-German relations, but at the same time had warned the Germans that Britain had no intention of forcing a loan on the Portuguese. This was reinforced the following year when Britain signed a new agreement with the Portuguese that reaffirmed its seventeenth-century pledge to

²³ Ibid., pp. 173-176.

defend Portugal proper and her colonies against all enemies.²⁴ The agreement was kept secret at Portugal's request, but the resentment, even betrayal, that the Germans subsequently felt when they finally realized they would not soon be gaining new African colonies, though entirely unintended, was certainly predictable.

When the German Emperor visited Windsor in November 1899 Chamberlain again renewed his quest for an Anglo-German alliance. During a personal meeting with the Emperor—it was the first time they had ever met—the Colonial Secretary proposed a three-power understanding between Britain, Germany, and the United States. This time, however, it was the Emperor who reminded Chamberlain of Britain's diplomatic tradition against any permanent alliances. He added as well that he did not wish to antagonize Russia. Chamberlain refused to let it drop, however, and one day after the Emperor's departure gave a speech at Leicester in which he again challenged the advisability of British isolation in Europe. He declared that he looked forward to the conclusion of the self-evident "natural alliance" between Britain and Germany, and echoing what he had already proposed to the Kaiser, he called for "a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race." These three races, he reminded his audience, shared a system of justice, a literature, as well as a language of common origin, and urged them to disregard the antagonism that existed in the foreign press. What he foresaw, he declared, would be more than just an alliance of paper, it would be an understanding based upon the "sentiment" that bound these respective peoples and existed "in the minds of the statesmen of the respective

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 194-197; "Anglo-Portuguese Secret Declaration, October 14, 1899", BD I no.118.

countries.” The speech was not well received in the United States or in Germany. In fact, in order to remain within the mainstream of German public opinion Bülow publicly attacked the speech, leaving Chamberlain shocked and resentful.²⁵

Although his enthusiasm was dampened for a while, when in September 1900 the Emperor let it be known that Germany would back a British initiative to support formally the Open Door in China if it chose to make such a policy move, Chamberlain pushed Salisbury to action yet again. In his memorandum of September 10 the Colonial Secretary pressed the need to “encourage good relations between ourselves and Germany, as well as between ourselves and Japan and the United States.” With that in mind he argued that the clear policy choice was to “endeavor to make use of the present opportunity to emphasize the breach between Russia and Germany and Russia and Japan.” On this occasion Chamberlain had also secured the support of Balfour and Lansdowne, and they all now hoped to drive a wedge between Germany and Russia over the latter’s ambitions in Manchuria. The whole episode, filled as it was with misunderstanding and feelings of betrayal, deserves more scrutiny because of both the bitterness it instilled in Chamberlain and the fact that it was not Salisbury but Lansdowne—as the newly installed Foreign Secretary—who would be forced to unearth and explain the actions of the government to Parliament.²⁶

The Kaiser’s overture had come in late August by way of Lascelles who had accompanied the Prince of Wales on a visit to Germany. While the King was with the

²⁵ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 280, 282; Chamberlain’s speech at Leicester on November 30, 1899, *The Times*, December 1, 1899, p. 7.

²⁶ Tames, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, pp. 115, 117; Chamberlain memorandum, September 10, 1900, printed in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 15; Lascelles to Salisbury, August 24, 1900, BD II no.8.

Emperor at Wilhelmshöhe their conversation turned to the idea of cooperation in China. According to Lascelles's initial report of the meeting, the Kaiser expressed that Germany, like Britain, feared Russia's intentions in North China and Manchuria now that—as a result of the Boxer Rebellion—there were Russian troops occupying the region. The Emperor suggested that a formal declaration of the Open Door in the Yangtze valley, Britain's sphere of economic interest, would do much to dispel the suspicions of other powers that England meant to close the area to outside trade. These suspicions had supposedly been sparked by recent British troop landings in Shanghai. Were a formal declaration to be made, the Kaiser assured Lascelles, the British “would find the German Government on their side.” German motivations in this were actually two-fold as they also wished in proposing an Anglo-German Far Eastern agreement to prevent Britain from concluding an agreement with the Dual Alliance. What followed, however, was a comedy of misunderstandings.²⁷

The Emperor had apparently failed to offer his suggestion as a definite proposal to be forwarded by Lascelles to Salisbury. In fact, the Ambassador had explicitly expressed in his report that he had little faith in the effectiveness of such declarations. Inexplicably, a week later Lascelles informed the Prime Minister that the Emperor was anxiously awaiting a response to his overtures regarding Chinese affairs, to which Salisbury replied that he had received no such proposals. Two weeks later Lascelles

²⁷ Ibid.; Norman Rich, *Friedrich von Holstein: Politics and Diplomacy in the Era of Bismarck and Wilhelm II, Vol. II* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 623.

himself denied that “any definitive proposals which could be considered overtures” had in fact been made.²⁸

When the German ‘non-proposal’ was finally clarified, Francis Bertie, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in charge of the Far Eastern Department, correctly pointed out that the Emperor’s proposal only amounted to a concession by Britain of the Open Door in the British Yangtze Valley, but not in German Shantung. The Prime Minister replied that the Emperor’s “observations look very much like an attempt to make a quarrel between France and us.” Salisbury was always skeptical of such vague proposals, and what is more, a month after the Chamberlain memorandum he declared to Lord Curzon that his faith in Germany was “infinitesimal.” Pointing out that Germany lived in “mortal terror on account of that long undefended frontier of hers on the Russian side,” he maintained that they “will therefore never stand by us against Russia.” As always, he argued, they are “rather inclined to curry favour with Russia by throwing us over.” Forced by a majority in the Cabinet, however, Salisbury agreed to hold talks with Germany on a possible joint declaration. Grenville judged the “naïvety” of the pro-alliance ministers “extraordinary.”²⁹

Salisbury’s cynicism proved correct. In his initial talks with Hatzfeldt, one of the few treaties that the Prime Minister personally negotiated, Salisbury quickly found, as

²⁸ Lascelles to Salisbury, August 30, 1900, BD II no.9; Salisbury to Lascelles, August 31, 1900, BD II no.11; Lascelles to Salisbury, September 14, 1900, BD II no.13. Lascelles denied to both the Germans and Salisbury that the Emperor had made any definite overtures (see Lascelles to Salisbury, September 14, 1900, BD II no.13 and Lascelles to Salisbury, October 5, 1900, BD II no.16).

²⁹ Bertie memorandum, September 13, 1900, BD II no.12; Salisbury to Bertie, August 24, 1900 quoted in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 313-314; Salisbury to Curzon, October 17, 1900, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 17; Ian H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894-1907* (London: The Athlone Press, 1966), p. 104; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 314.

suspected, that while the German proposal stipulated an Open Door in the Yangtze it conspicuously left out the rest of China. The British counter proposal thus referred to all of China, and renounced any territorial ambitions in that country by either country. Hatzfeldt informed Salisbury that the German government could not consent to anything that would be seen as pressuring Russia, especially concerning Port Arthur and the Amur River, which of course was exactly what the British had been hoping for. Salisbury was forced, therefore, to settle for an addition to the first clause of the agreement that committed both powers to uphold free and open trade for all nationalities on the rivers and ports of China and to “uphold the same for all Chinese territory as far as they can exercise influence.” From this it would appear that all concerned should have known that the agreement did not cover Manchuria. Moreover, shortly before the Anglo-German Agreement was signed in October 1900, Salisbury openly declared to Hatzfeldt that he was “not very much in love with this agreement” because it was “liable to so much misunderstanding.” The facts as presented correspond well with the current historical consensus as reflected in Ian Nish’s contention that the “one-sided arrangement” left the pro-alliance group “disheartened” and Salisbury unsurprised, but both contentions in this assessment require some further consideration.³⁰

When the Yangtze Agreement—as it was also called—was publicized and other powers were invited to adhere to it, the Russians immediately seized on the “exercise of influence” clause as evidence that the Open Door feature applied exclusively to the

³⁰ Ramm, “Lord Salisbury and the Foreign Office,” in Bullen, ed., *The Foreign Office*, p. 52; Salisbury to Lascelles, September 25, 1900, BD II no.14; Salisbury to Lascelles, October 15, 1900, BD II no.17 and “English Draft Agreement, as finally Settled,” enclosed in no.17; Salisbury to Hatzfeldt, October 6, 1900, BD II no.38, enclosure no.6; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 106.

spheres of influence of both powers. They therefore, under this reading of the text, publicly agreed to it in principle. While perhaps unsurprised but certainly not pleased, Salisbury immediately sent a telegram to the British Minister in St. Petersburg, Charles Hardinge, to notify him that the Russian translation of the document had “modified the sense of it.” The agreement, he maintained, actually extended to the “whole of the Chinese Empire so far as the two Powers can exercise influence.”³¹

It was following this apparent diplomatic success that the Emperor made his famous and unexpected trip to England in early 1901 to attend the bedside of his ailing ‘Grandmamma.’ After nearly sixty-four years on the throne, Queen Victoria died in the early evening of January 22. The Emperor’s presence allowed the primary shapers of British foreign policy another opportunity to meet personally with His Imperial Majesty. Salisbury had been unable to meet with the Kaiser during his previous visit in the fall of 1899, and had always held a rather negative opinion of the Emperor. The feeling was mutual. The Emperor blamed Salisbury for the failure of previous attempts to conclude an Anglo-German alliance, while the Prime Minister believed the Emperor to be not quite “all there.” There was more than a little truth in the Kaiser’s complaints, as Salisbury’s attitude toward the kind of open commitment inherent in any defensive alliance had never and would never change. In December of the previous year the premier had noted for Lansdowne’s benefit that when in the past he had received complaints from Hatzfeldt over England’s reluctance to commit, his answer “always was that England never gives assurances of unconditional support . . . [and] consent in any

³¹ Salisbury to Hardinge, October 29, 1900, BD II no.21.

future war will depend largely on the casus belli.” Moreover, he added that “As that cannot be foreseen—so neither can our attitude be foreseen.” Regardless, Salisbury’s faith in Germany was, as noted earlier, “infinitesimal,” and this made his support of any broader alliance unlikely in any circumstance. His faith in the German Emperor counted for even less.³²

Salisbury was so uneasy about the Kaiser’s influence on German foreign policy that he maintained that the Franco-Russian alliance actually furthered peace in Europe as it was a “decided check” on the Emperor, and the premier was quite happy to see the latter “hobbled.” Still, during the dispute over the partition of the Samoan Islands in 1899 between the United States, Britain, and Germany, Salisbury was “puzzled” to discover by way of the British Military Attaché in Berlin that the Emperor considered him “his enemy.” He complained to Lascelles that it was “a great nuisance that one of the main factors in the European calculation should be so ultra-human . . . He is as jealous as a woman.” Chamberlain’s meeting with the Emperor, as recollected by his son Austen years later, did not augur well for Anglo-German relations either. When the Kaiser asked for the Colonial Secretary’s opinion of Chancellor Bülow, after making sure the Emperor wanted his true opinion, Chamberlain reportedly replied, “I think he is not a good man to go tiger-shooting with!”³³

³² Salisbury to Lord George Hamilton, February 20, 1891, printed in Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury, Vol. IV 1887-1892* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), p. 367; Salisbury to Barrington, December 13, 1900, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 8, Correspondence with Salisbury, Cranbourne, Selbourne. Also Correspondence Relating to Ordinance Factories.

³³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 484; Salisbury to Goschen, September 6, 1897 quoted in Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 233; Salisbury to

All that exists in the British records to brief us on Lansdowne's meeting with the Emperor are the Foreign Secretary's notes of their conversation, intended only to recount the views of His Imperial Majesty. Grenville adjudged it "an Imperial lecture on world history," and that appears to be well-judged.³⁴

Antagonism between Europe Germanic v. Asiatic + America.

Don't talk of the Continent of Europe. Russia is really Asiatic.

In 1900 there was a Russo+French proposal for intervention. He telegraphed to Bulow to refuse.

(He was) On his way to swear recruits at Wilhelmshaven.

The Russian Emperor fit to live in a country house and rear turnips.
Only way to deal with him is to be the last to leave the room.

French bitterly disappointed with Russia and with Russian Emperor. No real love between the two countries.

Russian Grand Duke like Paris and a girl on each knee.

Russia bankrupt. Will get the money she wants in Wall Street.

U.S. hates us and will go in with Russia.

Russia wants to direct U.S. enterprise towards the Yangtse.³⁵

Lascelles, May 10, 1899, excerpted in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 277; Austen Chamberlain to Lansdowne, September 16, 1920, LP, Named Correspondence, Joseph (and Austen) Chamberlain, Vol. 2.

³⁴ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 335.

³⁵ Note of Conversation with the German Emperor, Sandringham 1901 (dated in file as June 1920), PRO FO 800/130. With regard to the apparently open question of whether the Foreign Secretary received this "Imperial lecture" at Sandringham or Osborne, in a letter to Lascelles dated August 28, 1901, Lansdowne wrote that "The Emperor is very suspicious of American designs but he has I think an exaggerated idea of these & he unfolded this thesis to me with much eloquence at Osborne" (Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 28, 1901, PRO FO 800/128).

The Emperor's summary of world affairs bordered on the juvenile, veering as it did between vulgar gossip and ridiculously transparent attempts to manipulate through fear-mongering. If Lansdowne came away from the meeting with any sense of what Salisbury had concluded about the Kaiser over a decade before, however, it was barely beyond its inception. The Emperor believed "he had made a visible impression" on the Foreign Secretary, while Lansdowne was quite pleased with the "good impression" left by the Emperor's visit. He felt that His Imperial Majesty's spontaneous and self-effacing actions had "appealed to the public mind, which in spite of all our professions to the contrary is full of sentiment & easily touched."³⁶ At that moment, he was not entirely wrong. It has been argued that as a rule Lansdowne ignored—or at least failed to take adequate consideration of—public sentiment, but this can be slightly misleading as the Foreign Secretary actually often remarked on the state of public opinion in his writings. He never willingly deferred to public opinion, however, or let it drive his foreign policy, and in some respects that distinguished him from Salisbury. When the unreasoned opinions of the British public threatened his policies, however, he could react with marked exasperation and an incredulousness that can surprise the scholar.

Salisbury was right, of course, in his mistrust of German motivations. Although men like Hatzfeldt were unquestionably genuine in their desire for an Anglo-German alliance, German Foreign policy since 1897 was under the direction of Bülow, first as Foreign Minister (1897-1900) and then Chancellor (1900-1909). He had been picked by his old friend the Emperor to carry out a policy of naval expansion and increased

³⁶ The Kaiser quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 199; Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 23, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

German influence on the world stage. Like most of Europe's political elite the Kaiser was a great admirer of the theories of Alfred Thayer Mahan, and unlike most was in a position put them into effect. Bülow's foreign policy of imperialist *Weltpolitik* was intimately connected to German internal politics and the need as he put it to "reconcile, pacify, rally" and "unite" the German public. This would be accomplished by exploiting the populist nature of the Emperor's personal rule, and by touting even the smallest material, colonial, or diplomatic gain as a glorious victory for the Reich. The policy also required, however, that Germany maintain its own 'free hand' in foreign policy and avoid moving too close to Britain lest Germany's destiny be circumscribed by a precipitously concluded Anglo-German alliance. German greatness would of course eventually necessitate British diminution, therefore an alliance would be problematic. Nevertheless, Bülow did not want to antagonize Britain needlessly either, at least until naval expansion was complete.³⁷ Under the Chancellor's direction Germany would play the role of neutral arbiter while awaiting the inevitable Anglo-Russian war, and such a war was not unimaginable.

The First Manchurian Crisis began in January 1901 as it appeared that Russia was pressing China to sign a treaty that would have made Manchuria a virtual Russian protectorate. With Japan forcing the matter to the forefront of international attention, the Anglo-German Agreement would be put to the test after only three months. The Japanese had openly adhered to the Yangtze Agreement after it was signed, but did so

³⁷ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics" *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 25, No. 2/3 (May-June, 1990): 300-301; Bülow quoted in Paul Kennedy, "German World Policy and the Alliance Negotiations with England, 1897-1900" *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 45, No. 4 (December, 1973): 609; Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," p. 302; P. Kennedy, "German World Policy," pp. 609, 611.

under the same assumptions and with the same intentions that had motivated the British. In addition to forestalling Russian ambitions in Manchuria, they also hoped it might with fortune succeed in detaching the Germans from Russia in the Far East. Understandably they now looked to Britain and Germany for support over the rumored Sino-Russian agreement. In February the Japanese proposed that Britain guarantee China support if Russia attempted to appropriate bits of Manchuria, but Lansdowne thought a guarantee to China too risky. Moreover, he believed the Yangtze Agreement was for the moment sufficient. Improbably, Salisbury put forward the idea of a joint arrangement with the Japanese to defend the Chinese coastline against intrusion. The Prime Minister was never above making temporary arrangements to protect or further British interests, but Nish goes too far in arguing that Salisbury's suggestion was "in embryo . . . the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," but that it was just not pursued at the time.³⁸ Any agreement would have certainly embodied something much less than the eventual Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and it also seems a significant point that the Prime Minister chose not to pursue it.

In early March, in response to further Japanese enquiries as to where Germany and Britain really stood if the dispute over Manchuria should boil over, Lansdowne had Bertie draw up a draft declaration to be jointly made by Britain and Germany. The declaration would have committed both nations to neutrality in the event of hostilities between Russia and Japan, but have required joint naval intervention if Russia should be joined by a second power. While having more in common with the eventual Anglo-

³⁸ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 108-109, 111-113.

Japanese agreement than Salisbury's earlier proposal, Lansdowne had put forward the idea of a joint declaration as an attempt to draw Germany out. It was also to be kept secret. Circulated and then considered at a March 13 Cabinet, the proposal gained the support of several members, but as the Prime Minister explained to the King, no action could be taken on "such an alliance" (as Salisbury termed it) with Germany's likely response unknown.³⁹

Notwithstanding Britain's failure to support Japan, Russia dropped its negotiations with China in April having achieved nothing. This was due in large part to Japanese resistance and their efforts to rally the other great powers to action. The other major consequence of the crisis was that it had forced Germany to clarify to the world, and Russia in particular, their interpretation of the Yangtze Agreement. On March 15 Bülow declared in the Reichstag that the agreement, "was in no sense concerned with Manchuria," and that "the fate of that province was a matter of absolute indifference to Germany." This came as a surprise to Lansdowne who the very next day in a letter to Sir Claude MacDonald, British Minister at Tokyo, brought up the previous misunderstanding the government had had with the Russians over the exact meaning of "exercise influence." Lansdowne also wrote to Lascelles asking if Bülow's speech had been correctly reported in the press, and reiterated that Britain did in fact believe the agreement pertained to Manchuria. The Foreign Secretary was afraid of a public disagreement over the meaning of the agreement and the damage it potentially could do.

³⁹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 18, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 340-342; J. A. S. Grenville, "Lansdowne's abortive project of 12 March 1901 for a secret agreement with Germany" *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* XXVII (November 1954): 210-212.

Lascelles confirmed Lansdowne's fears as to Bülow's speech, and added that he was "convinced that [the] German Government always understood that the words 'as far as they can exercise influence' were inserted for the purpose of excluding Manchuria from the agreement." Moreover, Lascelles referred back to the original negotiations between Salisbury and Hatzfeldt, noting the latter's objection to Port Arthur and the Amur River being included in the agreement.⁴⁰

On the March 28 Lansdowne was forced to admit in the Lords that the Germans had in fact let it be known during negotiations that Manchuria was not a place where they "exercised influence," needlessly pointing out to his fellow peers that the latter term was a "somewhat elastic expression." He asked their lordships, however, whether or not the dispute was "really a very material one," because Germany along with the other powers had already declared as matter of policy that they desired to maintain Chinese territorial integrity. In conclusion, he argued that "it surely does not very much matter to us whether Germany has arrived at the conclusion by a consideration of the Anglo-German Agreement or whether she has been led to it by considerations of general policy." This was a rather cleverly turned argument unless one considers that in actuality and with sincerity the Foreign Secretary was maintaining that the Yangtze Agreement was still to be considered meaningful. He explained that while the government would always "strive to uphold the interests of the country" and "certainly be tenacious in matters of principle," "in matters of detail we recognise that we must not

⁴⁰ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 118; Extract from Speech by Count von Bülow in the Reichstag, March 15, 1901, BD II no.32; Lansdowne to MacDonald, March 16, 1901, BD II no.33; Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 16, 1901, BD II no.34; Lascelles to Lansdowne, March 17, 1901, BD II no.35.

expect always to have our own way.” Balfour thought the statement “admirable” and that it left “nothing to be desired,” except perhaps some added emphasis that Britain would not acquiesce to Russia over the Open Door as it might appear she had done over other issues in Manchuria. Unsurprisingly, it also received a favorable response in Berlin. A couple of days later Lansdowne remarked to Lascelles that he had done his “best to minimize the importance of our differences, and to show that we were really shoulder to shoulder,” but the German Government had not made it easy by its “extreme frankness.” He also admitted that “Lord Salisbury’s illness made it impossible for me to obtain final instructions from him, but of course the evidence to show that Germany had never regarded [Clause 1] of the A. G. Agreement as applicable to Manchuria was overwhelming.”⁴¹

The Manchurian Crisis has raised many questions concerning Lansdowne’s motivations that in turn have suggested to a few that some hidden calculation was at work. Grenville has argued that Lansdowne—along with the rest of the government—did not really care much about the fate of Manchuria, but he then found himself “at a loss to explain such an extraordinary alteration of policy” when in March the Foreign Secretary informed the Cabinet that there existed a grave crisis. He concluded that Lansdowne’s policy must have turned on some greater issue or long-term scheme, such as fear of a possible Russo-Japanese clash or more probably that he saw in the crisis a

⁴¹ Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. XCII, March 28, 1901, columns 24, 25, and 29; Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 7, 1901, BD II no.37; Balfour to Lansdowne, March 30, 1901, LP, Named Correspondence, A. J. Balfour, August 1895-January 1915; Lascelles to Lansdowne, March 29, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 1, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Grenville argued that the evidence suggested that “Lansdowne was ready to take a charitable view of Bülow’s policy” (Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 342).

chance to bring Britain and Germany together. More recently, and contributing to the sense of calculation, Avner Cohen has argued that Lansdowne had no intention of ramming Russia's "head against the Manchurian wall" because he had recognized that the Yangtze Agreement did not cover Manchuria. Cohen asserted that unlike the rest of the Cabinet, Chamberlain in particular, Lansdowne was not surprised or upset at Germany's statement on Manchuria because his chief concern was to avoid upsetting closer relations in the future. As L. K. Young—upon whom Cohen largely relied—stated, Lansdowne's "chief concern was not that Russian appropriations in Manchuria should be resisted, but that, through the vigorous insistence of Japan, the Anglo-German Agreement should not be called to the fore and put to a strain which the alignment could not stand."⁴²

It is clear from the dispatches, however, that Lansdowne was surprised at the German interpretation of the treaty. Moreover, the records of Salisbury's negotiations were unearthed to reaffirm the government's position.⁴³ While Lansdowne's letter to Salisbury on January 15, 1901, supports Grenville, Young, and Cohen, in where he

⁴² Ibid., pp. 332, 337; Avner Cohen, "Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Lansdowne and British Foreign Policy 1901-1903: From Collaboration to Confrontation" pp. 124-125; Leonard Kenneth Young, *British Policy in China, 1895-1902* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 293.

⁴³ Interestingly, the proof needed to show that the existing historiographical consensus is incorrect can also be found in Young. He noted that in later years Lansdowne was asked by A. L. Kennedy, "why he had finally given up trying to reach agreement with Germany," and Lansdowne answered that "It was something to do with Manchuria . . . I found I couldn't trust them." Thus it would appear that the Foreign Secretary, like Chamberlain, had lost faith in Anglo-German cooperation over the Manchurian Crisis. Unfortunately, such recollections well after the events in question should always be treated as suspect. Kennedy interviewed Lansdowne in his "last years," well after the publication of the infamous Peace Letter, and there is no avoiding the fact that his statement conflicts with his subsequent actions (Young, *British Policy in China*, p. 294; Kennedy's conversation with Lansdowne, A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury*, p. 393 note).

noted that his “general feeling” was “that for the present we must show as few signs as possible of being ‘fussy’ about small matters in China,” there is a problem in that the narrative omits notice of the way in which the perceived danger of the rumored Sino-Russian convention evolved over the early weeks and months of 1901. No one had an official text of the treaty—all that existed was informed rumor in the newspapers—and thus Salisbury replied that “We know little on which we can rely as to the terms of the convention.” As various unofficial versions were published in the press over the next month or so Lansdowne’s concerns grew. In a Cabinet memorandum of March 1, Lansdowne warned that despite assurances from St. Petersburg, it appeared that Russia now intended to create a protectorate over the whole of Manchuria which went far beyond the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1898, which had merely parceled out railway concessions. If force was out of the question, the Foreign Secretary believed a protest was in order. He expressed to Russia’s representatives that what he had seen and heard appeared to involve “much more” than the “provisional and temporary arrangement for the purpose of preventing the recurrence of the recent disturbances and of protecting the railway.” He said as much in the House of Lords on March 28.⁴⁴

In light of this background, Lansdowne’s reaction to Bülow’s speech of March 15 makes more sense. Indeed, at the risk of furthering an argument which might appear contrary to the central thesis of this essay, it seems more precise to argue that Lansdowne did what he could to avoid a public rupture with Germany, but that that aim

⁴⁴ Lansdowne to Salisbury, January 15, 1901, quoted in Young, *British Policy in China*, p. 282; Salisbury to Lansdowne, January 17, 1901, quoted in Grenville, “Lansdowne’s Abortive project,” p. 205; Lansdowne memorandum, March 1, 1901, excerpted in Grenville, “Lansdowne’s Abortive project,” p. 206; Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 22, 1901, BD II no.28; Lansdowne to Scott, March 4, 1901, BD II no.45; Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. XCII, March 28, 1901, column 26.

did not direct his actions above all other concerns. His was not a single-minded pragmatic policy concerned solely with keeping the possibility of an Anglo-German alliance alive. Lansdowne did not push ahead in spite of German betrayal—for he abhorred ‘shabby’ dealing—but in fact had concluded that Germany in actuality had not betrayed the Yangtze Agreement or Britain, as Chamberlain and others believed. Incredibly, Lansdowne on the whole still thought the more limited Yangtze Agreement worthwhile both in its stated and symbolic purpose. What he did regret was the vehemence of Bülow’s “extreme frankness” while the latter exculpated the German Government from having played any part in an anti-Russian scheme.

The Japanese were extremely disappointed at the whole turn of events, and went so far as to ask Lansdowne if there had been some private agreement concerning Manchuria between Germany and Britain of which they had not been informed. The Foreign Secretary assured them that this was not the case. The overall result was to sour the Japanese on ever relying on German support against Russian ambitions in the Far East, and to draw her closer to the power that had had similar motives in signing the Yangtze Agreement. Almost by design, the German Government had gone far in achieving its objective of encouraging a strictly Anglo-Japanese Alliance that would antagonize Russia in the Far East, but without antagonizing her in Europe. At the time the Emperor reportedly referred to the King’s Ministers as “unmitigated noodles” for not

taking advantage of the situation to assert Britain's position in the Far East."⁴⁵ Of course an Anglo-Russian war would not have upset Germany in the least.

It is possible that Salisbury's declining health played a part in the drafting of the poorly worded Yangtze Agreement, but it seems clear that those who pushed for negotiations paid little attention to them or the treaty's final wording. The American Secretary of State, John Hay, thought the agreement "a horrible practical joke on England." Before it was even concluded Salisbury had declared to Brodrick that it was unnecessary, but "seemed consistent with the policy of pleasing Germany to which so many of our [Unionist] friends are attached." That Salisbury signed the agreement anyway suggests he was wise to relinquish the Foreign Office portfolio without too much fuss the following month. Germany was not prepared to alienate Russia for the sake of upholding the Open Door in Manchuria.⁴⁶

When Lansdowne failed to secure permission from the Cabinet on March 13 to propose to Germany a secret joint declaration of common policy, his disappointment was real. Less than a week later he wrote to Lascelles that he well understood the complaints of Baron von Richtofen, the new German Foreign Minister, that Britain had hung back while simultaneously trying to elicit Germany's intentions. He asserted, however, that Britain had been justified in its actions because in the first place "we are . . . sincerely desirous of keeping step with Germany so far as we are able . . . and our S. African

⁴⁵ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 121-122, 125, 127; Extract of Bertie memorandum, October 27, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

⁴⁶ Hay quoted in P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 243; Salisbury to Brodrick, October 8, 1900, quoted in Steele, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 337; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 105-106.

entanglements make it impossible for us to commit ourselves to a policy which might involve us in war, unless we can assure ourselves that any obligation which might mean war would be shared by another power.” Nevertheless, he admitted that he “anticipated” Germany’s rejection of the offer had it been proposed. This was not, however, “wisdom after the event” or “a reasonable calculation before it” as Monger has contended.

Lansdowne’s admission was made after Bülow’s declaration before the Reichstag that the Yangtze Agreement did not pertain to Manchuria, and specifically he was responding to Lascelles’s note of March 17 in which the latter was confirming the accuracy of the report of the Chancellor’s declaration. Lansdowne did complain, however, that “Bülow’s speech lays so much stress upon Germany’s indifference towards Manchuria that it is difficult to conceive that the German Govt. ever seriously thought of throwing its weight into the balance in order to save Manchuria from virtual annexation from Russia.”⁴⁷

Thus when Hermann von Eckardstein, First Secretary at the German Embassy in London, approached Lansdowne on March 18 with a proposal for a general defensive alliance between Germany and England Lansdowne was cautious in his response. According to Lansdowne, the First Secretary, acting unofficially of course, informed him that the German Government would look favorably on “an understanding of a more durable and extended character.” The offer was for a defensive alliance directed at Russia and France that would only come into operation if either contracting party were attacked by more than one power. As is now well known, Eckardstein had decided to

⁴⁷ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 18, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 27; Lascelles to Lansdowne, March 17, 1901, BD II no.35.

take advantage of Hatzfeldt's absence from the embassy due to ill-health, and was operating well outside his instructions. His actions were also completely unscrupulous, and over the next few months he repeatedly reported to Berlin that it was Lansdowne who had approached him with the proposal of an Anglo-German alliance. Eckardstein's efforts for an alliance may well have been genuine, but they were undermined by his pursuit of personal aggrandizement and Hatzfeldt's job. His remarkable deception also meant that the leadership on both sides would act under a gross misapprehension from the very start of negotiations.

From the beginning, Lansdowne recognized the difficulties inherent in any such agreement. Foremost to his mind was that it would require "the adoption of an identic [*sic*] foreign policy by both powers in all their external relations." It would also be difficult, he noted, to distinguish "between the case in which a country was acting on the defensive and the case in which it was not." Lansdowne therefore struck a hesitant tone both with Eckardstein and in his official memoranda, acknowledging that the "project was a novel and very-far-reaching one, which would require careful examination, and which obviously I could not encourage without reference to my colleagues." He did not doubt, however, that Eckardstein had been instructed to sound him out.⁴⁸

The Foreign Secretary was somewhat more circumspect in a private letter he wrote to Lascelles. He doubted whether much would come of the proposal, specifically because it would have meant the creation of an Anglo-German foreign policy; and he was also a little less certain as to the true source of the First Secretary's proposal.

⁴⁸ Lansdowne memorandum, March 18, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

Eckardstein had been forthright with the fact that he spoke without authority, but as this was a customary and indispensable contrivance of the diplomatic trade, Lansdowne had made certain natural assumptions. Prudently, he asked Lascelles to discover the identity of Eckardstein's inspiration, adding that the First Secretary "evidently wishes me to suppose that the Emperor entertains these views." That Lansdowne's interest in the proposal was greater than he let on in official correspondence is evident in the telegraph he sent to Lascelles a mere four days later asking him once again to find out whether or not the alliance proposal was inspired, and if so, by whom. Though he was unable to find out whose hand really lay behind the proposal, Lascelles concurred that he could not fathom that Eckardstein would act without authority.⁴⁹

Because of the First Secretary's deceptions, Bülow and Fredrich von Holstein, the influential head of the Political Section at the German Foreign Office, both now backed a calculated response to the non-existent British overture. They instructed Eckardstein that he should push Lansdowne to begin negotiations with the Austrians, confirming that they still sought British adherence to the Triple Alliance. The First Secretary knew this was a non-starter, but his lies to Berlin had led them to believe that Germany could afford to drive a hard bargain and wait for the best deal on their own terms.⁵⁰

With Salisbury away, there was little Lansdowne could do to advance matters, and he knew that the Prime Minister's attitude would not be favorable. Even in

⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 18, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 22, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Lascelles to Lansdowne, March 23, 1901, BD II no.78.

⁵⁰ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 347-348, 350; Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 627, 630.

conversations with those in the Cabinet who favored a German agreement, he found scant encouragement. He wrote to Lascelles that “while on the one hand they cordially desired that there should be a good and well-assured understanding between England and Germany, directed towards the maintenance of peace and mutual protection against aggressive combinations on the part of other Powers, they regarded with a certain amount of apprehension the idea of an international arrangement of the somewhat indefinite but very far-reaching character” which Eckardstein had proposed. The First Secretary had gone so far as to suggest to Lansdowne that despite Germany’s reluctance to enter into an agreement concerning the Far East in support of Japan, once the proposed defensive alliance was made “it would virtually involve joint action” in such a case anyway. Regardless, they now both decided that the time was not right for an agreement to be attempted, and agreed to let the matter drop until after the Easter holiday. Notably, Eckardstein’s double game had been so effective that when he informed Berlin that alliance negotiations had broken down, Holstein was ready to put the blame on some inappropriate remark the Emperor may have made and that had been reported back to London by Lascelles.⁵¹

Throughout, Lansdowne was always ready to admit that it would “be difficult to make anything” of Eckardstein’s proposal, but that “knowing the quarter in which it probably originated” he “wished to treat it with all possible deference.” The impression, however, that the Foreign Secretary hereafter was merely trying to end negotiations without offending the Emperor is mistaken. It is certainly true that Lansdowne’s

⁵¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 29, 1901, BD II no.79; Holstein to Eckardstein, April 3, 1901, quoted in Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 638, 645.

assessment of Wilhelm II was evolving. On April 1 he confessed to Lascelles that “The Emperor’s speeches are certainly rather alarming, and give one the idea that his nerves are as you suppose overstrung.” He added that “No one can live at such constantly maintained high pressure with impunity,” and acknowledged that “this is a very serious factor in all our calculations.” Shortly thereafter, however, while conceding that the Emperor’s most recent “performance was certainly hard to justify,” he maintained that the “‘unmitigated noodles’ [recalling the Emperor’s term for King Edward’s Ministers] must not be too quick to resent these singular ebullitions.” Lansdowne did not follow in the footsteps of Chamberlain in his attitude towards Germany because his motivations differed fundamentally from the latter. His efforts also lacked the racial sentimentality—which so quickly led to resentment—that marked the Colonial Secretary’s endeavor.⁵²

The hesitancy apparent in much of Lansdowne’s memoranda and letters might also have been due to Salisbury’s continued presence as a monitor of foreign affairs. In a March 17 memorandum addressing British military contingencies in case of the invasion of Belgium, Holland and other countries, Lansdowne argued that much will proceed unknown and unprepared as the circumstances of the next crisis were unforeseen. Although in many respects reaffirming what the Foreign Secretary had written, the Prime Minister made a point of declaring in the margin that “it is idle to speculate, our treaty obligations will follow our national inclinations & will not precede

⁵² Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 1, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 13, 1901, BD II no.81.

them.”⁵³ Foremost, any assumption that Lansdowne’s talks with Eckardstein were merely diplomatic courtesy is belied by the Foreign Secretary’s continued striving to effectuate some sort of agreement.

On April 9 Eckardstein returned from a brief trip to Berlin and informed Lansdowne that the time was now right to resume discussions, but again the Foreign Secretary cited the absence of Salisbury as an obstacle to the advancement of anything substantive. In response, Eckardstein—apparently losing some of his nerve at the mention of the Prime Minister—stipulated that no assumption should be made that the Emperor was aware of their talks. For the first time, what had always sounded to Lansdowne like the conventions of diplomatic language, struck him as something quite different. He must have been somewhat taken aback by Eckardstein’s remark, as he now informed the First Secretary that though he realized their talks were “unofficial” he had “on the contrary formed an impression that H[is] M[ajesty’s] Government had been sounded upon the subject of the proposed alliance with the unofficial concurrence of the Emperor.” According to Lansdowne, Eckardstein “‘hummed and ha’d’ a good deal” in his response. Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary did not appear to draw any overly negative conclusions from this exchange. Lansdowne still believed that an Anglo-German defensive alliance was “In principle . . . good enough,” but feared that if it did not likely break down over the details, Salisbury would certainly regard “the scheme, to say the least, with suspicion.” After this meeting Eckardstein sought a different avenue and approached the Japanese Ambassador to London, Baron Hayashi Tadasu, in an

⁵³ Lansdowne memorandum, March 17, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff200-204.

attempt to draw Lansdowne out by way of a possible Anglo-German-Japanese Agreement to be proposed by Japan. The Japanese, however, wanted no part of a German alliance.⁵⁴

In the final weeks of May, Eckardstein made one last attempt at an Anglo-German alliance. During these renewed talks he promised Lansdowne an official German draft memorandum containing the terms of a proposed agreement, which the Foreign Secretary indicated he would be more than happy to receive. Unfortunately for Eckardstein, Hatzfeldt suddenly returned from his long absence and called on Lansdowne at the Foreign Office proposing that they meet in a few days to discuss the proposed alliance. Despite his illness, Hatzfeldt had been kept abreast of the First Secretary's efforts. A decidedly nervous Eckardstein offered three times to fill in for the Ambassador at the meeting, on account of the recent death of the Hatzfeldt's daughter, but his offers were refused. When Hatzfeldt met with Lansdowne on May 23—both under the impression that the other had originally proposed an alliance—the German Ambassador informed Lansdowne that any proposal would require Britain to join the Triple Alliance. After asking Lansdowne if Britain was prepared to continue its “present ‘isolement’” even knowing “the dangers it invoked,” Hatzfeldt declared that Germany was in fact England's only real choice for an alliance because Russia could not be trusted. Lansdowne promised to lay the matter before the Prime Minister.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 9, 1901, BD II no.80; Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 13, 1901, BD II no.81; Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 646-647.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 654; Lansdowne memorandum, May 24, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

The Foreign Secretary later informed Eckardstein that regardless of the Hatzfeldt meeting, he would still welcome the memorandum that had been promised. He vowed to treat it as a private communication between the two men alone, and to use it with the utmost “discretion.” Unfortunately for Eckardstein, Hatzfeldt opened the note. It was only then that he realized what his First Secretary had been doing in his absence. The Ambassador’s fury was that much greater as it appeared to him that Eckardstein had been treacherously angling for his job. Hatzfeldt reported Eckardstein’s betrayal and blatant disobedience to Holstein, but amazingly, the latter thought the story incredible and told his friend that it was better to let the matter drop.⁵⁶

While awaiting the promised German proposal—which would never come—and with the obstacles to an alliance still unresolved from Eckardstein’s original proposal in March, Lansdowne made the extraordinary decision not only to lay the matter before Salisbury, but to move matters forward by ordering Sir Thomas Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, to draw up a British draft convention of an Anglo-German alliance for the Cabinet’s consideration. Sanderson “sketched the outlines” of a treaty based on the unofficial talks of the preceding two months, but offered his own negative assessment of the enterprise as well. Arguing that the Germans would be unscrupulous in their reading of any treaty, he observed that any agreement would be a virtual guarantee to Germany of Alsace and Lorraine, but would guarantee little or nothing to Britain. Norman Rich has criticized Sanderson’s analysis of the true German offer,

⁵⁶ Lansdowne to Eckardstein, May 24, 1901, BD II no.84; Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 654-655. Holstein also reminded his friend that Eckardstein’s presence was the only thing that allowed the often indisposed Hatzfeldt to remain in his post. If Eckardstein was recalled then Hatzfeldt would be as well. Nevertheless, Hatzfeldt was recalled shortly thereafter anyway, while Eckardstein remained.

arguing in part that the Permanent Under-Secretary along with the Cabinet ignored the fact that Germany was prepared to guarantee the entire British Empire.⁵⁷ In Sanderson's defense, however, he might have argued that upon signing such an alliance Britain's guarantee of Alsace and Lorraine—territories that were still a cause of much resentment and acrimony—would be immediate, while a German guarantee of India meant much less in all respects.

Sanderson actually provided two draft treaties, the second of which anticipated British responsibility for Germany's commitments under the Triple Alliance. Both drafts, however, included the same principal clauses of an Anglo-German defensive alliance. Each declared that both parties sought the maintenance of the status quo and peace in Europe, but if either contracting party should find itself at war with more than one power "without provocation," then the other contracting party would be bound to "conduct the war in common." The alliance would also have a term of five years, with the one exception that it would "not apply to questions on the American Continent, nor bind either High Contracting Party to join in hostilities against the United States of America." The second amended draft stipulated that if one party went to war "in defense of its legitimate interests, or in consequence of a defensive alliance contracted by it and previously communicated to the other," then the other party would engage in activity "not less than favourable than that of strict neutrality."⁵⁸ Exactly how Britain's commitment would have played out under these terms in the context of one of the more

⁵⁷ Sanderson memorandum, May 27, 1901, BD II no.85; Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, p. 656.

⁵⁸ Anglo-German "Draft Convention," May 27, 1901, BD II no.85, enclosure nos. 1 and 2.

likely war scenarios—that of Germany coming to the aid of an ally which had been attacked by Russia, and in return was attacked by France—was not made clear.

Lansdowne had been right to fear the Prime Minister's decided views on such an alliance. In his response to the draft treaties, Salisbury dismissed the vagaries at once by declaring that in effect "This is a proposal for including England within the bounds of the Triple Alliance," and that almost certainly Britain would be responsible for the security of Italy and Austria as much as Germany. He argued that the "The liability of having to defend the German and Austrian frontiers against Russia is heavier than that of having to defend the British Isles against France." As for Hatzfeldt's dig at Britain's "present 'isolement,'" the Prime Minister scoffed. "It is impossible for us to judge," he argued, "whether the 'isolation' under which we are supposed to suffer, does or does not contain in it any elements of peril." Moreover, he added that "It would hardly be wise to incur novel and most onerous obligations, in order to guard against a danger in whose existence we have no historical reason for believing." Salisbury did not even consider these the "weightiest objections" to such an alliance. Once again he questioned whether a parliamentary democracy could commit itself to aid another power in a conflict with "no means whatever of knowing what may be the humour of our people in circumstances which cannot be foreseen." British public opinion notwithstanding, he pointed out that "a promise of defensive alliance with England would excite bitter murmurs in every rank of German society." Salisbury recalled that for many years Hatzfeldt had been trying to elicit from him some prediction of British actions if war should break out between Germany and France, but he had always responded that "no

English Minister could venture on such a forecast.” It is unclear whether or not the draft treaties were discussed by the Cabinet, or even a subset of its members, but it hardly mattered in light of the Prime Minister’s most thorough rejection of the idea.⁵⁹

Grenville argued that the Prime Minister’s response was unfair and an overreaction, and that “Perhaps Salisbury had misunderstood Lansdowne’s intentions.” He suggested that the Foreign Secretary had merely wanted drafts of an alliance printed so that the Cabinet “might have something definite to discuss.”⁶⁰ Despite the persistent doubts and reservations that Lansdowne himself expressed, however, it cannot be ignored that he continued to pursue seriously what he so often implied was infeasible. More credible is that the Foreign Secretary, who was noted for his diffidence, sometimes used it as artifice in his memoranda. When recounting his talks with Eckardstein and Hatzfeldt, he never failed to point out that he comprehended fully the obstacles to any agreement. Moreover, to have then presented convention drafts to the Prime Minister as mere discussion pieces seems so highly unlikely as to be preposterous. What would have been the point of formulating discussion pieces for a matter one believed was unworkable? Even Sanderson appears to have been reluctant to draft them in the first place. What is certain is that Salisbury paid no notice to Lansdowne’s circumspection, and took him to task for apparently not comprehending well enough the impediments to

⁵⁹ Salisbury memorandum, “Anglo-German Understanding”, May 29, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Monger argued that Lansdowne had the support of both Hamilton and Balfour, the latter based on his memorandum of December 12, 1901 in which he declared his reservations regarding the Japanese Treaty in comparison to joining the Triple Alliance. To read that memorandum as signifying Balfour’s support for joining the Triple Alliance, however, is to misunderstand his rhetorical style (Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 36-37).

⁶⁰ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 353.

an alliance. In marked contrast, when the time came to make the final decision on the Japanese Treaty—little more than seven months down the road—the Prime Minister proved sufficiently weak within the Cabinet that Lansdowne, acting virtually alone, was able to push it through.

Both sides now let the matter drop again—or “for the moment” at least, according to Lansdowne. The Foreign Secretary wrote to Lascelles that he was “quite content to mark time for a while,” but Salisbury had really left him little choice in the matter. Lansdowne was also under the impression, courtesy of Eckardstein, that Hatzfeldt was one of the major obstacles to more successful negotiations, and that after the latter’s impending recall, matters “could be more conveniently examined.” With the path towards a defensive alliance blocked, Lansdowne’s attentions turned to the consideration of “some alternative form of agreement, perhaps limited to particular eventualities.” Still of the same mind in August, he expressed to Lascelles his devout hope “that it is not true that the Emperor is quarrelling with Bülow,” whose “influence” Lansdowne believed “on the whole salutary so far as the external relations of Germany are concerned.” While enjoying the “remote” and “delightful” “quiet” of Dereen while flat on his back—his sciatica again—Lansdowne declared to Lascelles that “As for a ‘complete understanding’ between Germany and ourselves . . . no one could have striven harder than I have to maintain such an understanding, and I am sure Eckardstein will bear witness to this, but as I have already said, such an understanding cannot be fruitful of good results unless the conduct of the parties to it proves to the world that they are in loyal cooperation.” With regard to the Emperor’s use of the term “alliance” in recent

conversations with Lascelles, Lansdowne conceded that the Ambassador knew “probably better than I do what a big fence this is to ride at.” He added, however, that “I should not mind having a try if I knew what was on the other side.” It would have meant a “great deal,” he noted in obvious frustration, “to know what is really in the Emperor’s mind.” Over the summer, Lansdowne’s most reliable source on Anglo-German relations was still Eckardstein, and the latter was now confirming that for an alliance to be concluded Britain would have to join the Triple Alliance “and openly proclaim the fact.” Lansdowne was still unsure of this, but did not dismiss it outright. It was all a question, he noted, “which the Cabinet will have to consider in the autumn.”⁶¹

On November 9 Bertie issued a memorandum in which he argued that the Germans could not be trusted, that treaty or no treaty they would be bound to come to Britain’s defense anyway out of concern for the balance of power, and therefore a joint declaration of policy in Europe and the Mediterranean would be “safer” than joining the Triple Alliance. Because Lansdowne’s subsequent memorandum of November 22 bore a striking resemblance to that of the Assistant Under-Secretary, Grenville maintained that Bertie almost from the very beginning had “gained considerable influence over” the Foreign Secretary.⁶² As shown above, however, Lansdowne had already contemplated an agreement that might stipulate less than what Berlin wanted, and by November had probably already convinced himself that if a new approach were attempted it would have

⁶¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, May 30, 1901, BD II no.87; Lansdowne to Lascelles, June 9, 1901, BD II no.89; Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 6, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 24, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 28, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

⁶² Bertie memorandum, November 9, 1901, PRO FO 800/115; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 361-362. Ian Nish argued as well for Bertie’s substantial influence over Lansdowne in his work, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, which is discussed and similarly disputed in chapter five.

to be on different terms. In his memorandum Lansdowne felt “bound to admit” that the obstacles to a “full-blown defensive alliance” with Germany on the terms expressed by Hatzfeldt in May were “at the present moment, virtually insuperable.” According to the Foreign Secretary those obstacles were:

1. The impossibility of arriving at a definition of the *casus foederis* which would not be either so rigid as to greatly hamper our freedom of action or so vague as to deprive the alliance of all practical value.
2. The certainty of alienating France and Russia.
3. Complications with the Colonies, which might not at all approve of the idea of hanging on to the skirts of the Triple Alliance.
4. The risk of entangling ourselves in a policy which might be hostile to America. With our knowledge of the German Emperor’s views in regard to the United States, this is to my mind a formidable obstacle.
5. The difficulty of carrying Parliament with us at a moment when the Parliamentary situation is as little satisfactory as it is at present.

To these he added an unnumbered sixth obstacle: “the decided views which the Prime Minister has expressed.” Though he now openly conceded that a “full-blown” alliance was for the moment unobtainable, Lansdowne delivered a long-delayed riposte to Salisbury’s May 29 memorandum which had questioned the dangers of isolation. He admitted the “force” of the premier’s observations, but maintained that “we may push too far the argument that, because we have in the past survived in spite of our isolation, we need have no misgivings as to the effect of that isolation in the future.” With regard to Salisbury’s famous contention that a parliamentary democracy could not commit a future government to war without their consent, Lansdowne argued that this exception would not apply as any agreement that was concluded would be public, not a “secret

contract.” This was either a poorly employed straw man or a case of almost willful misunderstanding, because the Prime Minister’s dictum had never been reserved as an objection to “secret” arrangements only. Nevertheless, Lansdowne justifiably pointed out that the ongoing alliance negotiations with Japan had rendered the Prime Minister’s argument over isolation moot, and made the second argument possibly insulting to the Germans if employed. Lastly, with regard to German society’s well-known “suspicion and dislike” of Britain, Lansdowne charged that this was “to a great extent, the result of the aloofness of our policy, and that an openly declared change in that policy would not be without effect upon German sentiment.” One might be tempted to quibble over whether friends and enemies can be made and unmade so easily.

Despite the “virtually insuperable” obstacles that Lansdowne so succinctly enumerated, he did not believe they applied “to a much more limited understanding with Germany as to our policy in regard to certain matters of interest to both Powers.” Improbably, he suggested an understanding along the lines of the Anglo-German Yangtze Agreement, though he admitted that Germany’s “interpretation of that Agreement has not been by any means satisfactory.” He maintained, however, that “as a tentative and provisional step it might not be without value, and the offer would, at any rate, place it out of the power of the German Government to say that we had treated them inconsiderately or brusquely rejected their overtures.”⁶³ A month later, in a memorandum requested by Salisbury that set out the heads of a possible Anglo-German understanding, Lansdowne again sought to sell the innocuous nature of the new proposal

⁶³ Lansdowne memorandum, November 22 (also dated November 11), 1901, BD II no.92.

by pointing out that if Germany were to refuse the offer “no great harm will have been done, and we shall have put it out of their power to accuse us of having ‘dropped’ them.” Although Salisbury minuted that he still believed the proposal to be “full of risks and to carry with it no compensating advantage,” nevertheless, Lansdowne was allowed to present his entente proposal to the new German Ambassador, Count Paul von Wolff Metternich, two weeks later.⁶⁴

With regard to Lansdowne’s fear of appearing to have “dropped” the Germans, it seems significant that he made his decision to approach the new German Ambassador in large part because the latter had failed to approach him in the weeks since taking up his appointment. Having informed Metternich that at the moment conditions were not suited for a further attempt at a more definitive defensive alliance, Lansdowne put forward the idea of a joint understanding with regard to policy in areas where the interests of the two powers were similar. The German Ambassador’s response, according to Lansdowne, was unhesitating; Metternich declared that the German Government saw the matter as a case of the “whole or none.” He never even bothered to relay to his masters in Berlin Lansdowne’s offer of an entente.⁶⁵

Lansdowne had striven hard to bring about an Anglo-German alliance, but the rapprochement he sought was ultimately undermined by the unfounded expectations of Germany’s gentlemen diplomats and politicians. Moreover, some strong and rather emotionally driven personalities on both sides actually helped exacerbate tensions and

⁶⁴ Lansdowne memorandum, December 4 (also dated December 12), 1901, BD II no.93; Salisbury’s minute of December 6, 1901 on Lansdowne memorandum, December 4 (also dated December 12), 1901, BD II no.93.

⁶⁵ Lansdowne memorandum, December 19, 1901, PRO FO 800/128; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 365.

generally worsen Anglo-German relations. Holstein's own personal attempt to warm relations in late October—and it was a genuine effort—managed only to antagonize. Believing that the recent negotiations had failed because of Salisbury's insidious intrigues, as well as the hostility of the British public, he invited Sir Valentine Chirol, head of *The Times*'s foreign department, to meet with him so he could express in candid terms his opinion as to exactly why Anglo-German relations had soured over the past decade. He began by disclosing the story that the Prime Minister had planned some six years previous to foment a general European war over the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The resulting carnage, he maintained, falling disproportionately as it would on the continental powers, would have been to Britain's advantage. He assured Chirol, however, that he was “one of those who believe that the current of the times will eventually bring together those two great and related powers, Germany and England, although perhaps only after I am gone,” adding that his views were shared by both the Emperor and the Chancellor. Chirol dutifully reported the conversation to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary upon his return. Lansdowne was incredulous, but stopped short of accusing the Germans of inventing the story. He noted simply that “nothing could be more unfortunate than that the relations of the two gov[ernmen]ts. should be prejudicially affected for so long a time by what I cannot help thinking is a misapprehension.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 359-360; Holstein quoted in Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 663-664; Lansdowne to Chirol, November 8, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

To make matters even worse, in the same week Chamberlain became engaged in a bitter war of words with the Kaiser and Bülow. Reacting to criticism in the British and foreign press, the Colonial Secretary declared before assembled Unionists in Edinburgh that if when the time comes the government should find it necessary to conduct the war with more vigor and greater severity, “we can find precedents for anything that we may do in the action of those nations who now criticize our ‘barbarity’ and ‘cruelty,’ but whose example in Poland, . . . in Tongking, in Bosnia, in the Franco-German war . . . we have never even approached.” It is ironic that the spat itself was born in part of the failure of these ‘natural’ allies to come to an understanding. Chamberlain’s dream of a Pan-Teutonic alliance had vanished in unending inter-Germanic enmity. Two months later before a crowd in Birmingham, he declared that Britain was simultaneously the “most liberal nation the world has ever seen” and the “best hated,” and while the other nations of Europe might envy, libel, and misrepresent Britain and “gloat over what they think is our approaching downfall,” Chamberlain found consolation in the fact that “the opinion of Europe was not an absolute criterion as to the judgment of history.” He urged Britons never to surrender their heritage, and confessed that it was now the “duty of the British people to count on themselves alone, as their ancestors did . . . in a splendid isolation, surrounded and supported by our kinsfolk.”⁶⁷

When Bülow finally responded in the Reichstag to Chamberlain’s original October remarks over two months had passed, and he chose to pander to public opinion

⁶⁷ Chamberlain’s speech at Edinburgh on October 25, 1901, *The Times*, October 26, 1901, p. 9; Chamberlain’s speech at Birmingham on January 6, 1902, *The Times*, January 7, 1902, p. 4.

as his policy of *Weltpolitik* demanded rather than to safeguard Anglo-German relations. Quoting Frederick the Great, Bülow advised his fellow Germans to “Let the man be and don’t get excited, he’s biting on granite.” Lansdowne responded to the Chancellor’s remarks with “surprise,” noting that “if there had ever been occasion for taking notice of Mr. Chamberlain’s speech in the Reichstag, that occasion had passed by.” He found the “gratuitous resuscitation of the question” to be “most unfortunate,” and regretted both the “tone” and “mischievous” nature of Bülow’s oration. Holstein was also shocked and surprised, and could only conclude that the Chancellor had not wanted an alliance with Britain after all.⁶⁸

While Lansdowne regretted the press attacks and recriminations on both sides, he questioned whether it was really true that the Germans could do nothing to prevent the verbal and pictorial assaults on the Royal family and the British Army. The “disgusting” caricatures, as one of the King’s private secretaries Francis Knollys called them, had been a sore spot for years, and were being published in the French as well as the German press. Lansdowne knowingly wondered “would they have been allowed to pass unheeded if they had been directed against the Czar, his family, his army?” No doubt they would not. As was his wont, however, the Foreign Secretary remained cautiously optimistic that the “storm may have spent its force before long, and that we may find ourselves in smoother waters again.” His fear, though, was “that these events will leave unpleasant

⁶⁸ Bülow’s remark in the Reichstag quoted in Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 667-668; Lansdowne to Knollys, January 10, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: The Court, f50.

memories.”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, even Lansdowne’s opinion of certain German officials had suffered somewhat. He now believed Eckardstein “well meaning” in his intentions, but regretted always having “to discount his statements considerably.” As for Bülow’s speeches, he observed that there was “always a tone of persiflage [*sic*] in what he says which grates upon me.”⁷⁰

Lansdowne rather optimistically ascribed a great deal of the ill-will that the German people felt toward Britain to the Boer War, and was in the meantime echoing Bertie’s language of *realpolitik*, asserting in a letter to Lascelles that “apart from sentiment I cannot see that it will ever be of advantage to Germany to let us ‘go under’ before a great European coalition.” He maintained, however, that he was still “sanguine enough to hope that the bitter feeling which now prevails against us in Germany may not last forever.” This was one area of foreign policy where Lansdowne’s much lauded Whiggish detachment worked to his detriment. When it came to understanding and assessing the “sentiment” of a people he was a man adrift. It strikes one as very similar to his dealings over Ireland. He was nearly Panglossian at times in his belief that popular opinion would in the end follow the current of his own reasoning. Grenville maintained that Lansdowne attached “far less importance to the influence of public

⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 17, 1902, PRO FO 800/129; Knollys to Lansdowne, March 23, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: The Court, f65; Lansdowne to Knollys, January 10, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: The Court, f50; Lansdowne to Salisbury, January 10, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f18.

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 17, 1902, PRO FO 800/129; Knollys to Lansdowne, March 23, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: The Court, f65; Lansdowne to Knollys, January 10, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: The Court, f50; Lansdowne to Salisbury, January 10, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f18; Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 8, 1902, PRO FO 800/129.

opinion” than Salisbury, but though that assessment might hold a great deal of truth within the specific comparison, Lansdowne certainly did not fail to comment on the public’s influence upon foreign affairs.⁷¹ He just utterly failed to comprehend that opinion when it interfered with his policies, which one may presume he believed to be the product of more thoughtful and sober judgment.

The missed opportunities for an Anglo-German alliance in 1901 and earlier have excited the interest of historians for obvious reasons. The implications of such an alliance for the rest of twentieth century European history, and world history for that matter, might well have been profound. Lord Newton maintained that “The failure of the negotiations in 1901 may be described as a turning-point in the history of the world,” while German Ambassador Metternich himself told Lansdowne during their meeting in December 1901 that an agreement between the Triple Alliance and the British Empire “would probably have ensured peace for half a century.” He feared as well that such a favorable opportunity was not likely to come again.⁷²

Such contemporaneous pronouncements notwithstanding, how realistic were the chances of an agreement being concluded, especially with Salisbury as Prime Minister? Grenville argued in 1954 that the evidence was “increasing for the view that providing an alliance with Germany alone could have been obtained on reasonable terms, the prime minister would have consented to such an alliance.” Such qualifications, however, could make anything appear to have been possible. A. J. P. Taylor that same

⁷¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 22, 1902, PRO FO 800/129; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 354.

⁷² Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 208; Lansdowne memorandum, December 19, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

year took the contrary view, concluding that the German condition that Britain must join the Triple Alliance was “not meant seriously,” and that Germany’s leaders were playing a cynical game hoping in the end for a mutually destructive Anglo-Russian war.⁷³

There is much to support Taylor’s assertion, and Paul Kennedy has since declared that the consensus against success is now “beyond any doubt.” He argued that the German policy of *Weltpolitik* had been in operation by 1900, so that from the beginning Anglo-German relations in this period were complicated by “two contradictory trends”: the policy of *Weltpolitik* being carried out by Bülow and the efforts at rapprochement by the pro-alliance faction in the British cabinet, and one might add to the latter the efforts of Eckardstein and Holstein. It is ironic then that Lansdowne initially welcomed Bülow’s influence on the Emperor, and thought Holstein “an extremely dangerous personage” in the German Foreign Ministry. On numerous occasions in fact the Chancellor sought to prevent the Kaiser from unwittingly agreeing to an Anglo-German alliance. Holstein would write in later years that “One had the impression that Bülow clung to all the obstacles which stood in the way of the alliance.”⁷⁴

Kennedy has further argued that the “rampant and uncontrollable Anglophobia in Germany during the Boer War” doomed any hopes of an Anglo-German entente. British newspapers also dutifully and eagerly recorded examples of German anti-British

⁷³ Grenville, “Lansdowne’s Abortive Project,” pp. 212-213; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 396.

⁷⁴ P. Kennedy, “German World Policy,” pp. 605, 625; P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 233, 236-237, 240, 245; Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 17, 1902, PRO FO 800/129. Lansdowne also confessed to Lascelles that he was “extremely suspicious” of Holstein’s influence (Lansdowne to Lascelles, February 24, 1902, PRO FO 800/129); Holstein quoted in P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 246.

propaganda for their readers. In January 1902, the *Daily Chronicle* described an anti-British cartoon in a German newspaper that depicted Chamberlain and Kitchener as naked red devils boiling Boer children in a large cauldron. While this treatment might have been expected from the French or Russians, the Germans were supposed to be a friendly power. It was an enmity that Bülow, more often than not, chose to feed rather than prevent.⁷⁵

Niall Ferguson has more recently argued that while an agreement was not predestined for failure, the predominant focus on the “personalities involved” was a “rather unsophisticated” answer as to why an agreement was not reached. While there can be little doubt that individual human agents are indeed pesky intrusions upon modern historiography, the balance of Ferguson’s argument also carried some troublesome inconsistencies. Echoing the work of social scientists in the field of alliance theory, he maintained that Britain actively appeased only “those powers which appeared to pose the greatest threat to her position even at the expense of good relations with less important powers.” Germany, Ferguson argued, was one of the latter. While this theory might explain Britain’s appeasement of the United States, it does not appear that it can be entirely reconciled with the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. What is more, it completely and utterly fails to explain why some in Britain would have sought an alliance with Germany in the first place if the aim was safeguarding the Empire. What would have been the value of an alliance with such a weak partner? Ferguson attempted to account for such dissonance by asserting that British

⁷⁵ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 246-247, 249.

arrangements with Germany over Heligoland, the Portuguese colonies, and the partition of Samoa, were not in fact appeasement, but co-operation. Moreover, he argued that “It was, after all, the British who killed off the alliance idea, as much as the Germans.”⁷⁶ In fact, British efforts at rapprochement as carried out by Balfour, Chamberlain, and Lansdowne were quite genuine and in many cases unrequited, while Salisbury himself referred to the Liberal Unionists being “attached” to a “policy of pleasing Germany.” Nearing the end of his tenure as Prime Minister, Salisbury even acquiesced in Lansdowne’s last ditch effort in December 1901 to break the German stance of “the whole or none.”

Salisbury’s general suspicions and distrust of Kaiser Wilhelm II’s Germany unfortunately proved all too true. In February 1900, the perceptive Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Berlin, Count Ladislaus Szögyeny, reported to his superiors in Vienna that the Emperor and leading German statesmen were looking forward to becoming “the genial successor to England” as the world’s most dominant power. He added that though “Germany’s far-reaching plans are at present only castles in the air,” the nation “was already preparing with speed and vigor for her self-appointed future mission.”⁷⁷ If nothing else Germany’s leaders were guilty of reckless self-defeating envy.

In late 1901 the rest of Britain’s leadership finally began to perceive and take notice of Germany as a more significant military threat, and it came as a direct result of state secretary of the Imperial Navy Office Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz’ naval building

⁷⁶ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York, Basic Books, 1998), pp. 46-55.

⁷⁷ Szögyeny’s report excerpted in P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 241.

program, which Bülow had wholeheartedly backed. In his memorandum on the naval estimates in November 1901, Selborne noted that Germany's current naval policy was "definite and persistent" and would in time "place Germany in a commanding position if ever we find ourselves at war with France and Russia." In April of the following year he confessed to Balfour that "The question of our naval policy is more pressing now than it was when I wrote my memorandum in the autumn . . . I candidly admit that I had not then realized the intensity of the hatred of the German nation to this country." He added that Lansdowne also shared his "anxiety." Balfour replied that he found it "extremely difficult to believe that we have, as you seem to suppose, much to fear from Germany—in the immediate future at all events." To Balfour's thinking it seemed "so clear that, broadly speaking, [Germany's] interests and ours are identical." In no sense had he or would he ever become rabidly anti-German, but he did now "have sorrowfully to admit that the world is not always governed by enlightened self-interest." With regard to Germany's true intentions it was left to Lansdowne to ponder whether "the Emperor, Bülow, Holstein, & others [would] have contemplated as they did an Anglo-German alliance, if hatred of G[rea]t Britain was to be regarded as for all time inherent in the sentiments of the German people?"⁷⁸ That after 1901 Lansdowne continued to strive for the answer to improved Anglo-German relations—and with regard to advocating continued active cooperation with Germany he was to be almost alone—is sufficient

⁷⁸ Selborne Memorandum "The Navy Estimates and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Memorandum on the Growth of Expenditure," November 16, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 1, Private Letters: Admiralty and Colonial Office, f5; Selborne to Balfour, April 4, 1902, printed in D. George Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power, The Imperial and Naval Papers of the Second Earl of Selborne, 1895-1910* (London: The Historian's Press, 1990), p. 142; Balfour to Selborne, April 5, 1902, printed in Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power*, p. 142; Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 22, 1902, PRO FO 800/129.

evidence that his foreign policy embraced more than 'balance of power' concerns. In light of this, the subsequent turn towards Japan in late 1901—the supposed 'balance of power' alternative to the failed attempt at a German alliance—must also be reconsidered.

CHAPTER V

THE JAPANESE ALLIANCE

The Anglo-Japanese relationship was long-standing, and stretched far beyond the exigencies of Britain's strategic position in 1901. Along with the other great powers, Britain engaged Japan soon after it was forcibly thrust into world affairs in 1854. In particular, the British took an active role in the modernization of Japan's military. In 1866, the Royal Navy agreed to train Japanese naval officers, and naval cadets were sent to serve on British ships and study in England. In their eagerness, the Japanese went so far as to borrow wholesale from the Royal Navy's terminology, textbooks, and even designs of uniforms. The first warships built specifically for the new Japanese Navy in 1878 came from Britain's shipyards, and though Japan made sure not to depend on a single Western nation, it would be predominantly British built battleships that defeated the Russian Baltic fleet at Tsushima in 1905.¹ Commerce between the two nations was also considerable—though dwarfed by Britain's China trade. Roughly thirty-eight percent of Japan's imports, used to modernize and industrialize the country, came from Great Britain. Moreover, in 1894 Britain became the first European country to relinquish its extra-territorial rights in Japan, putting the latter on the path towards equality with the European powers.²

¹ John Curtis Perry, "Great Britain and the Emergence of Japan as a Naval Power" *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 21, No. ¾ (1966): 309, 311-312, 316 n.54, 318, 321.

² Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 8-11; Perry, "Great Britain and the Emergence of Japan as a Naval Power," p. 317.

Events also served to create a convergence of interests. Britain's most important national interest in the Far East was its China trade—in 1894, British ships carried 83.5% of China's maritime trade—and it was the threat to that trade that set some in the British leadership in search of an ally in the region. Ironically, it was the total and overwhelming defeat of the Chinese by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 that led to the imminent possibility that the "China Market" might be carved up and distributed among all the great powers. That would have brought an end to the as yet undeclared Open Door. When France, Russia, and Germany joined forces in an attempt to limit Japan's gains at the end of the war, British and Japanese interests—namely, to block Russian territorial ambitions in the Far East—became one.³

Combining to form the so-called Far Eastern Triple, France, Germany and Russia confronted Japan over the spoils of her victory as spelled out in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Specifically, they wished to void China's cession to Japan of Liaotung Peninsula, which included the strategically important Port Arthur. The British Government, then under the leadership of the Liberal Lord Rosebery, declined to join the protest, but did not back Japan either. For the present and immediate future, the British proved non-responsive to the potential of a Japanese understanding or alliance. Faced with three hostile world powers and having no ally of its own, Japan was forced to yield to the Triple's demands and abandon Liaotung. For the Japanese, it was one more

³ Ian H. Nish, "Politics, Trade and Communications in East Asia: Thoughts on Anglo-Russian Relations, 1861-1907" *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 21, No. 4 (1987): 667.

ignominy at the hands of the west.⁴ Thus they turned inward over the next decade, doubled the size of their army, and increased their naval strength. By the close of the century, and with the continued help of British naval yards, Japan would hold the naval balance in the Far East between the combined Franco-Russian navies and the British.⁵

When the Conservatives returned to power in England in 1895, they also showed little interest in making any significant approach to Japan. Salisbury wrote to Sir Ernest Satow, British Minister in Tokyo, that it was his sense that Britain's "strategic or military interest in Japan can easily be over-estimated."⁶ Satow was also to learn through Bertie that the Prime Minister simply did not trust the Japanese. While Salisbury admitted that Japan might be useful in preventing the Russians from gaining an ice-free port, ultimately he believed that there was no need to take advantage and draw closer to the recently humiliated Japan. British power, to his mind, remained supreme in the Far East.⁷

In early 1898 Germany took the lead in obtaining compensation for having removed Japan from Liaotung, and signed a lease for the port of Kiaochow in Shantung. The Chinese had looked to Russia for support during its negotiations with Germany over the Kiaochow lease, but within months after that lease had been granted the Russians

⁴ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 33-35; Inouye Yuichi, "From Unequal Treaty to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1867-1902" in Ian H. Nish and Yoichi Kibata, eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, Volume 1: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1600-1930* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 151.

⁵ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 36.

⁶ Salisbury to Satow, October 3, 1895, quoted in Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 40.

⁷ Nigel Brailey, "Sir Ernest Satow, Japan and Asia: The Trials of a Diplomat in the Age of High Imperialism" *The Historical Journal* Vol. 35, No. 1 (March 1992): 132; Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 813; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 41.

secured their own lease to Port Arthur and the surrounding area, the very territory the Japanese had been forced to give up a few years before. Lacking substantive support from Britain, an embittered Japan looked instead to gain compensation from the Russians in Korea, but without much success. The British government pressed the Chinese to resist the demands of the other powers, and as Balfour noted in an August 1898 Cabinet memorandum, Britain itself wanted “no more fragments of China,” and in no way wanted to precipitate partition. Finding other more forceful alternatives unpalatable, however, the British subsequently secured their own leases to both the New Territories in the south, and the port of Weihaiwei in Shantung.⁸

With the foundation of a relationship in place, and an increasing convergence of interests, it was the Japanese who took the first active steps to forge an alliance. In March 1898 Japan’s Minister to London, Count Kato Takaaki, initiated talks with Joseph Chamberlain. Kato had been actively seeking an Anglo-Japanese alliance, and thought matters quite promising. Not one to shy away from inserting himself into foreign policy areas, during their conversation Chamberlain hinted at the benefits of an Anglo-Japanese understanding, or even joint action in the Far East as a primarily anti-Russian bloc. He had already made similar suggestions to Salisbury, but stopped short of advocating an alliance between the two powers. Kato was disappointed when Chamberlain did not do more to push the idea of an alliance. He had hoped for more, from both his own

⁸ Ibid., pp. 49-53; Inouye, “From Unequal treaty to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance” in Nish and Yoichi, eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, Vol. I, p. 151; Balfour memorandum, August 15, 1898, quoted in Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 114.

government and the Colonial Secretary, believing the latter had in fact proposed more than he really had.⁹

Britain turned to Russia instead, and in April 1899 made an effort to settle the outstanding dispute over railway interests in Manchuria. With the signing of the Scott-Mouravieff Agreement, Britain conceded Russia's predominance in constructing railroads in Manchuria, with the notable exception of the Peking-Mukden line. In return, Russia recognized British dominance in the Yangtze region. The Boxer Rebellion in China in the summer of 1900 increased tensions once again, however, as Russia's military presence in Manchuria expanded. In violation of the recently signed agreement, Russian forces occupied the Peking-Mukden line, and continued to do so even after the Rebellion was put down. Continuing Russian efforts to prevent Japan from exercising its right to build railways in Korea meant that the primary concern in the Far East for both future allies was further Russian encroachment to the south.¹⁰

While the Boxer Rebellion fostered friendlier relations between Britain and Japan, it also revealed British military deficiencies in the Far East. Indeed, Britain's Minister to Peking during the rebellion, Sir Claude MacDonald, credited the crucial role played by Japanese forces in relieving the Legations as having "sowed the seeds of that formal Alliance between the Island Empires of the East and the West."¹¹ The 22,000 troops that Japan provided had been vital to the Allied effort to take Peking, but they

⁹ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 63-66.

¹⁰ Inouye, "From Unequal treaty to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance" in Nish and Yoichi, eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, Vol. I, pp. 152-153.

¹¹ MacDonald quoted in Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 91.

also made Britain's dependency on Japan manifest.¹² Following the Rebellion, Chamberlain expressed to the Cabinet that now more than ever Britain would require assistance in containing Russia. In addition to the need for retaining good relations with Germany and the United States, the Colonial Secretary specifically added Japan to the list of priority relationships. He received no support from Salisbury, however, for any further action.¹³

When Chamberlain did force a policy move in September 1900, this time with the backing of Lansdowne, Balfour, and others in the Cabinet, it was in the direction of Germany. The Germans had let it be known that they would back a British initiative formally to support the Open Door in China.¹⁴ The result was the Anglo-German (Yangtze) Agreement of 1900. As noted in the preceding chapter, it was Salisbury who was responsible for the details of the agreement, but when the ground beneath it appeared to collapse in March 1901 Lansdowne was at the Foreign Office. The Japanese had adhered to the agreement under the same assumption, and with the same intentions, that had motivated the Chamberlain group: that the agreement was essentially an anti-Russian measure, and that it might eventually succeed in detaching Germany from Russia. It marked the first time that Britain and Japan had entered into a treaty that went beyond mere trade concerns.¹⁵

¹² Murashima Shigeru, "The Opening of the Twentieth Century and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1895-1923" in Nish and Yoichi, *History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, Vol. I, pp. 163-164.

¹³ Chamberlain memorandum, September 10, 1900, quoted in Monger, *End of isolation*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, pp. 115, 117.

¹⁵ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 108-109.

The First Manchurian Crisis that began in January 1901 brought matters to a head. Over the next three months Lansdowne's concerns grew that Russia was pressing the Chinese to sign an agreement that would have made Manchuria a virtual Russian protectorate.¹⁶ When in April Russia dropped its negotiations with China having achieved nothing, however, Lansdowne credited the withdrawal of the "obnoxious" agreement to the "plain speaking" of the Japanese, as well as British pressure on China. In addition, he did not doubt that the Russians would "continue to make themselves as disagreeable as possible," though he thought it significant that they had been "prevented from making a 'backstairs' arrangement with China to our detriment." Lansdowne did not believe that the incident had "by any means" disposed of the question "satisfactorily," but it is important to note that he did not dismiss the idea of a future settlement with Russia. He wrote to the British Minister in St. Petersburg that "With a little *bonne volonté* & mutual confidence the whole affair ought to be capable of settlement." Lansdowne did not, however, then turn to the Japanese for support. He instead looked to continued support of the Yangtze viceroys in their indispensable role as a moderating and stabilizing force in China. His effort to procure an additional £75,000 loan for the viceroys, however, was met with a rather terse rebuff from Hicks-Beach.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 22, 1901, BD II no.28; Lansdowne to Scott, March 4, 1901, BD II no.45; Lansdowne memorandum, March 1, 1901, excerpted in Grenville, "Lansdowne's abortive project," p. 206.

¹⁷ Lansdowne to Hicks-Beach, April 7, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Chancellor of the Exchequer, f4; Hicks-Beach to Lansdowne, April 8, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Chancellor of the Exchequer, f5; Lansdowne to Scott, March 23, 1901, PRO FO 800/140.

The Japanese Alliance has been consistently portrayed as a response to the failure of the approach to Germany. Indeed, the chronology of events almost compels this conclusion—*post hoc ergo propter hoc*. With Britain still in need of a partner in the Far East in order to preserve the status quo and maintain peace, the seemingly obvious alternative to Germany was Japan. Monger argued that Lansdowne was in fact “forced to make an alliance with Japan” to avoid isolation. With very little explanation, however, he also maintained that the choice between Germany and Japan that Lansdowne was obliged to make “was not made consciously.”¹⁸ Although not the author’s intended argument, this qualification correctly marks the point of divergence between the Foreign Secretary and his Cabinet colleagues in their foreign policy motivations. While it might well have been the case that a German alliance formulated in the spring of 1901 would have put paid any military alliance with Japan, Lansdowne’s foreign policy would not have precluded a lesser Anglo-Japanese understanding. Moreover, in December 1901 after the Japanese negotiations had progressed beyond that point where the Foreign Secretary would have been comfortable unceremoniously ending them—for fear of appearing to be engaged in duplicitous and shabby diplomacy—he continued to hold out hope for a lesser Anglo-German understanding.

Once again it was Japan that took the first step towards an alliance, and again it was on the efforts of a Japanese diplomat working largely on his own initiative. Baron Hayashi Tadasu, who in 1900 had been appointed Japanese Minister in London, had been approached by Eckardstein in March 1901 and told that the time was ripe for an

¹⁸ Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 62-63, 66; See also Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 391.

approach to Britain concerning a three-power agreement. Hayashi, however, was a devoted anglophile and had embarked for London the previous year already with the idea of pushing for a strictly Anglo-Japanese alliance.¹⁹ As Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1895, Hayashi had experienced the shame of the western powers' intervention after the Sino-Japanese War, but in a newspaper article written that same year he argued that Japan had to "contain" its "temporary indignation, conserve energy by building up a strong navy, and cultivate the friendship of the country which has common interests with us for the future."²⁰

Hayashi approached Lansdowne on April 17, 1901 and suggested in rather vague terms the creation of a permanent Anglo-Japanese agreement that would protect the Far East interests of both nations. Judging by the suggested starting points of negotiation that Hayashi sent his superiors after his conversation with the Foreign Secretary, almost all of his initial objectives found their way in some form or another into the final treaty signed ten months later. Hayashi sought support for Chinese territorial integrity, British recognition of Japan's free hand in Korea, and military support if either party was engaged in conflict by more than one other power. By all accounts Lansdowne expressed interest and was friendly to Hayashi's proposal, but would not comment further without having seen anything substantive. At this stage, Lansdowne also apparently insisted on talking in terms of an agreement that would necessarily include Germany. In this it seems likely that he was operating on the information that had

¹⁹ A. M. Pooley, ed., *The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadashu Hayashi, G. C. V. O.* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1916), pp. 114-115; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 128.

²⁰ Murashima, "The Opening of the Twentieth Century and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance" in Nish and Yoichi, eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, Vol. I, p. 160.

reached the Foreign Office through Eckardstein. The First Secretary revealed to Sanderson that in a recent conversation he had had with Hayashi, the latter had put forward a personal proposal of a three power agreement based on the Yangtze Agreement, but it would go further in pledging the powers to support the integrity of China and the Open Door. At any event, Lansdowne informed Hayashi that he could not be expected to express an opinion on an unofficial proposal, and that with Lord Salisbury out of the country, the Cabinet could go no further in considering the matter until his return.²¹

Still lacking the official commitment of his government, Hayashi approached Lansdowne again in May and on this occasion handed over the points of a possible agreement that he had also sent off to Tokyo. In *The Secret Memoirs of Count Hayashi*, still accepted as a credible source in many respects, the minister related that “Lansdowne replied that the discussion of the main lines of an agreement was easy, but the difficulty would arise when details came to be settled.” He also noted that the Foreign Secretary again made a point of suggesting that this would not necessarily have to be a two-party agreement. Lansdowne did subsequently recall MacDonald from Tokyo—where he was now stationed—ostensibly for discussions relating to recent Chinese matters, but little evidence survives to suggest what, if anything, was said about the Japanese proposal. Clearly, the Japanese Government was not as yet paying very close attention to Hayashi’s initiative, and Lansdowne still viewed the matter as one of engaging the

²¹ Pooley, *The Secret Memoirs*, pp. 116-119; Lansdowne to MacDonald, April 17, 1901, BD II no.99; Sanderson to Lansdowne, April 16, 1901, PRO FO 800/115.

Germans in some sort of more binding treaty in the Far East. This last conversation of course came less than two weeks before Lansdowne presented Salisbury with the detailed points of an Anglo-German alliance.²²

Despite the apparently receptive demeanor Lansdowne displayed in conversation with Hayashi, he did not at this time favor concluding such an extensive alliance. That nothing came of these early contacts, and the fact that Lansdowne made no effort to approach Japan for some time, is persuasive evidence for this conclusion. In early July, Lansdowne did suggest to Hayashi the possibility of a multilateral treaty protecting the Open Door in Manchuria, while noting Russia's special interests in the region, but this in no way presaged a defensive alliance. Nothing came of the proposal.²³

Unofficial contacts continued through July, but it was not until the last day of that month that Lansdowne met with Hayashi on his own initiative and responsibility to ask whether the two powers might come to an "understanding" as to "what line of conduct we might follow, supposing the balance of power in the waters of the Far East to be threatened with serious disturbance."²⁴ This was the first real British initiative towards a formal understanding, but was it due largely to the failure of Anglo-German

²² Pooley, *The Secret Memoirs*, pp. 119-120; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 129, 132. Nish argued that "some of the confidence" historians had in the *Secret Memoirs* has since been lost. Shortly after the first translations of Hayashi's supposed "History of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance" appeared in the English press courtesy of A. M. Pooley (it had already been printed in the Japanese newspaper *Jiji Shimpō* before being suppressed by the government), however, Lord Sanderson wrote Lansdowne that in his opinion "Ld. Hayashi's account of the negotiations with us is fairly correct, taking account of the crudeness of expression which results from condensation" (Ibid., p. 394; Pooley, *The Secret Memoirs*, p. 31; Sanderson memorandum entitled "Anglo-Japanese Alliance" enclosed in Lord Sanderson to Lansdowne, September 15, 1913, LP, Named Correspondence, Sir Thomas, later Lord Sanderson, March 1896-February 1922).

²³ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 140.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 146-148; Lansdowne to Whitehead, July 31, 1901, BD II no.102.

negotiations? Moreover, was Lansdowne's sole overriding interest the "balance of power in the waters of the Far East"? One cannot deny that the failure of negotiations with Germany must have had a tremendous effect on the direction of British foreign policy, but in the strictest terms of the above hypotheses, one would have to accept that the Foreign Secretary had definitely given up on a German alliance in June or July 1901, and that because of this saw a Japanese alliance as the only, and necessary, alternative. Even when narrowly confined to matters in the Far East, such a simplified conclusion should be avoided because it tends to mask the significant influence of Lansdowne's overall 'policy of the entente.' His overriding motivation in foreign policy was not to conclude military alliances so that the balance of power might be righted, but to remove areas of conflict with other powers through lasting understandings. In pursuit of such understandings, however, Lansdowne sometimes slowly progressed to a point where he was in fact openly contemplating firm alliances.

In the *Secret Memoirs*, Hayashi asserted that during their conversation on July 31, Lansdowne suggested the creation of a "permanent treaty" with Japan, but nowhere was it suggested that Lansdowne at this stage offered a defensive alliance.²⁵ Ian H. Nish, whose study of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance still stands as the definitive account, credited Bertie's memorandum of July 22, entitled "Anglo-Japanese Agreement: reasons why one is desirable and why Germany should not be included", as having "lifted the issue to a new diplomatic level."²⁶ Bertie argued that notwithstanding Germany's

²⁵ Pooley, *The Secret Memoirs*, pp. 124-125.

²⁶ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 155-156.

“cynical policy” to foster an understanding between Britain and Japan to be directed at France and Russia, Britain would “certainly gain more than lose by an understanding with Japan, for to have no understanding with any one would be dangerous.” He maintained that an agreement with Germany could not be had, while one with Russia would not be adhered to, so Japan was both the obvious and strategically advantageous choice. Japanese interests in Manchuria, and especially Korea, he argued, made her an inevitable obstacle to Russian ambitions. Furthermore, Bertie pointed out that Japan would fight to prevent the absorption of Korea “with or without allies.” For Bertie, the question that had to be asked was could Britain “afford to see Russia in occupation of Korea.” He concluded that a Russia in possession of Korea, and dominant in Manchuria and Peking, would be “such a danger to our interests as to render it necessary for us to resist,” and that “it would be better to come to an understanding with Japan now than to wait till the contingency arises and to trust to being able to make arrangements with Japan at the last moment when we might not get much in return.” Arguing that the issue could not be left to sit, Bertie contended that “unless we attach Japan to us by something more substantial than general expressions of goodwill we shall run a risk of her making some arrangement which might be injurious to our interests.” As to the terms of such an arrangement, he suggested that Britain offer naval assistance to Japan if necessary to prevent any foreign occupation of Korea, and in exchange Japan might provide naval and military support at British request to aid in resisting any foreign aggression on the Yangtze or in Southern China. In addition, both powers would pledge to make no other agreement concerning the Far East with any other power without mutual consultation.

Bertie rested the safety of such a commitment on the knowledge that “The policy of Russia is a bluff,” and that “She is in reality quite as much afraid of our strength as we are of the largeness of her forces.” Moreover, he was confident that when Russia “realises that her adversary is in earnest as well as strong She generally gives way.”²⁷

Nish established the significance of Bertie’s memorandum on the fact that many of the suggestions the latter put forward were later to be found in the proposals the Foreign Secretary put before the Japanese, such as naval co-operation and a Japanese free hand in Korea. While Lansdowne made no minute on the memorandum, and was not prepared to push forward with any of Bertie’s ideas until the Cabinet had been consulted, Nish argued that the Foreign Secretary “had at least been presented with the issues.” Thus, he believed it deserved “a special place in the growth of the alliance in so far as it convinced Lansdowne.”²⁸ Among Lansdowne’s papers, however, there is a copy of Bertie’s memorandum that does include a notation by the Foreign Secretary added presumably before he forwarded it to Salisbury. While overall he was amenable to some sort of understanding with Japan, Lansdowne thought that his Assistant Under-Secretary’s proposals constituted a “very far reaching pledge” for the Japanese, and that the terms defining “what constituted an act of foreign aggression within this enormous area” of the Yangtze and South China would be difficult to draft. Of Britain’s obligations to Japan, Lansdowne believed them actually to be “more precise and less

²⁷ Bertie Memorandum, July 22, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary, Miscellaneous Foreign Office Papers 3, Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1902. Grenville cites a similar Lansdowne minute on a Bertie memorandum, but with a different date—July 2, 1901 (“Bertie memorandum, 2 July, 1901, FO 17/1506” cited in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 399).

²⁸ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 157, 177.

extensive,” but worried that Britain might find itself “obliged to go to war at an inconvenient moment and upon an issue that might not be of first rate importance.” He noted, however, that he wished “to keep well with the Japanese” and fancied that this could be done “without going so far as Mr. Bertie proposes.” In pointed opposition to Bertie’s express desire for a commitment that constituted more than an exchange of friendly intentions, the Foreign Secretary proposed a “joint declaration of policy in which it would be recorded that it was the object of both Powers to prevent any other Power from acquiring a dominant position in Korea” or gain “preferential rights in the Yangtse Valley.”²⁹ Lansdowne’s commentary does not suggest that when presented with the issues he was persuaded to favor a defensive alliance even of the limited nature that Bertie put forward. Nor does it suggest that the Foreign Secretary was quite prepared as yet to grant Japan a dominant position in Korea as he would later claim after the fact. Even if it were true that early on Bertie had acquired some inordinate influence over the new Foreign Secretary, as Nish has argued—and this despite the fact that they apparently disliked each other—in this particular case Lansdowne made clear that he wished for a lesser understanding than that put forward by his Assistant Under-Secretary.³⁰ Strictly by the evidence, one could reasonably argue that there was a point in July, August or even September at which Lansdowne was consciously pondering the

²⁹ Lansdowne’s notations on Bertie memorandum, July 24, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary, Miscellaneous Foreign Office Papers 3, Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1902.

³⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 22, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f37; Zara Steiner, “The Last Years of the Old Foreign Office, 1898-1905” *The Historical Journal* Vol. 6, No. 1 (1963): 82; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 153-154.

conclusion of an understanding with both Germany and Japan, and a permanent alliance with neither.

At this stage the idea of a “defensive alliance” with Japan was not a settled notion in Lansdowne’s thinking. Hayashi reported to his government that Lansdowne had used the word “alliance” several times in their negotiations through August, but that appears to have been an exaggeration on the minister’s part. Salisbury’s report of August 16 to the King concerning the Japanese negotiations only stated that the matter would “be pursued,” while in his official correspondence Lansdowne consistently referred to a possible “understanding” between the two powers.³¹ This was a matter of semantics no doubt, but in the realm of diplomacy and the mind of a professional diplomatist—which Lansdowne had become—these were and still are important distinctions.

How in September and October the matter made that metaphorical crossing from “understanding” to “alliance” in Lansdowne’s mind remains unclear, although such an evolution would become a necessity in order for negotiations to continue. Lansdowne hoped the Japanese would make the next diplomatic move, and in mid-August left for a seven week holiday in Ireland. The beautiful scenery and refreshing atmosphere of County Kerry, however, did not provide a respite from pressing Foreign Office business or a boost to the Foreign Secretary’s health. He re-aggravated his sciatica and was unable to “shake it off.” Late in September, having resorted to “being pummeled by a

³¹ Salisbury to the King, August 16, 1901, quoted in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 399; Lansdowne to Satow, August 25, 1901, quoted in Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 159-160; See also Lansdowne to Whitehead, August 14, 1901, BD II no.103.

little Swedish Masseur” in order to ease his physical ailment, he complained to Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, that with regard to Japan he was still “puzzled to know what to do next.”³²

Lansdowne did write to MacDonald on September 4 from Derreen telling him “By all means encourage the Japanese Ministers to tell us frankly what they want.” He advised that “if the undertaking is even to take shape we shall have to clothe it in more precise language,” including agreement as “to the form in which assistance might be given” to one party from the other. It was still far from certain though that active “assistance” would necessarily include direct military support. Even with matters in such an imprecise state, however, Lansdowne was “sincerely desirous to make something of the idea.”³³ This came only a week after he had written Lascelles that a possible German agreement remained a question “which the Cabinet will have to consider in the autumn.”³⁴ As it happened, the Japanese were just as hesitant to make that first jump to official negotiations, and though Hayashi met with Bertie at the Foreign Office during September to discuss matters nothing concrete was to be advanced until October.³⁵

³² Lansdowne to Lord George Hamilton, September 20, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters: India Office, f14; Lansdowne to Lord George Hamilton, September 30, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters, India Office, f20. Roberts attacks Lansdowne for “blithely” going “on holiday” at a time of such momentous shifts in British foreign policy (Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 813).

³³ Lansdowne to MacDonald, September 4, 1901, PRO FO 800/134.

³⁴ Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 28, 1901, PRO FO 800/128.

³⁵ Steiner, “Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” p. 29.

In early September, and with most of the Cabinet still absent from London, Lord Selborne produced an important memorandum on the state of British naval power in the Far East. In it he argued that the Two-Power Standard could no longer hold up in a confrontation with both France and Russia—this was not the first time he had stated this belief—and that an alliance with Japan would suit Britain’s strategic needs by allowing a greater concentration of forces in European waters.³⁶ With Selborne’s memorandum now in hand, and as it complemented Bertie’s conclusions, Lansdowne—now back in London—finally moved in a similar direction and requested a re-drafting of the Bertie memorandum of July 22. In the margins of this new draft Lansdowne contemplated a “Japanese Entente” where both powers would co-ordinate their policies respecting China and Korea, including a commitment by Britain of ships and money to resist the occupation—presumably by Russia—of the latter.³⁷ While it would appear that the combined Selborne and Bertie memoranda had a significant effect on policy, it cannot be said that the idea of a Japanese alliance was ever an entirely original one, and that Lansdowne had never contemplated such thoughts before.³⁸ Lansdowne persisted in couching his foreign policy initiatives in terms of forging ententes, but as of September he was open to pledging military support to Japan with regard to a clash over Korea for the sake of seeing negotiations move forward.

³⁶ Selborne memorandum, “Balance of Naval Power in the Far East,” September 4, 1901, enclosed in Selborne to Lansdowne, September 7, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 1, Private Letters: Admiralty and Colonial Office, f4. The memorandum also is reprinted in Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power*, pp. 123-126.

³⁷ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 177.

³⁸ Steiner asserted, “Lansdowne gave far more consideration to the opinions of the service chiefs than Lord Salisbury had done” (Steiner, “Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” p. 31).

On October 16 Hayashi and Lansdowne met and laid down the essentials of future discussions, and in general these would become the main elements of the final treaty. Put forward by Hayashi, they included the protection of Japan's special interests in Korea against Russian encroachment, a joint declaration that both powers guaranteed Chinese territorial integrity, independence, and the Open Door, and that both powers would be bound to the other's defense if attacked by two other powers. Lansdowne agreed that these points were a "useful basis for discussion," and added that it might prove beneficial if their two navies agreed to work together in peace time, allowing each other access to port facilities and coaling stations. Interestingly, on this occasion it was Lansdowne who resisted any idea of including Germany in the talks. According to Lansdowne, Hayashi thought that German participation would make the agreement "look much more formidable," but the Foreign Secretary had come to the conclusion that the Germans would never really contemplate joining such an agreement.³⁹ Lansdowne was now committed to concluding a strictly Anglo-Japanese alliance, and would push—at times almost completely alone—for its conclusion in the face of all opposition.

Lansdowne had a draft agreement prepared and sent it, along with the Selborne memorandum and the notes on his conversation with Hayashi, to the Prime Minister for his approval prior to bringing it before the Cabinet. Salisbury gave his approval, and Lansdowne was "extremely hopeful" of success.⁴⁰ Placed before the Cabinet on

³⁹ Lansdowne to Whitehead, October 16, 1901, BD II no.105; Pooley, *The Secret Memoirs*, p. 131; Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 7, 1902, BD II no.120.

⁴⁰ Steiner, "Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," p. 31; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 178; Lansdowne to MacDonald, November 1, 1901, BD II no.109.

November 5, the main criticisms came from those who believed the treaty to be too one-sided in favor of Japanese interests. Specifically, some hoped the treaty could be expanded to include India.⁴¹ Balfour, however, was quite nervous over the possibility that Britain might be drawn into a war with Russia and thereby France as well. He was also not pleased that the Cabinet rather speedily authorized Lansdowne to proceed. Irritated and surprised, he wrote to Lansdowne a month later complaining that he had arrived but “a few minutes late, and found the brief debate already in full swing, and the Cabinet not very anxious to hear any views on the general aspects of a problem, which they were treating in the main as one confined to the Far East.” At the time, however, Balfour did not press his views.⁴²

At the very same Cabinet meeting, Lansdowne also presented the outlines of an agreement to settle outstanding disputes with Russia. In part an effort to deflect both public and Cabinet criticism of the Japanese treaty proposal, he put forward the plan of a direct approach to Russia to discuss “with absolute frankness” disagreements over Manchuria and Persia. He argued that this would be better than dealing indirectly with “the two weak and dishonest Governments which in each case stand between us and that of Russia.” He did not expect the Russians to accept, however, and did not think a

⁴¹ Steiner, “Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” pp. 31-32. Hicks-Beach favored an approach to Russia.

⁴² Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 117; Balfour to Lansdowne, memorandum, December 12, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff159-179.

“refusal on the part of Russia” would do Britain “much harm.”⁴³ Believing their position in the region superior, the Russians refused the offer. Because of the simultaneous approach to Russia, David Steeds has charged Lansdowne with diplomatic “duplicity,” but this mistakenly frames his foreign policy solely in terms of competing alternatives as if Britain were deciding whether it would eventually join with France and Russia or the Triple Alliance.⁴⁴ While this framework might have reflected the thinking of Chamberlain or Bertie, it was not true of the current Foreign Secretary. The approach to Russia did not mean that Lansdowne contemplated a Russian agreement as a possible alternative to a Japanese alliance. He continued to hope and push for an agreement with Russia in the future and had these sentiments relayed to the Russian Government through the British Minister in St. Petersburg. It was in a similar vein that he did not object to Marquis Ito’s suggestion in early January 1902 that Japan might still seek their own agreement with Russia in order to protect Japanese interests in Korea. Lansdowne assured Ito that an agreement made “in the interests of peace” would not meet with Britain’s disapproval as long as it did not conflict with the terms of the eventual Anglo-Japanese Treaty.⁴⁵

⁴³ Lansdowne memorandum, “Anglo-Russian negotiations as to a) Manchuria; b) Persia,” October 25, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 9, Cabinet Memoranda on Miscellaneous Subjects 1892, 1901-1904, f6.

⁴⁴ David Steeds, “Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1902-23: A Marriage of Convenience” in Nish and Yoichi, eds., *History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, Vol. I, p. 202. Steeds argued that “Both sides were guilty of what might be called duplicity during the negotiating process.”

⁴⁵ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 401-402, 418-419; Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 7, 1902, BD II no.120.

The Foreign Secretary's differing views would be displayed throughout the negotiations, especially in how he dealt with the concerns of the Cabinet. The British draft treaty was handed to Hayashi on November 6, and according to the Japanese Minister, Lansdowne informed him that due to the concerns of two or three members of the Cabinet he found it necessary to ask if Japan might consider expanding their commitment to include British interests in India.⁴⁶ Personally, the Foreign Secretary did not feel "justified in expanding the scope of the draft" beyond the understanding at which he and Hayashi had already arrived, and it is hard to believe that he expected much from this request. Under pressure though, he again repeated the concerns of his Cabinet colleagues in mid-December during discussions of Japan's amendments to the initial draft. In the two meetings he had with Marquis Ito the following January, the first at Bowood and the second at the Foreign Office, Lansdowne again showed some concern over the issue of expanding the treaty, but not nearly as much as his colleagues. He certainly did not press the matter particularly hard, and never intimated that it might sink the agreement.⁴⁷

Balfour did not put forward his strongest opposition to the Japanese alliance until mid-December, after Japan had submitted its counter-draft. Recounting his surprise that there had been no warning that the alliance was to be discussed at the November 5 Cabinet, that no papers were circulated, and that very little in depth discussion had taken place concerning its wider effects, Balfour put forward what he thought were the most

⁴⁶ Pooley, *The Secret Memoirs*, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁷ Lansdowne to MacDonald, November 6, 1901, BD II no.110. This letter also is excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 222; Lansdowne to MacDonald, December 19, 1901, BD II no.117; Lansdowne to Macdonald, January 7, 1902, BD II no.120.

salient arguments against the treaty. The greatest flaw in this “offensive and defensive alliance,” he argued, could be seen in juxtaposition to Britain joining the Triple Alliance. Balfour pointed out that “if war should arise out of either a German or a Japanese Alliance, the forces you have got to fight are exactly the same, namely, Russia and France; while our ally in the one case would be Japan, and in the other case the Triple Alliance.” He considered the former “a much weaker partner.” Noting as well that the field of combat for Britain in either case would be in European waters and on the Indian Frontier, neither of which would be covered by the treaty, he asserted that, “Japan will have a right, in certain contingencies, to call upon us to go to war with France and Russia in a matter which may & though indifferent to us be a matter of life and death to her.” Britain, Balfour observed, had “no corresponding privileges.” In contrast, he argued that in fighting for the Triple Alliance “we should be fighting for our own interests, and for those of civilization.” With regard to deterrence, he also maintained that an alliance with Germany was the more likely to prevent war in that it “would probably prevent France throwing in her lot with Russia,” thus the “dangers are less and the gains are greater.”

Of lesser importance, but argued with equal intellectual force, was Balfour’s fear of the effect that the departure from the policy of isolation would have on both domestic politics and future diplomatic relations with Germany. He pointed out that if “Hitherto we have always fought shy of any such engagements,” regardless if it was the right or wrong course, “we could at least say that we were carrying out a traditional policy of isolation which had proved successful in the past.” Concluding the proposed Japanese

treaty would leave Britain without its traditional reasons for rejecting German advances, namely Britain's traditional policy against long-term alliances and the inability of any parliamentary democracy to bind future governments to war. Only six months before, Salisbury had vetoed the idea of Britain joining the Triple Alliance on these very bases. The only two excuses that would be left to the government, Balfour observed, would be the hostile attitude of the German and English peoples towards one another (though he thought this was an "argument of transitory value"), and the untrustworthy nature of the leaders of the Triple Alliance. He believed the first to be inadequate, and the second unutterable in public. Throughout the memorandum, however, Balfour did not explicitly counsel against a departure from isolation, or press wholeheartedly for a German alliance. On the whole it was an argument for caution, faced with two such problematic choices.⁴⁸

In his defense of the treaty, Lansdowne simply shifted the focus away from the consequences of the treaty if war were to break out. Having been persuaded in November that a strong German agreement was not possible at present because Germany's terms would bind British foreign policy and create too many permanent enemies among the other great powers, Lansdowne argued that the primary benefit of the proposed Japanese alliance was that its terms would never have to be invoked.⁴⁹ He reasoned that "the chances of the 'casus fodeoris' arising are much fewer in the case of the Anglo Japanese agreement than they would be in that of an Anglo German

⁴⁸ Balfour to Lansdowne, memorandum, December 12, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff159-179.

⁴⁹ See Lansdowne memorandum, November 11, 1901, BD II no.92.

agreement.” Furthermore, in answer to complaints that the treaty offered Britain too little in return for its guarantees to Japan, he argued that precisely because the area covered by the treaty was so limited, this “diminished the difficulty of explaining to the Germans why we are prepared to face the one but not the other liability.” Ultimately, Lansdowne contended that if Britain was in any case not prepared to see Japan crushed by Russia and France, “may we not as well tell her so beforehand and get what we can out of the bargain.”⁵⁰ This last point was less of a concession by the Foreign Secretary to *realpolitik* than it sounded however. Without implying willful dissimulation, it is difficult to believe that Lansdowne ever expected—or even seriously sought—to secure much from the Japanese in support of wider British interests, or that he ever thought the terms of the alliance would have to be invoked. For him, the Japanese Treaty was an expression of goodwill set down on paper, and termed an alliance.

In late December, Lansdowne asked members of the Cabinet for their comments on the new Japanese amendments to both the treaty, and the secret diplomatic note which was to cover Anglo-Japanese naval cooperation in peacetime. Those proffered by Home Secretary C. T. Ritchie, Hicks-Beach, and Chamberlain again centered on the treaty’s one-sided appearance. Selborne was particularly troubled by Japan’s insistence that each power maintain a naval force superior to the largest force of any other power in the region.⁵¹ The commitment of such forces by Britain, he believed, would essentially

⁵⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 12, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff180-181.

⁵¹ Hicks Beach to Lansdowne, January 2, 1902, PRO FO 800/134; Ritchie to Lansdowne, January 4, 1902, PRO FO 800/134; Chamberlain to Lansdowne, January 5, 1902, PRO FO 800/134; Lord Selborne to Lansdowne, letters of January 2 and January 7, 1902, PRO FO 800/134; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 412-413.

undercut the treaty's financial and strategic benefits. All four, however, signified that they were prepared to accept the treaty if the rest of the Cabinet went along and, most importantly, if Lansdowne pressed the matter.⁵²

The final decision was the Prime Minister's, and it was of him that Lansdowne asked permission to "close with the Japanese" and "avoid further delay."⁵³ In his last major Cabinet memorandum, Salisbury focused his reservations on Britain's right to be consulted on any actions that Japan might feel necessary to take with regard to protecting its interests in Korea. If this right was not preserved, he argued, Britain would be "pledged to war" with "no limit: and no escape." He found Lansdowne's admission just days before that Japan would "never accept a stipulation that she is not to be allowed to take without our permission measures which we might regard as provocative but which she would defend upon the ground that they were forced upon her by the conduct of Russia," to be "somewhat disquieting." The Prime Minister believed that such a "pledge" to a foreign power would "not be sanctioned by Parliament," and that "in the interests of the Empire it ought not to be taken." Now in the final months of his premiership however, and with but a year and half to live, Salisbury refrained from quashing the Japanese Treaty, as he had the proposed Anglo-German alliance eight months earlier. While warning that Britain could not, and should not, "rely on the goodwill, or the prudence, or the wise policy of the present Government of Japan, however conspicuous at present those qualities may be," he admitted there was "room

⁵² Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 58-59.

⁵³ Lansdowne to Salisbury, December 31, 1901, PRO FO 800/134.

for negotiation.”⁵⁴ Lord Salisbury’s direction of British foreign policy had come to an end.

Lansdowne pushed ahead despite the “very stiff” negotiating of the Japanese and the reservations of the Cabinet. In order to alleviate the fears expressed by his colleagues, but without removing the most enticing part of the treaty for the Japanese, the agreement was amended to read that neither power had “any aggressive tendencies” in China or Korea, and that necessary measures to safeguard interests would only be taken if those interests should be threatened by the “aggressive action of any other power.”⁵⁵ While the Prime Minister believed that this alteration still offered Britain “no security,” Lansdowne—fearful of a complete breakdown of negotiations over these points—argued that the new language was “nevertheless . . . worth something” in that it would “enable either Power to disavow the other in a case where the quarrel was a wanton or gratuitous one.”⁵⁶ As for the naval agreement, the new British draft was precisely and vaguely worded to read that “Great Britain has no intention of relaxing her efforts to maintain, so far as may be possible, available for concentration in the waters of the Extreme East a naval force superior to that of any third Power.”⁵⁷ These revisions

⁵⁴ Salisbury memorandum, January 7, 1902, excerpted in Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England 1830-1902* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1970), no. 141, pp. 476-478; See also Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 413-414, and Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁵ Lansdowne to Macdonald, January 9, 1902, PRO FO 800/134; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 212; “Anglo-Japanese Agreement,” January 30, 1902, BD II no.125.

⁵⁶ Lansdowne to Salisbury, December 22, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f16; Lansdowne to Salisbury, January 8, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f17.

⁵⁷ “Anglo-Japanese Agreement,” January 30, 1902, BD II no.125.

were handed to the Japanese on January 14 and accepted into the final draft of the treaty. Through the use of well-crafted vagaries that allowed for varying interpretations, the treaty was accepted by both governments, and Britain was now “pledged to war” over Korea if Japan was confronted by the combined forces of Russia and France.

The Anglo-Japanese Treaty signed on January 30, 1902, was in Lansdowne’s estimation “an entirely new departure” for British foreign policy.⁵⁸ Indeed, well before its completion, Lansdowne had admitted that the government was “naturally a little nervous as to the manner in which this new departure may be regarded in Parliament & by the public.”⁵⁹ Defending the treaty in the Lords, Lansdowne asked therefore that their lordships judge the treaty “strictly on its merits, and not to allow your judgment to be swayed by any musty formulas or old-fashioned superstitions as to the desirability of pursuing a policy of isolation for this country.”⁶⁰ The treaty did mark a true departure for British foreign policy—a leap from traditional “isolation”—in as much as it was a long-term defensive treaty signed in peacetime. It was something quite different from other British guarantees granted in the nineteenth century, such as those to Belgium (1839), Luxemburg (1867), or the Ottoman Empire (1878). Britain did not rely on, or expect, military aid from the Belgians or the Turks in defense of the British Empire. Under Lansdowne’s direction, Britain signaled that it was now prepared to accept such assistance, and despite Lord Cranborne’s statement in the Commons that the British did

⁵⁸ Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 7, 1902, BD II no.120.

⁵⁹ Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 9, 1902, PRO FO 800/134.

⁶⁰ Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CII, February 13, 1902, column 1176.

not “ask for treaties: we grant them,” British leadership increasingly saw such friendly assistance as a necessity.⁶¹

Most of Lansdowne’s political contemporaries also considered the Japanese alliance a significant departure, as affirmed by the statements of both those in the government as well as those in opposition. Standing before the Commons, Balfour was willing to “admit” that this was “at all events in recent years, a new departure,” and he declared, moreover, that he would make no effort to “pretend that it is one of the ordinary, everyday diplomatic transactions between Power and Power.” The reasons for the treaty, he argued, lay not in the “secret archives” of the Foreign Office, “but upon the broad facts and the large necessities of our interests and our policy in the Far East.” He further stated that “It is admitted on all hands there can be no greater blow to the policy which not only Japan and Great Britain, but also America, Germany, all the commercial nations, I believe, have—their interest is also the *status quo*—there can be no greater blow to the *status quo* in the Far East than that two Powers should coalesce to crush either us or Japan.”⁶² In this, Balfour both echoed Lansdowne’s defense of the treaty from December, and simultaneously moved beyond it in referring to Germany and America.⁶³

⁶¹ For a brief history on the origins of “splendid isolation” with some differing conclusions see Christopher Howard, “The Policy of Isolation” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1967): 77-88; Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Commons, Vol. CX, July 3, 1902, column 734.

⁶² Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Commons, Vol. CII, February 13, 1902, columns 1294-1295.

⁶³ For example, in November 1899 Balfour wrote an American, Mr. Holls, that an Anglo-German rapprochement was “an object which I regard as only second in importance to drawing closer the English-speaking races on the two sides of the Atlantic” (Zebel, *Balfour*, p. 95).

Liberal reaction was mixed, thus preventing any concerted opposition to the alliance, but most concurred in the belief that something momentous had occurred. Lord Rosebery, a former foreign secretary as well as prime minister, welcomed the treaty and perhaps rendered its true significance best when he declared that its signing “would be felt in every part of Europe and the civilized world,” and “that is why it is so large and pregnant a departure.”⁶⁴ Unsurprisingly, it also received the public approval of Lansdowne’s Liberal successor at the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey. The King responded to the treaty’s signing by endeavoring to make certain that Lascelles informed the Kaiser personally so that the minister “would be able to point out that H[is] M[ajesty’s] Government no longer merited the appellation of ‘unmitigated noodles,’” a name the Emperor had bestowed upon them the previous year.⁶⁵ The German Government was on the whole pleased at the news, and the Kaiser “deigned” to remark to Lascelles that, “The noodles seem to have had a lucid interval.”⁶⁶ The French and Russians, with understandably less enthusiasm, responded in March with their own declarations of mutual support for the independence of China and Korea.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CII, February 13, 1902, column 1179.

⁶⁵ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 224; McDonnell (Salisbury’s private secretary) to Lansdowne, February 1, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f20.

⁶⁶ Von Bülow to Metternich, March 13, 1902, GDD III, pp. 157-158. Von Bülow states that the “step to ‘entangling alliances’ seems to have been a hard one for your British friends.” He also refers to the newly signed alliance as a “departure from isolation”; P. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 249; Lascelles to Lansdowne, February 8, 1902, PRO FO 800/129.

⁶⁷ John Albert White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 9-10.

Whether in public or in private, Lansdowne's stated motivations for concluding the treaty remained largely the same. In a letter to MacDonald on the day the treaty was signed, and later published along with it, Lansdowne pledged that the alliance was made strictly "for the preservation of peace, and that, should peace unfortunately be broken, it will have the effect of restricting the area of hostilities."⁶⁸ In the House of Lords, he declared that the "objects" of the alliance were obvious; maintenance of the status quo in the Far East, maintenance of the Open Door, and the maintenance of peace. A shift in foreign policy was deemed necessary, he argued, due to a changed world that now saw "a tendency on the part of the great Powers to form groups, . . . increasing naval and military armaments involving ever-increasing burdens upon the people for the defence of whose countries these armaments were accumulated," and wars that could come with such suddenness that nations now found it necessary to be "armed to the teeth and ready to enter on hostilities at any moment." Of course, by concluding this particular treaty Britain was rather conspicuously not joining one of the two established great power groupings. In a blatant exercise in public salesmanship, Lansdowne justified the decision to forge a long-term defensive alliance by arguing that "there is much greater danger in leaving important questions of international policy of this kind to vague and hazy understandings than there is in embodying them explicitly in an Agreement, the purport of which cannot possibly be misunderstood by those concerned." It was not so

⁶⁸ Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 30, 1902, BD II no.124; Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 226.

much a call for an end to “vague and hazy understandings,” however, as it was a call for an end to misunderstandings.⁶⁹

Lansdowne was quite pleased at the generally “feeble” attacks on his adjustment to British foreign policy, noting to Lord Curzon that the treaty had “been very well taken: better than I had ventured to hope.” He confessed that he had been “prepared for a more widespread reluctance to abandon our old policy of isolation.”⁷⁰ He had the support even of the old guard at the Foreign Office as well as the new, although some of these officials were no doubt moving at cross-purposes. Sanderson let it be known that he had “always thought” and still did, that the alliance would “have a steadying effect on Japan,” restraining her from going after the Russians.⁷¹ Lansdowne as well dismissed those who believed that Britain would be dragged into a war “all over the world over some trivial incident . . . because the Japanese want, or may want, to have it out with Russia.” He wrote to MacDonald that he did “not believe a word of it.” “I don’t believe,” he wrote, that “the Japanese will allow their Jingoës to run them into a war with Russia.” This assessment was based on information he had gathered from MacDonald, as well as on his own recent conversations with Ito and Hayashi within whose comments he had “detected a desire to come to an understanding with Russia as well as with us, &, so to speak, to insure in both offices.”⁷² That Lansdowne fully

⁶⁹ Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, CII, February 13, 1902, columns 1175-1177.

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Curzon, February 16, 1902, FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

⁷¹ Sanderson to Satow, May 9, 1902, BD II no.148.

⁷² Lansdowne to MacDonald, March 31, 1902, PRO FO 800/134.

expected an eventual Russo-Japanese understanding to be in the offing provides us with a better idea of how large a part ‘balance of power’ concerns played in his foreign policy as compared with the idea that detached gentlemen’s diplomacy might eventually eliminate the world’s danger spots without resort to war. With regard to the aggregate power of an alliance Lansdowne would focus almost single-mindedly on its deterrence value. As it happened, the Japanese and Russians would go to war with each other twice over the next fifty years, with Britain allied to the latter the second time around.

John LeDonne has called the Anglo-Japanese Alliance “a striking victory in the history of containment,” and unquestionably one of its chief motives and effects was to blunt the Russian advance on northern China and Korea. For Lansdowne, however, as opposed to the rest of the Cabinet, it was also part and parcel of his overall ‘policy of the entente.’ Although the Japanese Treaty went further than the partial agreements that Lansdowne preferred, it still conformed to the appearance that the agreements he sought during his time as Foreign Secretary “were not means but ends in themselves.” This distinguished him clearly from Chamberlain, who sought agreements primarily to further a future grand Anglo-Saxon or Pan-Teutonic alliance.⁷³ In the opinion of Paul Kennedy, Lansdowne belongs to the category of those in the government “whose intention was simply to reduce the pressures upon Britain’s global position.” In this, however, he grouped Balfour and Lansdowne together in their policy of “diplomatic *rapprochements*,” while there was actually a qualitative difference between the two.⁷⁴

⁷³ LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World*, p. 337; Cohen, “Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Lansdowne and British Foreign Policy,” pp. 127-128.

⁷⁴ P. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 266, 284.

While Balfour had sympathy for an Anglo-German alliance and Anglo-American cooperation, he retained some appreciation for his uncle's cynically minded "free-hand." Lansdowne's pursuit of ententes with any, and preferably all, the great powers—which Steiner attributed to his "patience and tact" as well as "his very lack of brilliance and bellicosity"—was something quite different.⁷⁵ His most significant adjustment to Salisbury's foreign policy of the 'free hand' was the addition of a belief in the efficacy of gentlemen's diplomacy, conducted by the elite members of Western civilization and carried out for the betterment of all nations and peoples. It is therefore ironic, or tragic if one wishes to be generous, that in Kennedy's considered opinion the Anglo-Japanese Alliance—as one of the causes of the Anglo-French Entente in that it created an incentive for both France and Britain to avoid being entangled in a Russo-Japanese War—marked the beginnings of the so-called 'encirclement' of Germany. Lansdowne anticipated none of this.⁷⁶

In late March 1902, with the Japanese alliance successfully concluded and defended, Lansdowne retreated to the "Kerry wilderness" for a week's holiday. There he planted some new Japanese bulbs sent to him by MacDonald, a fellow in the "great clan of gardeners," and they were to produce a fine complement to his "splendid jungle of bamboos."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Steiner, "The Last Years of the Old Foreign Office," p. 73.

⁷⁶ P. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 250.

⁷⁷ Lansdowne to MacDonald, March 31 (second letter for this day), 1902, PRO FO 800/134.

CHAPTER VI
NATURAL ALLIES AND INVETERATE ENEMIES:
AMERICA AND GERMANY

Four months after Lansdowne put an end, rather dramatically, to Britain's 'splendid isolation,' in South Africa the remaining Boer holdouts finally agreed to lay down their arms. With the war finally concluded and the coronation of the new sovereign set to take place in late June, Lord Salisbury decided the time had come to relinquish the premiership. He intended to step down after the coronation, but with its postponement due to the new King's sudden illness, Salisbury's declining health permitted no further wait and he resigned office on July 11, 1902. Hicks-Beach took the opportunity to retire as well, now that his biggest supporter in Cabinet was gone. The 'Hotel Cecil' continued, however, as Balfour, as fully expected, succeeded his uncle as leader of the Unionists and Prime Minister. Although now free to give his full attention to Hatfield House and other pursuits, Salisbury's remaining time was short, and he died the following summer.¹ Lansdowne was already well ensconced at Derreen when word reached him of his former chief's passing, so he wrote to Balfour that while it was "painful" to him to "seem wanting in respect" for a man he "revered," he declined to attend the memorial service as he simply dreaded "another long journey to England" and had "been feeling the strain of office a good deal of late."² There was much truth in the

¹ Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 826-828.

² Lansdowne to Balfour, August 25, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff50-51.

Foreign Secretary's claim of overwhelming stress, as the prior twelve months had been among the most trying of his tenure at the Foreign Office, and for the 'policy of the entente.'

Salisbury's resignation caused no sudden alteration in British foreign policy as the Cabinet had already largely detached itself from his direction. He still on occasion made his views known, as he did when he unceremoniously put paid to any more discussion of a proposed German alliance a year earlier, but foreign policy initiatives were no longer of his making. His opinions seemed never to lose their innate force, wisdom, or prescience, but the authority behind them had dissipated. In replacing one of the Victorian era's most eminent statesmen, Lansdowne must surely have feared being overwhelmed in his post as he had been at the War Office, and especially now that after seventeen months probation he was to be all but unsupervised. If we are to trust in the recollections of J. S. Sandars, "In office," Lansdowne ". . . w[oul]d hardly send off a dispatch of minor significance without getting approval," and "w[oul]d never accept a public engagement (political) without referring it for observations & guidance."³ Even Selborne, who liked and respected Lansdowne, believing him to possess "great experience [,] ability & good sense," thought him "ridiculously diffident, & by nature too cautious, almost timid."⁴ Five months before Salisbury resigned, the Foreign Secretary wrote to Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, that lately he had been "rather swamped by work & the number of people whom one has to see seems to increase

³ Sandars to Lady Newton, 1928-1929, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c. 771, ff71-72.

⁴ Selborne Notes 1916, MS Selborne 80, f289.

constantly,” while admitting that “Lord S[alisbury] used to intimidate his visitors & curtail their stay by wagging his foot at them, but I am such a light weight that I could not make Olympus tremble as he did if I were to attempt such demonstrations & my interviews are consequently prolonged.”⁵

While Salisbury’s departure might not have unleashed the joys of emancipation, the simultaneous resignation of Hicks-Beach must have given him some sense of relief. ‘Black Michael’ was briefly succeeded at the exchequer by Charles Thomson Ritchie—who was soon to resign over the issue of tariff reform—and thereafter was replaced by Austen Chamberlain. Although the latter was eighteen years his junior, the Foreign Secretary’s correspondence with Chamberlain exhibits a palpable difference in level of comfort as compared to his with Hicks-Beach. In an ongoing dispute in early 1905 over the proper compensation for British gendarmerie officers serving in Macedonia—Lansdowne was requesting an additional £100 a year—the Foreign Secretary dismissed the friendly accusation that he was “attempting to ‘bully’ the Chancellor of the Exchequer.” To the contrary, he claimed he was attempting “to make an impression on his head or his heart by a gentle trickle of arguments.”⁶ Although Chamberlain refused to admit either that the officers were unfairly treated or underpaid, he eventually succumbed and approved the salary increase.⁷

⁵ Lansdowne to Curzon, February 16, 1902, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

⁶ Lansdowne to Austen Chamberlain, January 20, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Chancellor of Exchequer, (no folio number).

⁷ Austen Chamberlain to Lansdowne, January 22, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Chancellor of Exchequer, f92.

Six months later, however, after reluctantly authorizing further expenditure for an increase in the Foreign Office staff, Chamberlain sharply criticized his elder colleague's ability effectively to manage his department. After claiming that "the F.O. clerks of the Higher Division have more holidays & are less hard worked" than in his own office, the Chancellor informed Lansdowne that "in assenting to the increase for which you have asked,"

I desire to impose upon you, if I may, that there will in future be no excuse for your office if they fail to do the work thoroughly & well. And I hope that you will take the opportunity of stating to them what it is that you require & that you will insist that they give it to you. Unless this is done, I have no defence for the increased expenditure.

There is no office in the public service which has been treated more generously than the F.O. Even now they retain privileges which no other office shares, & you have a right to demand & receive from them the best that men can give.⁸

Although pleased that the request had been granted, Lansdowne took exception to one or two of Chamberlain's bold assertions. He responded:

No one could I venture to think read these words without inferring that in the past the half of my office have been indolent or indifferent, and that they have failed in its duty not merely because they are shorthanded but because they are in the habit of shirking systematically.

Let me assure you that nothing is farther from the truth. Many people believe that the FO Clerk of these days does not differ from the type which Thackeray was so fond of describing in his novels. I think they would be surprised if they knew how much hard grind and how little recreation fall to the lot of the modern FO Clerk.

In fact, Lansdowne believed his team had been rather "overworked," and that their work schedule of seven hours a day through the week, plus five or six hours on Saturday, compared favorably to other departments. Moreover, he claimed that during his tenure

⁸ Austen Chamberlain to Lansdowne, August 2, 1905, memorandum entitled "Foreign office Reorganization", LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Chancellor of Exchequer, f93.

he had seen several of his men “broken down from over work,” and this included Sanderson who had recently recovered from a serious illness. Having also noticed that Chamberlain had purposely crossed out the word “private” on his letter—thus implying that the missive was to be relayed to the Foreign Office staff—Lansdowne informed the Chancellor that he himself would provide the necessary incentives for the production of satisfactory work to his own staff, as “The team will . . . pull more vigorously without such a crack of the Treasury whip as you would apparently like to administer.”⁹ Despite such a blunt exchange between the two, it does not appear to have affected their friendship adversely. It does tend, however, to reinforce somewhat the negative elements contained in the assessments made by Sandars and Selborne.

Perhaps it provides a useful background as well for a better understanding of how Salisbury’s successor at the Foreign Office was nearly brought down over a muddled affair involving the Shah of Persia and the Order of the Garter.¹⁰ In mid-August of 1902, instead of enjoying the peace of Derreen as might be expected, Lansdowne found himself “dancing attendance on the Shah.”¹¹ The Persian ruler’s visit to Britain had been urged by Sir Arthur Hardinge, British Minister at Tehran, in an effort to improve Anglo-Persian relations. Persian independence and stability were essential to the security of India, and as a buffer zone between the possessions of the Russian and British empires

⁹ Lansdowne to Austen Chamberlain, August 7, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Chancellor of Exchequer, f94.

¹⁰ In the midst of doing research for the official biography, Lord Newton was incredulous at the ensuing controversy, and thought the whole matter to be “absurd rubbish” (Lord Newton to Sandars, December 27, 1928, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c.771, f80).

¹¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, August 22, 1902, BP, Add 49727, ff226-229.

the country was second only in importance to Afghanistan. Britain was losing the ongoing competition with Russia, however, for influence at Tehran. Thanks to the Shah's profligacy, over the preceding year Russia was threatening, through a loan of £1 million, to become the Persian Government's sole creditor. Aside from paying for the expense of the Persian ruler's upcoming trip to Europe, it was feared that the loan would also be used to repay the existing loans of British banking institutions.¹²

Lansdowne's attention had been drawn to Persian affairs early in his tenure at the Foreign Office, and specifically by the "rather querulous language" employed by the Viceroy of India in his letters on the subject.¹³ Responding to Curzon's concerns in May 1901, Lansdowne assured him that he was equally "conscious" of the fact "that things have not been going well for us in Persia of late." Indeed, before Lansdowne had even read the Viceroy's initial dispatch, he had confessed to Hardinge that he was "rather despondent" in the knowledge that Britain was "competing on such unequal terms with Russia in this part of the world." Nevertheless, he promised Curzon a "vigilant and not inactive" policy. He eschewed the Viceroy's ideas on the establishment of official Russian and British spheres of influence—in the north and south of Persia respectively—and he also saw "great difficulty" in Curzon's notion of drawing a virtual line across the country beyond which Russian encroachment would constitute an automatic *casus belli*. With regard to the Persian Gulf, however, Lansdowne was more

¹² Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 424; "Memorandum Respecting Financial Assistance to Persia," February 5, 1903, printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part 1, Series B, Vol. 13, document no.45.

¹³ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 22, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f9.

willing to accept an aggressive stance. He admitted that Britain could not “expect to enjoy for ever the predominance we held for so long in these waters,” but he “would not allow Russia to acquire a footing for naval or military purposes in the Gulf.”¹⁴

The action Lansdowne ultimately favored was to assemble the principles of British policy in Persia, heretofore contained in “warnings hints & intimations . . . scattered here & there over a number of documents from which they have to be disinterred,” in a comprehensive dispatch to be sent to Hardinge, who would then at the appropriate moment, pass it on to the Persian Government.¹⁵ It was, in effect, a warning to the Persian Government against ceding too much power over their country to the Russians, especially with regard to the ports and revenues of southern Persia and Seistan. The warning was drawn up that summer, but its dispatch was delayed as the Prime Minister wished to exhaust all avenues available in securing a British backed loan to Persia. As Lansdowne had suspected, however, “the fountains of Beach’s charity” were “completely dry,” while the terms offered by the Government of India were prohibitive.¹⁶ Salisbury soon found the whole situation “sufficiently hopeless,” recognizing that “if the money is not found Russia will establish a practical protectorate [over Persia], & we can only by force save the Gulf Ports from falling into it.” He was also, however, firmly against any friendly arrangement with Russia for a joint Anglo-

¹⁴ Lansdowne to Curzon, May 5, 1901, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous); Lansdowne to Sir Arthur Hardinge, April 5, 1901, PRO FO 800/137.

¹⁵ Lansdowne to Curzon, August 15, 1901, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

¹⁶ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 22, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f9; Lansdowne to Salisbury, October 4, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f10.

Russian loan to Persia as contemplated by Lansdowne and Hardinge, as he predicted that Russia would merely “pretend to consider it—will waste time in colourable negotiations & when she has arranged matters to her liking will decline any cooperation with us.”¹⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, Lansdowne’s subsequent proposal to Russia, which he expanded to include a settlement of Anglo-Russian differences in both Persia and Manchuria, met with predictable failure. When after further consideration, the Indian Exchequer in December did offer a loan of half million pounds, having been led to believe by the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Lamsdorff, that this would be acceptable, the Persian Government was ordered by the Russians not to accept.¹⁸

Lansdowne did have some, albeit slight, hopes of achieving an Anglo-Russian agreement. Monger was correct in arguing that “there is nothing to show that the only virtue of the scheme for him lay in its likely rejection.”¹⁹ Angry at shabby Russian dealing, however, Lansdowne wrote to Curzon in February 1902, that he “hope[d] some day or other to bring out the fact that we offered the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to play *cartes sur table* with them about China & Persia, & that they refused.”²⁰ The Viceroy responded that there was “no greater fallacy in contemporaneous politics than the idea that England can come to an agreement with Russia over Asia,” without paying too high

¹⁷ Salisbury to Lansdowne, October 18, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f12.

¹⁸ “Memorandum Respecting Financial Assistance to Persia,” February 5, 1903, printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part 1, Series B, Vol. 13, document no.45; Lansdowne to Curzon, February 16, 1902, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

¹⁹ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 54.

²⁰ Lansdowne to Curzon, February 16, 1902, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

a price.²¹ Although the Foreign Secretary wished he could disagree “as to the impossibility of an agreement with Russia over Asiatic questions,” as matters stood in April 1902, he feared such a conclusion was “irresistible.”²²

A dispatch containing the principles of British policy in Persia was finally sent to Hardinge in early January 1902. Notwithstanding the delay, from the beginning Salisbury had been quite content to accept Lansdowne’s judgment, but his “own prima facie apprehension” was that Persia would “certainly choose Russia rather than England to follow because Russia can do her the greatest amount of harm.”²³ Following the initial failure to secure money for a loan to Persia, Salisbury was in fact “in favour of a more definite statement” than the Foreign Secretary originally proposed; one that would maintain that “under all the circumstances of the case G[rea]t Britain cannot acquiesce in the establishment by any other Power of a fiscal control over the Gulf Ports.”²⁴ The dispatch stated as much and warned the Persian Government that Russian acquisition of a military or naval station on the Persian Gulf would be “regarded as a challenge to Great Britain and a menace to her Indian Empire.” Moreover, it stated that if, “in the face of our warnings, the Persian Government should elect to encourage the advance of Russian political influence and intervention” in southern Persia, where His Majesty’s Government held a recognized superior interest to any other power, “it might no longer

²¹ Curzon to Lansdowne, March 16, 1902, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

²² Lansdowne to Curzon, April 10, 1902, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

²³ Salisbury to Lansdowne, September 30, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 8, Correspondence with Salisbury, Cranborne, Selbourne. Also Correspondence relating to Ordnance Factories.

²⁴ Salisbury to Lansdowne, October 18, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f12.

be possible to make the integrity and independence of Persia their first object as hitherto.”²⁵ Nearly a year and a half later, Lansdowne told the House of Lords that while Britain did not wish to exclude the legitimate commercial trade of other powers in the Gulf, “we should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal.” He made this declaration, however, “in no minatory spirit.”²⁶

In the meantime, the Shah was set to visit Britain in the summer of 1902. The idea for the visit was first broached by Hardinge in early March 1901, and had been greeted immediately with disfavor by King Edward due to Queen Victoria’s recent passing. Moreover, the royal schedule for the following year was due to be rather full, not least of all because of the planned coronation in late June.²⁷ In addition to the visit, Hardinge also had sought to confirm that the Shah would receive the Order of the Garter while in England, but Lansdowne warned him that it would be “most difficult,” or more likely “impossible,” for the Persian ruler to become a member of the traditionally Christian order.²⁸ Most importantly, it was the King himself who believed that the statutes of the Order excluded all non-Christians, and from this conclusion he refused to

²⁵ Lansdowne to Sir Arthur Hardinge, January 6, 1902, BD IV no.321a.

²⁶ Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CXXI, May 5, 1903, column 1348.

²⁷ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 234; Simon Heffer, *Power and Place: The Political Consequences of King Edward VII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 141.

²⁸ Lansdowne to Sir Arthur Hardinge, April 5, 1901, PRO FO 800/137.

budge. In fact, Victoria had bestowed the Garter on the Sultan of Turkey, as well as the Shah's own father, but subsequently changed the rules.²⁹

With the renewed sense of crisis in Anglo-Persian relations, Hardinge again suggested that the Shah be invited to visit, specifically so that His Majesty might witness for himself Britain's power. He argued that "The sight of London, of our resources, etc., and a cordial reception by the King and British Government would," he was sure, "have an excellent effect."³⁰ The visit was arranged eventually for August 1902 following the coronation, and Lansdowne now took the lead in attempting to obtain the Garter for the Shah. In June he asked the King to consider altering the statutes, and there was now some added urgency as Hardinge was now reporting from Tehran that the Shah still expected to receive the Garter on his visit. The British Minister had chosen not to disabuse him of this notion.³¹ Indeed, Hardinge reported that the Garter was one of the Persian ruler's "chief incentives in visiting England."³² When finally the Shah arrived in England it was a mere nine days after the King's postponed coronation (due to illness—an "acute peritonitis"), and His Majesty still had no intention of giving in.³³

According to Lansdowne's account of events, when the Shah discovered he was not going to receive the Garter it produced in him "a very marked depression." It then "became clear" to the Foreign Secretary "that if this decision was to hold the field, all

²⁹ Heffer, *Power and Place*, pp. 141-143.

³⁰ Sir Arthur Hardinge to Lansdowne (no date), excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 234.

³¹ Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 142.

³² Hardinge quoted in Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 143.

³³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, p. 823.

our hospitalities would be overshadowed by this rebuff.” He prepared to make one last attempt to change that decision at a luncheon held for the Shah on the Royal yacht at Portsmouth on August 20. Lansdowne wrote to Balfour two days after the event that he was authorized by the King to draw up a memorandum stating that the Garter statutes were to be altered soon, and the Persian ruler would eventually obtain his prize. According to the Foreign Secretary, the hastily drafted memorandum was read by the King during the luncheon and approved, and subsequent to this seemingly with the King’s permission, the Shah’s aids were informed.³⁴

When the King heard a few days later that the Garter was to be granted to the Shah, he reportedly exploded with anger. The dispatch His Majesty sent to Lansdowne on August 23 rescinding the Garter maintained that the King merely “consented the other day to consider any proposal to alter the statutes,” but he “never intended that these alterations should be rushed through in order to meet present difficulty, or that the Shah should know anything about it.” With a tone of finality, he added: “I cannot have my hand forced.”³⁵ Upon receipt of the King’s angry retraction, Lansdowne turned to Balfour for assistance and undoubtedly some form of intervention, sending him the King’s dispatch, and the following more detailed account of what transpired on the royal yacht:

I am not surprised that the King should have negatived my proposal, but there is a suggestion which I must resent, in his telegram .viz. that I exceeded my instructions when I made known to the Shah through the grand

³⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, August 22, 1902, BP, Add 49727, ff226-229.

³⁵ The King to Lansdowne, August 23, 1902, enclosed in Lansdowne to Balfour, August 24, 1902, BP, Add 49727, ff236-237.

Vizier that the King intended to revise the statutes, and that the new (non-Christian) Garter would be given the Shah.

The fact is that the King wishes to change his mind again, and would like to throw me over. That is a position which I could not possibly accept. My face, and for matter of that, the King's face too, would be blackened for ever, if I did.

The King's instructions were unequivocal. He authorized me to draw the mem[orandum]. He gave me an audience before I left the yacht, and approved what I had written, and I distinctly told him that, although I did not contemplate giving the mem[orandum] to the Persians, I could speak to them in the sense of it. It is moreover obvious that there was no occasion for saying anything in much of a hurry, unless for the purpose of reassuring the Shah.

Meanwhile an unknown situation is now to arise when the Press here and on the continent ask, and endeavor to answer the question "why were no decorations given and received on the occasion of the Shah's visit?"

With this the Foreign Secretary escorted the Shah to Dover, and thereafter took himself to Ireland to begin his delayed holiday.³⁶

Although it is impossible to know for sure whose version of events was the more accurate, the King's or that of his Foreign Secretary, Simon Heffer has concluded that: "For Lansdowne, in his advanced distress, the wish appears to have been the father to the thought."³⁷ While this accords rather intriguingly with Sandars's appraisal that the marquis was "the most scrupulous—if not meticulous—of all the Ministers" he knew, Lansdowne's immediate and detailed recollection of events, and contention that such a hurried proceeding could have only one purpose, are quite compelling.³⁸ If indeed there were misunderstandings on both sides, more likely than not the King was responsible for the greater portion.

³⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, August 24, 1902, BP, Add 49727, ff230-233.

³⁷ Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 144.

³⁸ Sandars to Lady Newton, 1928-1929, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c.771, ff71-72.

The King did not respond kindly to the Foreign Secretary's further attempts to rectify the situation. In a letter apparently softened by Ponsonby, he informed Lansdowne that "If the Shah leaves this country in the sulks like a spoilt child because he cannot get what he wants, it cannot be helped."³⁹ On August 26, His Majesty requested that Lansdowne "allow the matter to drop."⁴⁰ The Foreign Secretary thus continued to appeal to Balfour, who had yet to intervene. Writing from Derreen, he advised the Prime Minister that "If the King remains obdurate there is so far as I can see only one way out for me, and that will be 'out' in the most literal sense of the word."⁴¹ A week later, Lansdowne appeared relatively more optimistic about his situation, informing Hardinge that he wanted "to allow a little time for the Garter tempest to subside," but was "not without hopes that before you reach Tehran the outlook will have altered considerably."⁴² Balfour hesitated to act, however, so on September 16, and while still in Ireland, Lansdowne wrote to the Prime Minister asking when he might be back in London as "it will be necessary to approach the King soon about the Garter," and suggested that he "could probably do more by talking than by writing to him."⁴³

When Balfour did finally intervene, visiting Balmoral in mid-September, he did not talk to the King directly about the Garter, but instead had a long conversation with Knollys. The Prime Minister reported to Lansdowne that unfortunately the King still felt

³⁹ The King to Lansdowne (no date), quoted in Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 145.

⁴⁰ The King to Lansdowne, August 26, quoted in Heffer, *Power and Place*, pp. 146-147.

⁴¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, August 28, 1902, quoted in Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 147.

⁴² Lansdowne to Hardinge, September 4, 1902, PRO FO 800/137.

⁴³ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 16, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f32; Heffer, *Power and Place*, pp. 146-148.

“very strongly” about the matter, and refused to “admit apparently that he gave any assent to the memorandum which you shewed him, and thinks he has been ‘rushed.’” For his part, Balfour informed his friend that it was “all very unfortunate,” but that he was “very unwilling to bring matters to a deadlock by any incautious step at the present moment.”⁴⁴

At the beginning of October Lansdowne was back in London, though not at Lansdowne House as it was “in the hands of the sanitary engineers.” Rather wanly, he wrote to Balfour: “heaven knows when I shall get into it again, or whether I shall not be a ruined man when I do.”⁴⁵ Despite his Foreign Secretary’s mounting anxiety, however, the Prime Minister did not push the issue until November. When he did, he threatened the King with the resignation of the whole government if His Majesty did not back down. The ‘Christian’ Garter was bestowed finally on the Shah in January 1903 by a special mission to Tehran, upon the condition that the King would never again have to grant it to a non-Christian.⁴⁶ Lansdowne’s Garter “nightmare” was over, and the King complained that “no sovereign had ever before been so treated or so insulted.”⁴⁷ Three years later when the issue arose of the Garter being bestowed on the Emperor of Japan,

⁴⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, September 23, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f33.

⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 1, 1902, BP, Add 49727, ff244-247.

⁴⁶ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 89 n.3; Heffer, *Power and Place*, pp. 150-152.

⁴⁷ Lansdowne to Hardinge, November 18, 1902, PRO FO 800/137; The King quoted in Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 153.

Lansdowne again asked Balfour to broach the matter with the King, and despite His Majesty's previous stipulation on this occasion he consented without incident.⁴⁸

The working relationship between Lansdowne and Balfour was without doubt an intimate one and largely informal. In their correspondence Lansdowne was addressed invariably as 'Clan', while Balfour was 'Arthur.' Their reputation as a near synchronous pair with regard to the direction of British foreign policy lasted long after their brief three years together as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Labour premier Harold Wilson, who had four foreign secretaries in eight years in the 1960s and 70s, cited Lansdowne and Balfour as an example of an ideal ministerial partnership, although admittedly he did so largely as a justification for his own interference in foreign affairs.⁴⁹ Balfour remarked to his niece, Blanche Dugdale, in 1923 that indeed, "it's the rarest thing when the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister don't clash," and "you can't expect the P.M. *not* to interfere with Foreign Office business." Moreover, noting that "It's only when you get a combination of two men who see absolutely eye to eye and work in perfect harmony that you can avoid it," he added that Lansdowne and he undoubtedly "were one of those rare cases."⁵⁰ On one of the rare occasions the marquis infringed on the Prime Minister's prerogative by submitting directly some diplomatic appointments, Sandars informed the Foreign Secretary that, "As long as two ministers like Mr. Balfour

⁴⁸ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 29, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, (no folio number—between ff157 and 158); Heffer, *Power and Place*, p. 152.

⁴⁹ Philip Ziegler, *Wilson: The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 218-219.

⁵⁰ Balfour quoted in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. II, pp. 292-293.

& L[or]d Lansdowne are in office nothing matters with regard to their respective spheres of influence & authority.”⁵¹ Lansdowne appeared to show as little concern for the premier’s interest in his department, for eight months later, before the Junior Constitutional Club, he proudly declared to his audience that “there has been no Prime Minister who has given a closer and more unremitting attention to the foreign affairs of this country than Mr. Balfour.”⁵² These various statements have, however, taken on some unjustified negative connotations over the years, none more so than the assessment given by Austen Chamberlain, who in his political memoir echoed Sandars when he asserted that it was “safe to say that Lansdowne took no important step and sent no important despatch without consulting” Balfour, and added that the latter played an indispensable role “in conceiving and shaping” the marquis’s foreign policy.⁵³

It is more difficult to discern the exact nature of Balfour and Lansdowne’s personal relationship. In 1929, two years after the marquis’s death, Balfour told his niece that he was “always very fond” of Lansdowne; they had known each other since their days at Eton where Balfour was Lansdowne’s fag.⁵⁴ In 1895, before the marquis had entered the Cabinet, it was he who was appointed to sound out Balfour privately about being nominated to join “the club,” the famous dinner club founded by Dr.

⁵¹ Sandars to Eric Barrington, March 3, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f142.

⁵² Lansdowne’s speech on November 6, 1905, *The Times*, November 7, 1905, p. 6.

⁵³ Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, pp. 209-210.

⁵⁴ Balfour quoted in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. I, pp. 335-336.

Johnson of which Lansdowne himself was only recently made a member.⁵⁵ Lord Newton informs us, however, that while among Conservatives Lansdowne probably had more in common with Balfour “than with anyone else,” he “probably felt more affinity with [Liberal] men like Lord Crewe and Sir Edward Grey.”⁵⁶ Moreover, while it is certain that Balfour paid visits to Bowood over the years, as of August 1904 he had yet to travel out to see Derreen, which the marquis longed to show him. Lansdowne acknowledged good-naturedly that this was no doubt due to the fact that “there is no golf course.”⁵⁷ In addition, no matter how “fond” of the marquis he truly was, or how many times he made a point of noting how well they worked together, it is difficult to ignore that Balfour found his friend wanting intellectually, remarking to his niece that he would not have called Lansdowne “very clever,” but rather, “better than competent.”⁵⁸ Certainly in their political relationship Balfour had occasion to find his Foreign Secretary a distinct liability, and if Balfour was initially hesitant to back his friend energetically over the Garter episode, there is little evidence that he maintained even friendly or trivial contact with Lansdowne in the ten-year period between the publication of the ‘Peace Letter’ in November 1917, and the marquis’s death in 1927.

However close and harmonious the working relationship might have been, as we have already seen, their foreign policies were in fact more disparate in nature than has been heretofore acknowledged. Although these differences in policy were often quite

⁵⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, February 13, 1895, BP, Add 49727, ff4-5.

⁵⁶ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 492.

⁵⁷ Lansdowne to Balfour, August 19, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff200-203.

⁵⁸ Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. I, p. 335.

subtle and centered on the motivation behind their rhetoric more than the actual words, they are all the more easily understood as witnessed in the near identical speeches both gave on foreign affairs in final months of 1902. In mid-November at the annual Lord Mayor's Banquet at the Guildhall, the Prime Minister told those assembled that the extant dangers that menaced "the peace of mankind" could "be found almost entirely at those points where the higher civilization come into contact with the less high civilization," and it was the "great task of European and international statesmanship to take care that when these dangers occur they do not menace the peace of the world." Moreover he called for an end to "those international prejudices and jealousies" still harbored by the great powers. Lastly, and with great rhetorical flourish, he encouraged European statesmen above all "to continue that great policy of the European concert," and to "cultivate . . . that spirit of international tolerance, international comprehension, and, if it may be, international friendship and international love."⁵⁹ Impressive rhetoric to be sure, but in Paris, the liberal *Journal des Débats* felt obliged to "hope that this pacific peroration was not inspired by mere rhetorical considerations."⁶⁰ There is no reason to doubt that the peaceful sentiments Balfour expressed were sincere, but he never would have applied them liberally, without a fair amount of skepticism, to the world in which he lived. Little more than a year later when Japan and Russia were on the verge of war—a war Lansdowne refused to believe would actually take place—Balfour declared to Selborne that he detested all war, and "on general principles [he]

⁵⁹ Balfour's speech at the Lord Mayor's Guildhall Banquet on November 10, 1902, *The Times*, November 11, 1902, p. 11.

⁶⁰ Editorial in *Le Journal des Débats* from November 11, 1902, *The Times*, November 12, 1902, p. 5.

would always try to stop it,” but added, “that if any war *could* be conceived as being advantageous to us, this is one.”⁶¹ Another year after this, with an offer of mediation having been put forward by the American President, Theodore Roosevelt, the Prime Minister informed Lansdowne that while he was “on broad moral grounds, very anxious that we should do everything we can to put an end to the war,” he had admit that “from a narrowly national point of view, the balance of advantage, I suspect, is on the side of continued hostilities.”⁶²

A month after Balfour’s speech, before the members of the United Club, Lansdowne echoed his premier in identifying those few points of danger that threatened the peace of the world as existing primarily where “higher civilization[s]” allowed themselves to be played off against each another by the “less well-governed” “inferior civilization.” Lacking the lofty sentiments and grandiloquence of his chief, he expressed the hope that in any future dispute the western powers involved would deal with one another squarely, fairly and frankly, and “endeavor to settle the business upon business like principles.” Having with sincerity turned the liberal theory on international relations of Cobden and Bright somewhat on its head, he acknowledged, however, that these “elementary and crude ideas” might prove after further experience to have been the “dry dream of a novice” and might need modification or outright rejection.⁶³ His “elementary

⁶¹ Balfour to Selborne, December 23, 1903, printed in Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power*, pp. 163-164.

⁶² Balfour to Lansdowne, January 24, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f140.

⁶³ Lansdowne’s speech to the United Club on December 12, 1902, *The Times*, December 13, 1902, p. 8.

and crude” diplomatic ideals were thus to be applied both actively and liberally, but were also to be sorely tested.

Turning to international prejudices and jealousies, Lansdowne pointed to a recent article by Captain Mahan in the *National Review* in which the author reiterated George Washington’s warning against “permanent inveterate antipathies against particular nations.”⁶⁴ The Foreign Secretary, an avid admirer of Mahan, found it “excellent advice,” but believed strongly that Britain was not “in the habit of cherishing any antipathies of that kind.” He proudly noted that at that very moment British and German warships were acting in concert off the coast of Venezuela to enforce the repayment of defaulted debts.⁶⁵ In his essay, Mahan specifically deplored the poisoning effect that “impassioned feeling,” “misplaced emotion,” and “bitter temper” had on Anglo-German relations. Such ill-sentiment, he admitted, continued to “prevent a co-operation among the three Teutonic states,” which he believed inevitable. Mahan maintained that geography alone made Britain and Germany natural allies with common national interests. If by chance the antipathy that currently existed unfortunately should endure, however, he was gratified to note that “the permanent facts are too strong for it to do more than dash harmlessly against them.”⁶⁶ He could not have been more wrong; the immutable elements of man’s nature were not so easily cowed by geography.

⁶⁴ Ibid.; George Washington quoted in Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” in Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations Naval and Political* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1903), p. 209.

⁶⁵ Lansdowne’s speech to the United Club on December 12, 1902, *The Times*, December 13, 1902, p. 8.

⁶⁶ Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations” in Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect*, pp. 209-210, 249-250.

As to how many of Mahan's assertions Lansdowne subscribed one can only speculate, but he was quite pleased to declare the fact that Britain held no inveterate antipathies toward any of the great powers, or even Venezuela. He welcomed the extant rumors that Britain and France were on the verge of a settlement of all outstanding disputes between the two nations, and regretted that he was forced to deny them. The Foreign Secretary also cautioned that he was not suggesting that they were "on the eve of a sort of international millennium, but . . . the more the Great Powers knew each other, the more they acted together, the more they trusted one another, the better it would be for the interests of all for the peace of the world."⁶⁷

Having found no inveterate antipathies, Lansdowne asked if there was in fact a nation to whom Britain was "united by feelings of inveterate sympathy." Indeed there was one, he declared, Britain's "kinsmen across the sea": the United States.⁶⁸ If any alliance might truly have seemed inevitable and natural it was the burgeoning, although informal, Anglo-American 'special relationship.' Its foundations were equally the fears of the British for the security of their empire, outstanding disputes between the two countries which were solvable, and the lack of any perceived threat from America due to a cultural and personal affinity between the two peoples.

Salisbury never showed much concern for American feelings with regard to British foreign policy, and American military weakness only reinforced this stance. He never contemplated a special relationship with a country, it is fair to say, he actively

⁶⁷ Lansdowne's speech to the United Club on December 12, 1902, *The Times*, December 13, 1902, p. 8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

disliked. Following the failure of a Joint High Commission appointed in 1898 to settle outstanding Anglo-American disputes—the US was unwilling to link concessions with regard to the Alaskan Boundary to more favorable terms in other disputes—Salisbury was even less inclined to be accommodating toward the United States.⁶⁹ Chamberlain and Balfour, however, were once again advocates of charting a new course. The Colonial Secretary, whose third wife was American, famously exclaimed in May 1898 that “terrible as war may be, even war itself would be cheaply purchased if in a great and noble cause the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack should wave together over an Anglo-Saxon alliance.”⁷⁰ As for Balfour, Jason Tomes tells us that “Anglo-American co-operation” was one of the few topics that moved him to “hyperbole.”⁷¹ According to Sandars, his boss would not allow Americans to be referred to as foreigners, or America as a foreign state.⁷² Balfour was certain that the “co-heirs of Anglo-Saxon freedom and civilisation” were “pre-destined to pray and work together for the great aim of civilisation and progress.”⁷³ At the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war in early 1904, the Prime Minister was certain that “If the Americans would so far violate their tradition as to make a suggestion of an alliance for the purpose of preserving by arms, if

⁶⁹ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 371-373; Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 617, 633.

⁷⁰ Chamberlain’s speech to the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association on May 13, 1898, *The Times*, May 14, 1898, p. 12.

⁷¹ Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 174.

⁷² Young, *Arthur James Balfour*, p. 279.

⁷³ Balfour quoted in Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 40.

necessary, the integrity of China, it w[oul]d open a new era in the history of the world.”⁷⁴

There were numerous other lower level British Government officials also working for Anglo-American rapprochement. The most significant of these were the English friends and correspondents of Theodore Roosevelt, who was destined to become President of the great American republic in September 1901 with the assassination of William McKinley. The future president had met Sir Cecil Spring-Rice on shipboard heading to England in 1886, and not long afterward the British diplomat served as Roosevelt’s best man.⁷⁵ Spring-Rice became a close family friend of the Roosevelts, and the President would later break convention and lobby for his friend’s appointment as British Ambassador to Washington. Spring-Rice eventually did fill that post, but not until after Roosevelt had left office. In the meantime, however, the two exchanged numerous letters which touched on major international issues of the day, and this correspondence informally made its way into the hands of Lansdowne and Balfour. Another of these human conduits of Anglo-American friendship was Arthur Hamilton Lee who served as British military attaché to the American army in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. It was there in 1898 that he met Roosevelt and they became fast friends. Indeed, it was the war itself that altered Roosevelt’s overall attitude toward Britain. He wrote to Lee in July 1900 that Britain’s attitude and benign neutrality during

⁷⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, February 11, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f91.

⁷⁵ Stephen Gwynn, ed., *The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, A Record, Vol. 1* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), pp. 48-50. Hereafter cited as *Spring-Rice Letters*.

the war had “worked a complete revolution in my feelings.”⁷⁶ In spite of his own Dutch heritage, six months earlier Roosevelt had all but committed himself to the success of Anglo-Saxon civilization worldwide when he wrote to St. Loe Strachey that he felt “very strongly . . . that it is the interest of the English-speaking peoples, and therefore of civilization, that English should be the tongue South of the Zambesi, and the peaceful fusion of the races and the development of South African civilization can best go on under the British flag.”⁷⁷

It is difficult to ignore the expressions of insecurity in the letters of Spring-Rice and Lee as both gave voice to their perceptions of Britain’s relative decline. Their missives were in many ways pleas to the savior of Anglo-Saxon civilization—Teddy Roosevelt’s America. In November 1897, Spring-Rice confessed to Roosevelt: “I daresay the British part of the common inheritance is going down hill; all the more reason to look after the other.”⁷⁸ When Lee stood for Parliament as a Conservative in 1900 he informed Roosevelt that “One of the chief planks in my platform was ‘Friendly with America’ and you will be glad to hear that it was perhaps the most popular of all my planks—a fact which was no doubt largely due to the striking object lesson I was able to show in my American wife.”⁷⁹ Lee also considered it a point of pride that his

⁷⁶ Roosevelt to Lee, July 25, 1900, printed in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt Vol. 2* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 1362-1363, letter no.1791. Hereafter cited as *Roosevelt Letters*.

⁷⁷ Roosevelt to Strachey, January 27, 1900, *Roosevelt Letters*, Vol. 2, pp. 1143-1146, letter no.1460.

⁷⁸ Spring-Rice to Roosevelt, November 3, 1897, *Spring-Rice Letters*, Vol. 1, pp. 232-235.

⁷⁹ Lee to Roosevelt, November 12, 1900, quoted in David Henry Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt and his English Correspondents: A Special Relationship of Friends,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 63, pt. 2 (1973): 9-10.

nickname in the House of Commons was “The member for America,” although he was not the first to hold that title.⁸⁰ One of the primary motivations for Lee’s political career in fact was his belief that “the future relations between England and America are going to form the joint upon which the whole future of the Anglo-Saxon race will hinge,” and he asked “nothing better than to essay the part of a drop of oil to lubricate that joint.”⁸¹ In accordance with this performance, Lee did indeed have what he referred to as a “useful talk” with Lansdowne, and judged that he was able to “correct . . . a certain number of curious misapprehensions” the Foreign Secretary held with regard to President Roosevelt’s personality and policy.⁸²

Lee’s sanguine assessment with regard to his ability to influence important personages notwithstanding, the talk appears to have been rather less than persuasive. Lansdowne, like Salisbury, was never drawn to America on an emotional or cultural level like some of his Cabinet colleagues. It was Balfour who pointed out to his niece that the marquis “wasn’t quite an Englishman,” as “His mother was French.”⁸³ Lansdowne became cognizant in 1901 of Lee’s unique insight with regard to American matters in part on the recommendation of Moreton Frewen. Although he admitted that the latter was something of a “wild cat,” the Foreign Secretary believed Frewen—who was married to Jennie Jerome’s sister Clara—had lived a great deal among Americans

⁸⁰ Lee to Roosevelt, November 22, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Richard Cobden had been known by the same title.

⁸¹ Lee to Roosevelt, July 19, 1900, quoted in Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt and his English Correspondents,” pp. 31-32.

⁸² Lee to Roosevelt, December 17, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.

⁸³ Balfour quoted in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. I, pp. 335-336.

and therefore “knows more than most people about them & their ways.” When he informed Balfour of Lee’s potential usefulness in Anglo-American relations, Lansdowne had to admit, however, to being a little behind the curve as he had met Lee already at Balfour’s house.⁸⁴ The Foreign Secretary never did shake off his cautious view of Roosevelt. Frewen informed him that it was believed by some in America that Roosevelt, like the German Emperor, was afflicted with “scrofulous activity.”⁸⁵ Nearly four years later Lansdowne confessed to Balfour that he found the American President to be “a very attractive personality, but he is the kind of person who might be very awkward to handle in certain circumstances.”⁸⁶ Not long after this, he famously wrote to the Prime Minister: “Roosevelt terrifies me almost as much as the German Emperor.”⁸⁷ That the American President failed to measure up was likely due to the Foreign Secretary’s suspicion that one was more likely to fall under the influence of the other.⁸⁸ Although Lansdowne had been informed that while Roosevelt “really liked the Emperor,” he too “thought him very dangerous,” this revelation had seemingly little impact on his opinion of the President.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 22, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff151-152.

⁸⁵ Moreton Frewen to Lansdowne, September 16, 1901, BP, Add 49727, ff155-158.

⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 13, 1905, BP, Add 49729, ff50-53.

⁸⁷ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 27, 1905, BP, Add 49729, f121. A few months before this, Lansdowne wrote to Durand that the German Emperor and the American President had an unspecified “something in common” (Lansdowne to Durand, February 4, 1905, PRO FO 800/144).

⁸⁸ See Lansdowne to Herbert, December 4, 1902, PRO FO 800/144, and Lansdowne’s minute on a letter from Roosevelt to Spring-Rice, September 1, 1905, BP, Add 49729, ff179-183.

⁸⁹ Durand to Lansdowne, January 26, 1905, PRO FO 800/116.

When Lansdowne assumed control of the Foreign Office in the fall of 1900, unsurprisingly he was anxious to foster better relations with America. Already before the Cabinet at the time was the First Hay-Pauncefote Treaty which had been signed in February, and which would have allowed the United States to construct and manage a neutral, unfortified, isthmian canal. In reality, the treaty was a revision of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850, whose terms required that any future canal be subject to joint Anglo-American control. As the canal treaty passed through the US Senate, however, it acquired three significant amendments of its own which fundamentally altered the original terms to which the Cabinet had agreed. Clayton-Bulwer was now to be completely superseded by Hay-Pauncefote, the clause that allowed other nations to adhere to the treaty's provisions was omitted, and notwithstanding the retention of the clause forbidding fortifications, the soon to be passed 'Davis amendment' would allow the United States to take necessary measures to defend and police the canal, virtually abrogating the spirit of the original and recently signed treaties.⁹⁰

Lord Pauncefote, Britain's Minister and later Ambassador in Washington since 1889, expressed that in his opinion "it would be wiser to accept it [the Davis amendment] than lose the Treaty by its rejection." Moreover, he warned that if the amendment was not accepted by the Cabinet, the Senate would likely push forward with the more extreme Hepburn Bill which would completely abrogate Clayton-Bulwer without any consultation.⁹¹ Lansdowne first consulted Salisbury, who was now inclined

⁹⁰ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 381-382.

⁹¹ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, December 9, 1900, printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part I, Series C, Vol. 11,

to reject the amended treaty, but in a Cabinet memorandum drafted for a meeting on December 14, the new Foreign Secretary put forward “that public opinion in the United States runs so high in favour of an American canal, defended by whatever measures of precaution may seem good to the United States, that we shall be unable to stem the tide.” While recognizing that Britain might not be able in the end to stop America from building its canal, Lansdowne was nevertheless determined not to acquiesce “without raising difficulties.”⁹² The motivation behind Lansdowne’s subsequent policy decisions can be found in his private letter to Pauncefote written shortly after the Cabinet had decided that it would not accept the amended treaty. He admitted to the ambassador that “Whether the [Davis] Amendment will have any practical effects injurious to our interests” he did “not feel at all sure, but we have, it seems to me to consider the moral as well as the material results which would follow from the virtual abrogation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty without our consent.” Lansdowne had not decided to ‘bluff’ for better terms, as Grenville’s standard interpretation of events maintains, so much as hold out for more gentlemanly conduct from the Americans. He had no intention of cutting off further negotiations, but as he informed Pauncefote, “Much it seems to me will

document no.142. Pauncefote’s attitude can be explained in part by his conviction that the Nicaraguan canal would in fact never be built (See Pauncefote to Lansdowne, December 21, 1900, PRO FO 800/144, and Pauncefote to Lansdowne, December 25, 1900, PRO FO 800/144).

⁹² Lansdowne memorandum, December 13, 1900, excerpted in J. A. S. Grenville, “Great Britain and the Isthmian Canal, 1898-1901,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 61, Issue 1, (October, 1955): 64.

depend upon the manner in which we are approached by the U.S. Gov[ernmen]t., whenever it considers that the time has come for eliciting our views.”⁹³

Notwithstanding the private attempts of the US Secretary of State, John Hay, to alleviate British sensibilities, Lansdowne believed the United States Government had behaved “in a singular fashion over the amendments question,” publicly throwing them “on to the table of the F[oreign]. O[ffice]. . . . without a word of apology or explanation.”⁹⁴ Responding to the news from Pauncefote that Hay had tendered his resignation over the matter and only with great difficulty was convinced to remain in office, the Foreign Secretary was only “very sorry that Hay has shown so little courage.” Moreover, he maintained that if the Secretary of State “had persevered with his resignation he would have stood in a very dignified position.”⁹⁵

Lansdowne set the course of British policy more firmly in his Cabinet memorandum of January 15, 1901, in which he argued that the amended treaty, if put forward by the United States for British approval, should be rejected.⁹⁶ This decision came after the Admiralty had produced its own analysis of the US amendments, but although the Admiralty noted firmly in its conclusions that it was “not in the interests of Great Britain that it [the canal] should be constructed,” it conceded that “control of the

⁹³ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, December 14, 1900, PRO FO 800/144; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 384-385.

⁹⁴ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, January 17, 1901, PRO FO 800/144.

⁹⁵ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, December 25, 1900, PRO FO 800/144; Lansdowne to Pauncefote, January 17, 1901, PRO FO 800/144.

⁹⁶ Lansdowne memorandum, January 15, 1901, printed in C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), pp. 360-363.

canal would rest with the Power which was able to place a superior naval force in position to command the approaches to either entrance, quite independently of Treaties or Agreements with the United States alone.” Moreover, it was admitted that “the amendments inserted by the United States’ Senate appear to be comparatively immaterial, and introduce no new principle into the question.”⁹⁷ When Lansdowne maintained in his January 15 memorandum, therefore, that the Admiralty’s views meant that “while the Davis amendment would strengthen the hold of the United States upon the canal, it would probably not do so very materially,” he was not “skillfully turning upside down the conclusions reached by the Admiralty” as Grenville famously argued, but merely echoing what was longstanding British naval analysis of the situation.⁹⁸ Moreover, as noted in his letter to Pauncefote a month earlier, the Foreign Secretary was doubtful from the first as to whether the Davis amendment would have any practical effect on British interests. It was agreed by the Cabinet, therefore, to await an alternative proposal from the US Government containing better terms, and offered in a more courteous manner.

⁹⁷ Admiralty to Foreign Office, January 5, 1901, printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part I, Series C, Volume 11, document no.149.

⁹⁸ Lansdowne memorandum, January 15, 1901, printed in C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 360-363; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, pp. 385-386. Grenville’s crediting of the Foreign Secretary with great dialectic skill has been thoroughly undermined by Kenneth Bourne in *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 347-351. Interestingly, Grenville’s interpretation altered slightly over time to become more certain. In his renowned article, “Great Britain and the Isthmian Canal,” published nine years prior to his major foreign policy work, Grenville wrote that Lansdowne used the Admiralty’s arguments “to come to a conclusion perhaps contrary to those intended by the Lords of the Admiralty” (Grenville, “Great Britain and the Isthmian Canal,” p. 67).

The official British rejection of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty was dispatched to the British Ambassador in February, but at Hay's suggestion it was held until the end of the congressional session in mid-March in order to prevent the Senate from passing the Hepburn Bill which would in turn have forced the Secretary of State's resignation.⁹⁹ Hand delivered by Pauncefote on March 11, 1902, the rejection was as conciliatory as possible, according to Lansdowne, without Britain incurring any undue "loss of self respect."¹⁰⁰ Vice-President Roosevelt, who did not favor the treaty, believed Lansdowne's position "both mischievous and ridiculous."¹⁰¹ The Foreign Secretary had left the door open to further negotiations and hopefully more advantageous terms, however, and was rewarded with a new canal treaty proposal from Hay on April 24, along with a proposal for the arbitration of the Alaskan boundary dispute by an arbitral tribunal consisting of "six impartial jurists of repute."¹⁰² In his Cabinet memorandum of July 6, Lansdowne argued that the government should "be glad to find an amicable solution of this troublesome question" of the isthmian canal, and this was now possible as the conditions offered were more favorable than before, and "it is open to us, now that we are approached in a very different spirit by Mr. Hay, to deal somewhat less strictly

⁹⁹ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, February 22, 1901, printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part I, Series C, Volume 11, document no.161; Pauncefote to Lansdowne, January 18, 1901, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁰⁰ Lansdowne to Pauncefote, February 19, 1901, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁰¹ Roosevelt to Lodge, March 27, 1901, printed in Henry Cabot Lodge, eds., *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918, Vol. I* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), pp. 484-486.

¹⁰² Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 386.

with him so far as matters of form are concerned.”¹⁰³ The Second Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, which was eventually signed on November 11, 1901, completely superseded Clayton-Bulwer, recognized the United States’ rights to “police” the canal, while omitting the clause that forbids fortification, and guaranteed neutralization of the canal for all nations adhering to the rules of the treaty.¹⁰⁴

These hardly appeared to be the better conditions that Lansdowne and the British Government delayed nine months to achieve, but Kenneth Bourne credited the Foreign Secretary with pointing out that “foreign policy must be adapted to power as much as power to foreign policy.” In a rather short period following the Second Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, the waters of the Caribbean and soon the Western Hemisphere were turned over to the younger great Anglo-Saxon world power.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, less than a week after the canal treaty was signed the Admiralty made it clear that the United States Navy should not, and could not, be factored into calculations on which the Two-Power Standard was based.¹⁰⁶ It does not appear, however, that Lansdowne was simply recognizing rising American power in his policy decisions, as in these very months he had also approached, or been open to approaches by, Germany, Russia, and Japan. *Appeasement of America*

¹⁰³ Lansdowne memorandum, July 6, 1901, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁰⁴ Foreign Office “Memorandum respecting the Negotiations leading to Conclusion of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of November 18, 1901, superseding the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850,” printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part I, Series C, Volume 11, document no.225.

¹⁰⁵ Bourne, *Balance of Power in North America*, p. 350; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 389.

¹⁰⁶ Selborne memorandum, “The Navy Estimates and the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Memorandum on the Growth of Expenditure,” November 16, 1901, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 1, Private Letters: Admiralty and Colonial Office, f5.

was certainly practical politics within his overall scheme of the ‘policy of the entente,’ but the special nature of Anglo-American rapprochement was an unintended by-product as far as the Foreign Secretary was concerned. It was even to prove problematic for him in the near future.

Anglo-American rapprochement was delayed in fact by the importance Lansdowne attached to diplomatic form. In some regard Grenville was closer to the real truth in his conclusions when he argued that “In resisting the pressure for one-sided abrogation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, he [the Foreign Secretary] preserved the good name of the United States and ensured that the adherence of the United States to an international compact was sufficient guarantee of its observance in the future by her.”¹⁰⁷ Proper form meant a great deal to Lansdowne, but in reality he had ensured nothing by the delay. The unique ‘special relationship’ that developed between Britain and the United States—which significantly did not develop between Britain and any other major European or Asian power—was not then the product of gentlemen’s diplomacy, liberal theory, or simple imperial necessity. Anglo-American antagonism dissipated in the end due to the draw of dormant—or seemingly endlessly resurrected—racial, cultural, and tribal affinities. Thus Balfour was pleased with the agreement in a way the Foreign Secretary never fully comprehended, for the former recognized that “with England at Suez and the US at Panama we should hold the world in a pretty strong grip.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 388.

¹⁰⁸ Balfour quoted in Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 183.

With the canal treaty now out of the way, and relations between Britain and the United States the best they had been in a great while, both Lansdowne and Pauncefote believed it would be a mistake to delay any longer in tackling the last great menace to Anglo-American friendship. Resolving the dispute over the Alaskan boundary would “give us that clean slate,” wrote Lansdowne, “which we all so much desire.”¹⁰⁹ Less than a week after the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was signed, Lansdowne directed Pauncefote to approach Hay with regard to his arbitration proposal of the previous April, only to find that the situation had changed radically with the succession of Roosevelt to the American presidency. Pauncefote reported back in late March 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.”¹¹⁰

The existing boundary of the Alaskan panhandle, as vague as it was, had been set by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1825. By the terms of the treaty the boundary between Russian and British territory would follow the summit of the mountains that ran roughly parallel to the coast, but where the summit ran at a distance further than ten marine leagues (35 miles) from the shore, the demarcation line would follow the coastline at a distance no further than ten marine leagues. Demarcation of a more precise boundary concerned few until gold was found in the Canadian Yukon in 1897,

¹⁰⁹ Pauncefote to Lansdowne, December 19, 1901, PRO FO 800/144; Lansdowne to Pauncefote, December 31, 1901, PRO FO 800/144.

¹¹⁰ A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States 1895-1903* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1960), p. 105; Pauncefote to Lansdowne, March 28, 1902, printed in Bourne and Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part I, Series C, Volume 11, document no.237.

after which even the establishment of a temporary line became impossible. As the inlets and ports of the Alaskan panhandle, especially the Lynn Canal, offered the best access to the gold fields and thereby controlled the trade of the whole region, Canada argued that the boundary line should in fact be drawn across the headwaters of the canal and other river inlets. Such a line of course would place the existing port settlements and inlets themselves under Canadian jurisdiction. The United States had exercised de facto control over the areas in question and port settlements therein for some time, however, and had encountered little or no Canadian protest.¹¹¹ Canada persisted in its claim, but with the failure of the Joint High Commission as well as efforts to link the dispute to the nascent canal treaty negotiations, further delay appeared harmful to Canadian interests and so a *modus vivendi* was reached on October 20, 1899. The issue was then dropped for a time.¹¹²

Although the enquiry into Hay's April 1901 arbitration proposal was rebuffed in the first months of 1902, Lansdowne remained "deeply impressed with gravity of the Alaska problem" and wrote to Spring-Rice that he "would give a great deal to get it amicably disposed of."¹¹³ Ironically, the next opportunity for action came as the result of the new young President's impulse to threaten and engage in 'big stick' diplomacy. The British Chargé d'Affairs in Washington, Arthur Stewart Raikes, who was in charge temporarily at the embassy with Pauncefote on his death bed, relayed to the Foreign Secretary in late May the details of his recent interview with the President. Roosevelt

¹¹¹ A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, pp. 89-91; Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 373.

¹¹² A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, pp. 94-96.

¹¹³ Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, June 6, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

had informed Raikes that as long as the Boer War dragged on he would not raise the Alaskan question, but after that he was “going to be ugly.” Moreover, Raikes had learned from Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Kitson, British military attaché at Washington, who heard the story by way of senior Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, that the President had also “recently declared in the presence of two Senators that if any trouble arose in the territory in dispute he would occupy it with United States troops.”

Supposedly, one of the Senators in attendance replied that if the President were to make that declaration “from the steps of the White House” he would be assured of the next Republican nomination for president.¹¹⁴ The anecdote made its way quickly through highest levels of government on both sides of the Atlantic. Kitson reported essentially the same story to Lord Minto, Governor General of Canada, and apparently also contacted Arthur Lee and Spring-Rice.¹¹⁵ The effect of the story was greatest, however, on Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian Prime Minister, who learned of it from his own sources, and subsequently proposed to Minto that they should meet with Lansdowne and the American Ambassador, Joseph Choate, while they were all in England for the King’s coronation. According to the Governor General, Laurier appeared quite anxious to come to a settlement of some sort on the frontier before gold was discovered somewhere in the

¹¹⁴ Raikes to Lansdowne, May 23, 1902, LP, Named Correspondence, 2. Joseph Chamberlain, July 1899-May 1902, Austen Chamberlain, October 1906-December 1926. Pauncefote died early in the morning on May 24, 1902.

¹¹⁵ Kitson to Minto, May 24, 1902, printed in Paul Stevens and John T. Saywell, eds., *Lord Minto’s Canadian Papers: A Selection of the Public and Private Papers of the Fourth Earl of Minto 1898-1904, Vol. II* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1983), pp. 161-162.

disputed territories and the new American president got his chance to send in the marines.¹¹⁶

At the London meeting, which took place at Lansdowne House on June 23, 1902, the Canadian Prime Minister conceded two major points that eventually facilitated the conclusion of an arbitration treaty. Canada no longer expected to gain a port on the Lynn Canal, and would now also accept a six-person tribunal, which it had previously resisted, to decide the frontier. A few days later, Choate was informed of the volte-face.¹¹⁷ Final negotiations with regard to the actual machinery of arbitration continued into January 1903, with the Canadians returning to their usual plaintiveness and intransigence after having given way. According to Hay, however, Roosevelt only agreed in the end to a tribunal “experiment, to enable the British Government to get out of an absolutely untenable position, with dignity and honour.”¹¹⁸ Hay and Sir Michael Herbert, appointed to replace Pauncefoot as British Ambassador in Washington in October, signed the arbitration treaty on January 23, 1903. It called for “six impartial jurists of repute” to meet and make a final determination and interpretation of the 1825 Anglo-Russian Convention.¹¹⁹

With the last great menace to Anglo-American rapprochement moving towards peaceful arbitration, the last real obstacle to better relations turned out to be

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 164-166, journal entry for June 3, 1902,

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 171 n.1; C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 257-258.

¹¹⁸ Hay to Henry White, September 20, 1903, excerpted in A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, p. 111.

¹¹⁹ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 311.

Lansdowne's 'policy of the entente.' In early November 1902, the Foreign Secretary forged a temporary "iron-clad" alliance with Germany to coerce the Venezuelan dictator Cipriano Castro to pay his country's debts.¹²⁰ Castro seized power in the South American country in 1899, and there followed several years of disorder, causing damage to foreign business interests, and the seizure of British owned ships accused of smuggling and aiding revolutionaries. In August 1901, Venezuela also defaulted on its foreign debt, the majority of which was held by British and German investors.¹²¹ It was for these reasons that Lansdowne contemplated the use of force to bring Castro to heel. In a speech before the United Club in December 1902, the Foreign Secretary declared, to the laughter of those assembled, that Britain did not hold any inveterate antipathy against Venezuela, but he asserted that there would be no quarrel at all if that nation refrained from abusing British subjects and property, paid its debts, and replied to diplomatic representations "in perfectly courteous language." He hoped in future Venezuelans might perhaps be content to put themselves "on a moderate allowance in the matter of revolutions," having "indulged," he believed, in no fewer than one hundred and four in the last seventy years.¹²²

It is still debated among historians as to who approached whom to suggest a joint Anglo-German naval operation to coerce Venezuela. On January 2, 1902, Eckardstein

¹²⁰ Nancy Mitchell, "The Height of the German Challenge: The Venezuela Blockade, 1902-3," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring 1996): 195.

¹²¹ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 269; Warren G. Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean, 1901-1913: A Study in Anglo-American Relations* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1975), pp. 7-9.

¹²² Lansdowne's speech to the United Club on December 12, 1902, *The Times*, December 13, 1902, p. 8.

reported to Berlin that he had been approached by Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Francis Villiers, who informed him that the Cabinet was contemplating action, and might approach Germany in the near future with regard to joint action.¹²³ Independently of this, on January 14 Lansdowne directed Lascelles to enquire as to “what steps” Germany was contemplating, but officials in Berlin did not respond.¹²⁴ Lacking definitive evidence either way, the consensus is that the idea of using force against Venezuela germinated in both London and Berlin roughly simultaneously, and when Metternich initiated more substantial discussions with Lansdowne in July both countries were well aware they had a common interest as well as similar thoughts as to a future course of action.¹²⁵ When the Foreign Secretary laid the whole project before the Prime Minister on October 12, emphasizing that British subjects had been “outrageously treated” for some time, he argued that a final decision for coercion could not wait for the next Cabinet. Although a special Cabinet did meet five days later, there is no question that the project was pushed through by Lansdowne, and he alone bore primary responsibility for its success or failure.¹²⁶ Notwithstanding its shadowy beginnings, the “iron-clad” alliance was cemented in early November with both nations pledging their support for the other’s demands and agreeing to terminate their concerted action only

¹²³ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 271.

¹²⁴ Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean*, p. 13.

¹²⁵ Warren Kneer argued that “One can only concluded that both countries ‘instigated’ the joint intervention,” while Nancy Mitchell maintained that whole issue is “buried forever in innuendo,” and that the “only thing that seems clear is that this was a case of dovetailing interests gelling at the same time” (Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean*, p. 13; Mitchell, “The Height of the German Challenge,” p. 189).

¹²⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 12, 1902, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f35.

upon mutual agreement.¹²⁷ On November 13 Herbert informed Hay of Anglo-German plans, and while the American Secretary of State was only mildly fearful of troublesome resolutions from the House of Representatives, the British Ambassador was quite anxious and confessed: “I wish we were going to punish Venezuela without the aid of Germany, for I am not sure that joint action will be very palatable here.”¹²⁸ Lansdowne responded by pointing out that the Germans were working well with Britain with regard to Venezuela, and would only admit that it was “perhaps unlucky that we should be harnessed to them but it was quite inevitable.”¹²⁹ Although he had been at his post for only a few weeks, Herbert’s fear proved well-founded.

The reasons behind Lansdowne’s controversial decision to act in concert with Germany in a military operation in America’s backyard are not difficult to discern. Anglo-American rapprochement did not preclude the Foreign Secretary’s overall ‘policy of the entente.’ The Venezuela crisis offered a further opportunity to draw closer to Germany, and this goal remained an important part of Lansdowne’s foreign policy. The Foreign Secretary was not blind, however, to American sensibilities, and nor was he “for once caught napping” as Lord George Hamilton concluded and George Monger later echoed.¹³⁰ A year earlier in the midst of his quest for an Anglo-German understanding Lansdowne felt “bound to admit” that prominent among the obstacles to a “full-blown

¹²⁷ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 273.

¹²⁸ Herbert to Lansdowne, November 19, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

¹²⁹ Lansdowne to Herbert, December 4, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

¹³⁰ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 105.

defensive alliance” was “The risk of entangling ourselves in a policy which might be hostile to America.” Moreover, he stated that “With our knowledge of the German Emperor’s views in regard to the United States, this is to my mind a formidable obstacle.” Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary had proceeded.¹³¹ Explaining his Venezuela policy in the House of Lords in March 1903, Lansdowne argued that “With so plain an indication as that of the policy of the United States Government, there was no reason why we should have had any misgiving on the ground that objection might be anticipated in that quarter to measures of coercion.” In fact, Lansdowne claimed that the Foreign Office had sought “to make assurance doubly sure” that nothing was done to “give offence to the susceptibilities of the United States, or to indicate to them that we have any desire to impugn the Monroe Doctrine.”¹³² Although Chamberlain would later claim that he had “warned” the Foreign Secretary that “joint action with Germany would be unpopular,” Lansdowne had every reason to believe that the Foreign Office had prepared the ground thoroughly and that the United States had no objection to the Anglo-German operation.¹³³

The Germans too had been cautious, and as early as December 1901 they had let the United States know that coercive action might prove necessary to settle its claims, and conveyed specifically that they had “no purpose or intention to make even the

¹³¹ Lansdowne memorandum, November 22 (also dated Nov. 11), 1901, BD II no.92.

¹³² Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CXVIII, March 2, 1903, columns 1065-1066; *The Times*, March 3, 1903, p. 4.

¹³³ Joe Chamberlain to Austen Chamberlain, January 9, 1903, excerpted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 105.

smallest acquisition of territory.”¹³⁴ Bülow reported to the Kaiser that the American response indicated that they had “no objection.”¹³⁵ This American response was subsequently relayed to Lansdowne by Metternich on the very day in November 1902 the “iron-clad” alliance was formed.¹³⁶

When the Foreign Secretary put the whole project before a special Cabinet on October 17, 1902, he maintained that Britain could “assume the acquiescence of the United States.”¹³⁷ Among the more prominent of these indications of acquiescence were statements from senior members of the American administration, to which Lansdowne would refer in the defense of his policy in March 1903. For example, in July 1901, Vice-President Roosevelt wrote to the German Ambassador in Washington, Speck von Sternberg: “If any South American State misbehaves towards any European country, let the European country spank it.” He hastened to add, however, that he did “not wish the United States or any other country to get additional territory in South America.”¹³⁸ It was fear of the latter, along with the sight of Britain conducting a military operation in partnership with the Germans, which drove public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic into opposition. Warren Kneer argued that the Foreign Office underestimated “the

¹³⁴ Howard Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 396.

¹³⁵ Bülow to the Emperor, January 20, 1902, GDD III, pp. 160-162.

¹³⁶ Lansdowne to George Buchanan, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin, November 11, 1902, BD II no.174.

¹³⁷ Lansdowne’s memorandum of October 17, 1902, quoted in Mitchell, “The Height of the German Challenge,” p. 192.

¹³⁸ Roosevelt to Sternberg, July 12, 1901, *Roosevelt Letters*, Vol. 3, pp. 115-117, letter no.2099.

dangers of public opinion in the United States,” while being “primarily interested in the probable reaction of the Roosevelt administration.”¹³⁹ In their defense, however, it is evident that American officials also failed to judge correctly the adverse reaction of their own populace.

After issuing their final warnings to Castro—that went unanswered—Britain and Germany delivered their ultimata on December 7, 1902, and suspended diplomatic relations. On December 9 the intervening powers began to seize Venezuelan gunboats, the dictator’s only warships. Two seized by German forces proved only partially operational and thus a hindrance to their captor, and so were sunk unceremoniously.¹⁴⁰ Their destruction, unfortunately, only gave fuel to newspapers in the United States to attack the intervention as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. The *New York Times* characterized the sinking as “fairly comparable to acts of wanton devastation in warfare, which have long been discountenanced by civilized nations,” and called for arbitration. The gunboat incident was followed quickly on December 13 by a joint Anglo-German bombardment of the forts at Puerto Cabello, and the London *Daily Mail* felt compelled to conclude that it was “now too painfully clear that in this miserable Venezuela business the British nation has fallen into a trap laid by Germany.”¹⁴¹ This was far from the truth, of course; the Germans from nearly the beginning had committed themselves

¹³⁹ Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

¹⁴¹ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 277; *New York Times*, December 12, 1902, p. 8; *Ibid.*, December 14, 1902, p. 6; Mitchell, “The Height of the German Challenge,” p. 190.

entirely, with the purpose of avoiding blame, to the British program.¹⁴² As the blockade was firmly being established, however, opposition in the United States and at home in Britain mounted.

When Castro offered, via Washington, to settle the dispute through arbitration the same day Puerto Cabello was bombarded, the Cabinet accepted the proposal gladly at their next meeting on December 16. Lansdowne informed Henry White, the First Secretary at the American Embassy in London, however, that the blockade would have to remain in place until a final settlement was reached.¹⁴³ The same day the Cabinet grasped what it could in order to salvage what increasingly looked like a foreign policy disaster, Metternich, who also had correctly judged the situation, informed Berlin that the British cabinet was “in the long run, too weak to stick to its guns,” adding that the sooner they could “honorably withdraw from this business in concert with England, the better it will be.”¹⁴⁴ On December 18, the German Ambassador informed Lansdowne that his country accepted the proposal of arbitration.¹⁴⁵ Although the principle of arbitration had been accepted by the intervening powers, it was now up to Castro to accept their minimal prior demands, which were that the first rank claims of the powers would not be subject to arbitration, and that before any arbitration of secondary claims

¹⁴² See Bülow to the Emperor, December 12, 1902, GDD III, pp. 162-164.

¹⁴³ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 279-280; Lansdowne to White, December 18, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁴⁴ Metternich quoted in Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, December 18, 1902, BD II no.181.

was to begin, Venezuela would have to accept that it was liable for any damages that had occurred during the years of disorder.¹⁴⁶

In the interval, Anglo-American relations continued to suffer. Herbert reported that the negative impression still existed in the United States that “we are making war to collect debts.” He could not help but feel some “malevolent satisfaction,” however, that the intensity of the public expressions against Germany outstripped those directed against Britain, but he was warned by one Congressman that Britain could “spank” Venezuela if she wished, “but don’t take too long about it.”¹⁴⁷ The Foreign Secretary understood perfectly the need for a quick resolution but anticipated difficulties in getting Castro to accept the prior stipulations of the intervening powers. He was growing concerned as well over the “furious & unreasoning” anti-German feeling that was spreading throughout Britain. On December 22, Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The Rowers” appeared in *The Times*, the fourth stanza of which stated bluntly: “And ye tell us now of a secret vow, ye have made with an open foe!” The last stanza declared, moreover, that Britain had leagued itself anew “With the Goth and the shameless Hun!”¹⁴⁸ The identity of Britain’s “open foe” was hardly a mystery. Lansdowne thought the poem “an outrage,” and that matters had “been allowed to go much too far.” By the last week of December, he would have gladly accepted Roosevelt as arbiter of the whole Venezuela

¹⁴⁶ Lansdowne to Herbert (draft), January 13, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁴⁷ Herbert to Lansdowne, December 19, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁴⁸ Rudyard Kipling’s “The Rowers”, *The Times*, December 22, 1902, p. 9.

affair, if only for the sake of concluding the matter quickly “with a minimum of pedantry and red tape,” but unfortunately the President declined the offer.¹⁴⁹

With the Venezuela crisis escalating, the heavy pressure of Foreign Office work began to adversely affect Lansdowne both physically and mentally.¹⁵⁰ When New Year’s Day arrived and there was still no word with regard to Venezuela’s acceptance of the arbitration stipulations, the Foreign Secretary despaired of ever getting away for his holiday before Parliament returned.¹⁵¹ He wrote to Devonshire rather sullenly that as things stood, he did not see “any traces of happiness” at the outset of this New Year.¹⁵² Later that day, however, word came that all the terms of the intervening powers were finally accepted by Castro. Nevertheless, Lansdowne was forced to remain in London.¹⁵³

Instead of turning the whole matter over to The Hague Tribunal—to Lansdowne’s mind it was “a cumbrous piece of machinery to set going”—the Foreign Secretary accepted for the sake of expediency the unconventional procedure of direct negotiations at Washington.¹⁵⁴ Separate talks between Venezuela and each intervening

¹⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Herbert, January 2, 1903, PRO FO 800/144; Lansdowne to Herbert, December 27, 1902, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁵⁰ Lansdowne to Herbert, January 2, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁵¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 1, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f42.

¹⁵² Lansdowne to Devonshire, January 1, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of the Exchequer.

¹⁵³ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 1, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff5-8.

¹⁵⁴ Lansdowne to Herbert, January 2, 1903, PRO FO 800/144; Lansdowne to Herbert, January 13, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

power began on January 21, 1903, but negotiations refused to pass quickly or quietly. On the day negotiations began, the Germans bombarded the fort of San Carlos at Maracaibo, claiming of course that the Venezuelans had fired first.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, after the British secured a payment in cash of £5,500 for their first rank claims, the Germans demanded a similar cash payout for their first rank claim of £66,000. Even after Lansdowne arranged a Venezuelan counter offer of an immediate cash payment equal to that being paid to Britain, as well as precedence for Germany over all other powers in the payout of the balance of their claims, it still failed to satisfy the Germans who were now standing firm as a point of honor.¹⁵⁶ The “hard bargaining” of the Germans sent Lansdowne’s “brain . . . reeling,” and this unfortunately coincided with his nearly annual bout with influenza. At the end of January he informed Balfour, who was also on the sick list, that his doctor had virtually ordered him to leave London for the fresher air of Bowood.¹⁵⁷ The news from Washington was so unsatisfactory, however, that the Foreign Secretary had all but given up leaving the capital. There was even the fear now that nothing at all would be settled at Washington.¹⁵⁸

It was at this stage of the negotiations that the Foreign Office received a telegram from Herbert stating that since December “a great change” in American feeling toward

¹⁵⁵ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 291-292. The King let it be known that in his opinion “if the Germans continue to behave in Venezuela in the same violent way as now, the sooner we cut ourselves adrift from them the better” (Knollys to Barrington, January 25, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f103).

¹⁵⁶ Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁵⁷ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 27(?), 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff25-26; Lansdowne to Balfour, February 4, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff33-34.

¹⁵⁸ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 29, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff27-28.

Britain had taken place, and “if this German alliance continues much longer it will seriously impair our good relations with this country.” He added ominously that “In American opinion the time has almost come for us to choose between the friendship of the United States & that of Germany.”¹⁵⁹ When the Germans refused next a half payment of their first rank claims within thirty days, Lansdowne was forced to pressure his alliance partner to back down.¹⁶⁰ He relayed to Herbert that he had spoken frankly with Metternich on the “gravity of the situation and importance of immediate settlement,” and had hinted that he did “not think [the] position of Germany would be enviable if negotiations fell through under such circumstances.”¹⁶¹ The Germans were slow to take the hint, but fortunately for Lansdowne the Venezuelan negotiators soon afterward agreed to a plan that would pay Germany its full first rank claim in installments over the following five months. The final protocol was signed on February 13, 1903, and the remaining secondary claims were referred to The Hague.¹⁶² The British blockade was lifted the next day, and the Prime Minister made a point of praising publicly the Monroe Doctrine before a gathering of Liverpool Conservatives. He declared that that great American document had “no enemies” in Britain that he knew of, and to the approval of those assembled he pronounced that Britain “welcome[d] any

¹⁵⁹ Herbert to Lansdowne, February 7, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁶⁰ Kneer, *Great Britain and the Caribbean*, p. 55.

¹⁶¹ Lansdowne to Herbert, February 9, 1903, BD II no.200.

¹⁶² Lansdowne to Lascelles, February 12, 1903, BD II no.201.

increase of the influence of the United States of America upon the great Western Hemisphere.”¹⁶³

C. S. Campbell concluded that if the purpose of joint action with Germany was to foster better relations, Lansdowne “displayed a serious lack of imagination,” for “the intervention aroused such an outcry against Germany as virtually to end hopes of an alliance.”¹⁶⁴ Since no other member of the Cabinet, other than the Foreign Secretary, likely gave more than a passing thought to such hopes any longer, the damage involved was minimal and confined to exposing the ill-founded premises of Lansdowne’s ‘policy of the entente.’ The further charge that the Foreign Secretary showed “a want of imagination,” or required more “depth of mind,” was longstanding, however, and dated back to the assessments given by his childhood tutors. Those like Lansdowne who considered themselves at times business-minded, pragmatic, and liberal realists, too easily forgot that the concept of the “invisible hand” was itself laid upon a foundation of faith.

Nancy Mitchell maintained that while Lansdowne was indeed “caught napping,” his miscalculation of American reaction was “completely understandable” for “He would have had to have been a psychic—one who could see into the future as well as read other people’s minds—to have predicted the uproar in the United States.”¹⁶⁵ While there is much to support such a sympathetic reading of the evidence, Lansdowne was

¹⁶³ Balfour’s speech to the Conservative Club of Liverpool on February 13, 1903, *The Times*, February 14, 1903, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, p. 276.

¹⁶⁵ Mitchell, “The Height of the German Challenge,” p. 190.

still all too ready to discount the minds of those who might not operate upon that higher plane where gentleman diplomats ruminate. Although the Foreign Secretary thought it:

quite possible that there may have been a section of public opinion in the United States, not, perhaps, sufficiently informed as to the facts of the case, which at one time took a different and somewhat excited view of the question; but now that matters have advanced as far as they have towards a settlement I shall remain sanguine that no one whose opinion is worth having in the United States will hold any other view with regard to the action and conduct of His Majesty's Government except that throughout the whole of these negotiations that conduct has been perfectly sincere and entirely above suspicion.¹⁶⁶

Following the signing of the protocol, Lansdowne wrote to Herbert that he had known from the beginning that if there was to be trouble it would not be due to the conduct of the United States Government, “but to ebullitions of ill-informed popular feeling.”¹⁶⁷ A year later, when The Hague Tribunal delivered its judgment on the remaining claims in favor of the intervening powers, the Foreign Secretary pronounced it “A great triumph for common sense.”¹⁶⁸

With regard to the conduct of their “iron-clad” ally, Lansdowne believed that the Germans had “on the whole behaved well, although they have been fussy & fond of raising unnecessary points, but they have almost invariably given way to us.”¹⁶⁹ Writing to Lascelles two days later, the Foreign Secretary confirmed that the two governments had indeed “pulled together over the Venezuelan affair,” but

¹⁶⁶ Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CXVIII, March 2, 1903, column 1068.

¹⁶⁷ Lansdowne to Herbert, February 20, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁶⁸ Lansdowne to Metternich, February 22, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Herbert, February 20, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

he could also well understand that the “German Ministers are taken aback at the violence of the anti-German feeling which is being exhibited here.”¹⁷⁰ Despite what Metternich characterized as Britain’s “American fetish,” combined as it was with a seemingly natural dislike of Germany, he informed the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that Lansdowne was “a man of honour, who sticks to the promises he has made.”¹⁷¹

This personal bridge of understanding and trust, however, was the extent of the success for the Foreign Secretary’s efforts to forge an Anglo-German entente. While Anglo-Saxonism triumphed, Pan-Teutonism proved unfortunately to be a chimera. Lansdowne’s efforts to secure British participation in the primarily German financed Baghdad Railway scheme met defeat in April 1903. The Anatolian Railway was to be extended to Baghdad and Basra, and Germany invited other powers to participate and help defray the enormous cost in exchange for a share of the railway. In January 1901, Lansdowne had argued in favor of British investment in great part because it would “please Germany,” and he continued his support for the next two years in the face of opposition from Russia, the press, and Joe Chamberlain.¹⁷² Because he believed that this “most important highway to the East”—with an eventual terminus on the Persian Gulf—would

¹⁷⁰ Lascelles to Lansdowne, January 30, 1903, PRO FO 800/129; Lansdowne to Lascelles, February 22, 1903, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁷¹ Metternich to Bülow, February 4, 1903, GDD III, pp. 164-165.

¹⁷² Lansdowne minute on Sanderson memorandum, January 4, 1901, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 118; Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 121-122.

eventually be built with or without British involvement, the Foreign Secretary believed the lack of British participation would be a “national misfortune.” Moreover, he maintained that the internationalization of such an important rail line would have found unanimous support in the Cabinet, “but for the anti-German fever from which the country is suffering.”¹⁷³ Lansdowne would later recount to Curzon that such a “howl arose”—a “Jihad” even—against British participation that the government was forced to draw in its horns.¹⁷⁴

Lansdowne willingly admitted that Germany had “behaved shabbily” toward Britain on a good many occasions, but he insisted it was “not quite true to say that they have never made any attempt to cultivate good relations with us.” He attributed at least some of the divergence between himself and his colleagues with regard to their attitudes toward Germany to the fact that he had “perhaps become so much used to the querulous tone of the German Government” that it produced less of an effect on him. He was, at any rate, “more inclined to meet it with ridicule than with violent indignation.”¹⁷⁵

Anglo-American rapprochement had yet to reach its denouement, and following on the heels of the Venezuelan episode it was increasingly apparent that Britain had little alternative but to appease. On the day that British warships in the

¹⁷³ Lansdowne memorandum, “Bagdad Railway,” April 14, 1903, PRO FO 800/145.

¹⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, September 22, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f156; Lansdowne to Curzon, July 24, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of the Exchequer.

¹⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 18, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f138.

Caribbean lifted their blockade, Hay informed Herbert of the names of the three American members of the Alaskan tribunal appointed by the President. They were Elihu Root, the Secretary of War, Henry Cabot Lodge, senior Republican Senator from Massachusetts, and George Turner, retired Senator from the state of Washington. All three had attended law school, but none was an “impartial jurist of repute.” Both Lodge and Turner had in fact already taken very public stances against the Canadian position. Herbert was naturally “very sore” over the President’s appointment of three politicians instead of three judges, and believed he had been previously misled by Hay. Nevertheless, he advised the Foreign Office that Britain should still appoint the best men possible.¹⁷⁶ Lansdowne minuted his concurrence, arguing that although the US selection was “unfortunate,” to his mind “it would be most unwise either to protest or to reply by selecting mediocrities.”¹⁷⁷ It was true that Hay had been overruled in the choice of the American jurists, but he later defended them arguing that there was “not a man in the United States out of an idiot asylum, who has not an opinion on the subject,” while at the same time there was “not an intelligent Englishman who does not know they have no case.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Herbert to Lansdowne, February 19, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁷⁷ Lansdowne minute on Herbert to Lansdowne, February 19, 1903, PRO FO 800/144; Lansdowne to Minto, February 21, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of the Exchequer.

¹⁷⁸ Hay to Henry White, April 10, 1903, excerpted in A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, p. 115.

The Foreign Secretary was “grievously disappointed” at Roosevelt’s appointments, but rebuffed suggestions that Britain appoint three County Court Judges as its representatives.¹⁷⁹ As always, shabby dealings, however disquieting, never completely overwhelmed Lansdowne’s commitment and desire for the quick settlement of outstanding disputes. Indeed, when Herbert had asked at the beginning of the year whether any Canadians need be appointed to the tribunal, the Foreign Secretary had admitted that they should “never be allowed to exclude the Canadian element altogether,” for the Colonial Office was being “very Colonial” about matters, but that one Canadian “w[oul]d be enough.”¹⁸⁰ When all was said and done, Britain appointed two Canadians, Sir Louis A. Jetté, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec and formerly a Justice on the Supreme Court of Quebec, and J. D. Armour, Chief Justice of Ontario (who later died and was replaced by A. B. Aylesworth). The single British member was Lord Alverstone, Lord Chief Justice of England, and when negotiations convened in London in early September, his role soon became that of arbiter between the two North American factions.¹⁸¹ When the tribunal’s decision came down on October 20 it was largely in favor of the United States, and the Lord Chief Justice had voted with the Americans. The final award, which the Canadian commissioners refused to sign, gave the inlets, ports, and settlements to the United States, split the difference between the

¹⁷⁹ Lansdowne to Herbert, February 20, 1903, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Herbert, January 2, 1903, PRO FO 800/144; A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, p. 113.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

American and Canadian claims with regard to the line of the border between the Lynn Canal and the Portland Canal (which marked the southern border of the Alaskan panhandle), and decided largely in favor of Canada's claim as to the exact location and course of the Portland Canal.

It remains difficult to prove one way or the other whether British leaders, responding to private warnings from Roosevelt, exerted pressure on Alverstone to come to the proper judgment, but Balfour, more than Lansdowne, has always been the leading suspect. Lansdowne did meet privately with Choate at the Foreign Office on October 14, and the American Ambassador stressed that this was the last opportunity for a settlement and if the tribunal failed the President would consider the American claim proven and act accordingly. Choate then reported to Hay that if it had not already been done, Alverstone would soon be informed privately of the necessity for a definite conclusion to the matter.¹⁸² Lansdowne's version of the meeting differed somewhat. The Foreign Secretary wrote to Balfour that Choate spoke solemnly as to the consequences if the tribunal failed to settle the dispute, and "appeared surprised when I told him that Alverstone was not 'riding to orders,' and would certainly resent a suggestion that he should decide the question referred to him otherwise than according to the evidence." Although Lansdowne agreed roughly with Choate's lines of an acceptable compromise—which coincidentally happened to correspond with the eventual settlement—the Foreign

¹⁸² Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 184; C. S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, pp. 334-339.

Secretary insisted that it would be improper for him to pressure the British commissioners. Lansdowne afterward relayed the conversation to Alverstone, who was somewhat indignant at American conduct, but according to the Foreign Secretary the Lord Chief Justice was amenable to compromise, and the former “made no secret” of the government’s “great desire for a settlement.”¹⁸³ It is difficult to gauge whether or not Lansdowne’s ‘hint’ to Alverstone reflected the influence of American threats, or merely a recapitulation of his own long-held views. There also is no evidence in the Lansdowne and Balfour correspondence that suggests an organized conspiracy to influence the Lord Chief Justice. Alverstone’s immediate post-award letter to the Prime Minister, however, in which he complained of the intransigence of his Canadian colleagues, concludes with the line: “I have much to tell you when you come to town which I cannot put in a letter.”¹⁸⁴

Lansdowne’s public defense of the tribunal’s decision as a satisfactory one, if mixed, with some gains and some losses, has been characterized by A. E. Campbell as “sheer dishonesty.”¹⁸⁵ Even privately, however, the Foreign Secretary argued as much. On receiving news of the award he informed Balfour that on the main point of the inlets, the “American contention was perfectly good,”

¹⁸³ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 16, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff71-74.

¹⁸⁴ Alverstone to Balfour, October 20, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff78-79.

¹⁸⁵ A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States*, p. 121. Lansdowne argued, moreover, that he did “not think that any one seriously expected that we should obtain a favourable verdict on all points” (Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CXXIX, column 39).

while there had been a compromise with regard to the position of the mountains, and the issue of the Portland Channel was “virtually decided in favour of Canada” except for “the surrender of two tiny little islands west of Wales Island, the value of which they [the Canadians] have somewhat tardily discovered.” The Canadians might feel themselves betrayed—and Lansdowne soon found their many complaints “very undignified”—but the Foreign Secretary was sanguine that their indignation would soon evaporate.¹⁸⁶

The Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ had its beginnings in the opening years of the twentieth century, but it was not the conscious, or even unconscious, product of Lansdowne’s foreign policy. Notwithstanding the progress made, one could argue that on the whole the Foreign Secretary’s ultimately unsuccessful ‘policy of the entente’ acted as a negative force in as much as it often appeared self-defeating. Monger was correct in maintaining that throughout 1903 Lansdowne “continued to be borne along by events he could not control.”¹⁸⁷ His policies were inhibited by public opinion he considered unreasoned, and which at times took an “almost morbid interest” in subjects it did not fully grasp, such as the “insensate outcry” against his Baghdad Railway

¹⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 20, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff75-77; Lansdowne to Balfour, October 23, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f63. Minto reported that Laurier talked of “letting bygones be bygones,” but the latter then irritated the Foreign Secretary by refusing to let any mention of his conversation with Choate back in the summer of 1902 appear in the official Blue Book (Minto to Lansdowne, December 29, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of the Exchequer.; Lansdowne to Minto, February 4, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of the Exchequer).

¹⁸⁷ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 123.

scheme.¹⁸⁸ The Foreign Secretary found the situation both “ridiculous” and “humiliating.”¹⁸⁹ He was forced to make the ‘irrational’ choice between America and Germany, and compelled to acknowledge that in future he would “have to be extremely careful in dealing with a subject which is imperfectly understood by the public.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Lansdowne to Wolff, September 7, 1905, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous); Lansdowne’s minute on Sir N. O’Conor, British Ambassador at Constantinople, to Lansdowne, December 15, 1903, BD II no.224.

¹⁸⁹ Lansdowne to O’Conor, May 6, 1903, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 122.

¹⁹⁰ Lansdowne to Wolff, September 7, 1905, PRO FO 800/145 (Miscellaneous).

CHAPTER VII

ENTENTE AND ESTRANGEMENT:

THE TRIUMPH AND FAILURE OF THE 'POLICY OF THE ENTENTE'

The Anglo-French Entente

The Anglo-French Entente, signed on April 8, 1904, arguably was Lansdowne's greatest accomplishment while at the Foreign Office. Perhaps it is remembered now, however, equally for what it was not, than for what it became. It was not an alliance, it did not contain a military guarantee to France, and it was not intended to be the foundation of an anti-German coalition. In the words of Thomas Otte, it was the result of "a sensible policy of rational and comprehensive compromise in an effort to safeguard vital British imperial interests in the periphery of European politics without, it was thought, incurring major European obligations."¹ The Entente was initially praised, in fact, by radical Liberal opponents of 'balance of power' diplomacy. While they had been wary of the consequences of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, most radicals, according to Howard Weinroth, believed that the Entente Cordiale "heralded the rejuvenation of European Liberalism," and was a "first step toward a greater union of nations."² It is well-known that Lansdowne, for the remainder of his life, maintained that he never intended a military alliance with France, much less the isolation of Germany, and there

¹ Thomas Otte, "The Elusive Balance: British foreign policy and the French entente before the First World War," in Alan Sharp and Glyn Stone, eds., *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and cooperation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 16.

² Howard S. Weinroth, "The British Radicals and the Balance of Power, 1902-1914," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 13, No. 4 (December, 1970): 654, 657.

is little evidence that he approved the Anglo-French staff talks that began shortly before he left office in December 1905.³ The Anglo-French Entente negotiated by the Foreign Secretary was a colonial agreement meant to settle outstanding imperial disputes, and foster international peace.

Although the Entente was to become the foundation of one of the so-called ‘entangling alliances’ that encouraged the ‘slide’ to war in August 1914—and as a selling point Lansdowne had noted specifically to the Cabinet and others that he believed in time France would endeavor to bring Britain and Russia together—the agreement accorded with the ‘policy of the entente’ the Foreign Secretary had been employing for nearly four years. Two weeks prior to the signing, Lansdowne informed Lascelles that he would continue to “welcome any evidence shewing that Germany wishes to keep well with us.” Lansdowne realized, to a limited extent, the danger the Entente might hold for Anglo-German relations, and the diplomatic hornet’s nest that Morocco represented explained in part his initial reluctance to take up early French approaches. He was more inclined, however, to regard it as “a test case, so far as German good will is concerned,” and he urged Lascelles to convince his German friends, if possible, “that they have a golden opportunity of burying the hatchet and securing our lasting gratitude.”⁴

³ John W. Coogan and Peter F. Coogan, “The British Cabinet and the Anglo-French Staff Talks, 1905-1914: Who Knew What and When Did He Know It?” *The Journal of British Studies* Vol. 24, No. 1 (January, 1985): 111 n.3.

⁴ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 23, 1904, PRO FO 800/129; Lansdowne memorandum, September 10, 1903, quoted in P. J. V. Rolo, *Entente Cordiale: The Origins and Negotiation of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 204.

Germany's leaders followed a different path however, one which marked the utter failure of Lansdowne's 'policy of the entente.'

Even with Lansdowne at the helm at the Foreign Office, a settlement of outstanding Anglo-French disputes first required a change in both French policy and public opinion. As noted by the French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, the British Foreign Secretary "never takes the initiative and it is necessary to force his hand a little in order to make him more communicative," so it was going to be up to France to recognize the benefits of rapprochement.⁵ As recently as 1898, however, British and French forces had faced each other at Fashoda in the Sudan, the direct result of a challenge by France to the sixteen-year British occupation of Egypt. That famed standoff ended in a French retreat, but one year later the Boer War provided the French Foreign Minister, Théophile Déclassé, a fresh opportunity to dislodge the British from Egypt through international intervention. He was to be disappointed, however, by Germany. Déclassé came to understand somewhat belatedly that Franco-German cooperation against Britain, much less agreement over French interests in northwest Africa, would only ever come at the cost of a renunciation by France to any future claims on Alsace and Lorraine. This was an unacceptable bargain for any French politician, and thus, for Déclassé, any realistic hope of ending British occupation of Egypt faded.⁶

⁵ Cambon to Déclassé, August 6, 1903, quoted in Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 171.

⁶ Christopher Andrew, "France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 10, No. 1 (1967): 96, 98-99.

Notwithstanding his particular grievance with regard to Egypt, Declassé had never opposed outright the settlement of other contentious issues between France and Britain. Since 1898, the more Anglophile Cambon had been instructed to seek a settlement over, *inter alia*, African frontiers and France's special fishing rights in Newfoundland.⁷ His efforts had been for naught, however, as Salisbury was inclined to the view that while Britain's "policy is not to *presume* the hostility of the Government of France," he also believed that "anything like hearty good will between the two nations will not be possible." At most, he hoped that "a mutual temper of apathetic tolerance may be cultivated on both sides, without sacrificing the interests of others."⁸ A change at the Foreign Office and the evolution in Declassé's strategic thinking—the result of Germany's hard bargaining—brought about the necessary circumstances for Anglo-French rapprochement.

It was Cambon, working independently, who made the first approaches to the new British Foreign Secretary in 1901, offering to relinquish France's fishing rights in Newfoundland in exchange for British consent to French predominance in Morocco. Lansdowne offered seemingly a unique opportunity for future settlement, for in his own words, written to the British Ambassador to Paris, Sir Edmund Monson, upon assuming his post, he was "united with [France] by many ties."⁹ With regard to those family connections, Monson reported that Declassé and other members of the French

⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸ Salisbury to Curzon, April 8, 1899, excerpted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 16.

⁹ Lansdowne to Monson, November 12, 1900, PRO FO 800/125.

Government were also “much interested.”¹⁰ No doubt Cambon was especially pleased, because although he would eventually spend twenty-two years as France’s Ambassador in London, he never learned to speak English.¹¹ Despite such promising signs, however, Lansdowne was not open to Cambon’s early proposals which he characterized as needlessly “provoking an international controversy” by “dealing prematurely with the ‘liquidation’ of Morocco,” which he was sure would “lead to serious complications.”¹² In addition to the Foreign Secretary’s wish to preserve the status quo in Morocco, there also was some apprehension that the French Ambassador was acting without instructions. Moreover, Monson was increasingly disenchanted with Declassé, and in November 1902 he informed his chief that the French Foreign Minister could not be trusted, and was “not only a liar, but a clumsy liar also.”¹³

The subsequent change in Lansdowne’s attitude can be attributed to two primary causes. The first was the outbreak in late December 1902 of a new rebellion in Morocco which this time appeared to be a significant threat to the Sultan’s authority. In the midst of the Venezuelan Crisis, and having been able to return briefly to Bowood for the holiday, the Foreign Secretary was most “perturbed” by latest news of the Sultan’s reverses, for he was sure, he informed Monson, that if there was “a catastrophe, the

¹⁰ Monson to Lansdowne, November 14, 1900, PRO FO 800/125.

¹¹ Keith Eubank, *Paul Cambon: Master Diplomatist* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 209.

¹² Lansdowne to Monson, August 6, 1902, PRO FO 800/125; See also Lansdowne to Monson, January 2, 1902, PRO FO 800/125.

¹³ Monson to Lansdowne, August 23, 1902, PRO FO 800/125; Monson to Lansdowne, November 28, 1902, PRO FO 800/125; Monson to Lansdowne, December 31, 1902, PRO FO 800/125.

French will certainly take advantage of it, & renew the overtures which, as you will recollect, Cambon has more than once made to me for an ‘arrangement’ between us & which would certainly not be to the advantage of Morocco.”¹⁴

The second cause of Lansdowne’s turnabout was that the anticipated new overture from the French Ambassador—which came three days later—was made, according to Lansdowne’s own account of the meeting, without reference to “liquidation,” and “represented the French Government as the leading advocate of non-intervention and of the maintenance of the *status quo*.” If intervention by outside forces proved necessary, however, the Ambassador expressed the wish that participation be restricted to those powers with a paramount interest in Morocco, these being France, Britain and Spain. When questioned by the Foreign Secretary on this point, Cambon admitted that the country France wished specifically to exclude was Germany.¹⁵ Despite reports from Monson and Durand, who was Ambassador to Spain at the time, which cast doubt as to the veracity of this newfound French support for the status quo in Morocco, Lansdowne judged the French government to be sincere.¹⁶ Indeed, the Foreign Secretary had already informed the Prime Minister that he was prepared to work with France and Spain if necessary. Balfour sympathized with Lansdowne’s decision, but was skeptical as to whether existing French policy would remain unchanged for too long. In general, however, the premier was “rather inclined to think that the more intervention in the

¹⁴ Lansdowne to Monson, December 28, 1902, PRO FO 800/125.

¹⁵ Lansdowne to Monson, December 31, 1902, BD II no.330.

¹⁶ Durand to Lansdowne, January 3, 1903, BD II no.332; Lansdowne to Durand, January 5, 1903, BD II no.333; Monson to Lansdowne, January 9, 1903, BD II no.334.

affairs of these semi-barbarous states (when it becomes inevitable) is made a matter of European concern, the better.”¹⁷ With regard to Germany’s proposed exclusion, and notwithstanding Lansdowne’s pointed questioning of Cambon, neither the Prime Minister nor his Foreign Secretary appeared overly concerned. In light of the public outcry against Anglo-German joint action against Venezuela at the time this is understandable, and it was not a decision influenced by any personal Germanophobia on the part of either minister.

The Foreign Secretary does not appear to have been hurried by external events. Although Monger argued that “What finally brought Lansdowne, after so much hesitation, to broach the subject of an entente was the serious news from the Far East,” this conclusion deserves some reconsideration.¹⁸ The “serious news” to which he referred was the start of Russo-Japanese negotiations over Manchuria and Korea, but Monger’s assertion makes sense only if the Foreign Secretary believed war between the two powers to be inevitable in July 1903, and he did not. Moreover, Lansdowne was prepared to meet Cambon’s approaches more favorably some six months prior to the commencement of these talks, but was willing to await the next French initiative rather than assume the role of the pursuer. He later declared to Durand, with some pride, that it was his attitude of refusing to discuss “schemes of partition or premature attempts at liquidation” that showed the French Government that they would have to be “moderate

¹⁷ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 113; Balfour to Lansdowne, January 2, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff9-12.

¹⁸ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 128.

in their demands & also that they must be prepared to pay us handsomely at other points for being complaisant.”¹⁹

In the interval, the King made his famous state visit to France in May 1903. Although he was wrongly credited by many as the architect of the Entente, Edward’s role was not entirely inconsequential. Balfour objected vehemently some years later to serious historians relying on “a foolish piece of gossip” in attributing the ‘policy of the entente’ to the King. He declared to Lansdowne that he could not remember the King ever making “an important suggestion of any sort on large questions of policy.”²⁰ Nevertheless, Edward’s visit to Paris—which was his idea—did help to alter for the better public and press sentiment in both countries.²¹ There would be no “insensate outcry” eleven months later when it was learned that Britain and France had buried their differences. The King might even deserve some further credit, for though having first deprecated an immediate return visit by the President of France, Émile Loubet, to England, he changed course, believing a delayed visit might affect negatively the good feelings so recently generated.²² Edward’s well-known pro-French attitude and

¹⁹ Lansdowne to Durand, July 14, 1903, PRO FO 800/142.

²⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 11, 1915, LP, Named Correspondence, A. J. Balfour, August 1895-January 1915. A year earlier, in reference to the speech he gave on the occasion of the death Edward VII, Balfour declared: “What I said, and what I think, is that the late King was a great Constitutional monarch; that his personality enabled him effectually to use his unique position as a means of bringing the hearts of nations closer together, and that in this and other ways he did things which no amount of ‘cleverness’ would have enabled a smaller man to do” (Balfour to Lansdowne, December 13, 1913, LP, Named Correspondence, A. J. Balfour, August 1895-January 1915).

²¹ Christopher Andrew, *Théophile Declassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale: A Reappraisal of French Foreign Policy 1898-1905* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 208-209.

²² Lansdowne to Monson, May 19, 1903, PRO FO 800/126.

advocacy for rapprochement also had great effect as the French leadership mistakenly believed that the King had the greatest influence on British foreign policy, followed in order thereafter by Chamberlain, and then Lansdowne.²³ With the ground thus made favorable for Anglo-French rapprochement, Declassé decided to accompany Loubet to London in early July.²⁴ It was Cambon, however, who stressed the need for such a unique visit also to be meaningful in results. Knowing Lansdowne's natural reserve and reluctance to take the initiative, he made arrangements for a private meeting between both foreign ministers to take place at the Foreign Office to discuss what Monson characterized as "the idea of a general and comprehensive settlement."²⁵

Prior to that meeting Lansdowne was paid a visit by another recent convert to Anglo-French rapprochement, Eugène Étienne, Vice-President of the French Chamber of Deputies. Their conversation presaged the future Entente negotiations. According to Lansdowne's account of the meeting, Étienne emphasized the need to come to terms over Morocco, arguing that the French position in Algeria made it "absolutely necessary that she should have a preponderating influence" in that country. He also made sure to deprecate the idea of outright annexation, and assured the Foreign Secretary that the commercial interests of other powers would not be restricted. Lansdowne replied that Britain had never failed to recognize France's "special interests" in Morocco, but reiterated his warning against "the idea of bringing on a premature partition," as this was

²³ Andrew, "France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale," p. 101.

²⁴ Andrew, *Théophile Déclassé*, p. 209.

²⁵ Eubank, *Paul Cambon*, p. 82; Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, pp. 171-173; Cambon to Declassé, August 6, 1903, quoted in Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 171; Monson to Lansdowne, July 24, 1903, PRO FO 800/126.

likely to “arouse the susceptibilities” of other powers with interests in the country, specifically Spain, whose interests the Foreign Secretary was always careful to protect. With regard to the questions of Newfoundland and Siam, Étienne thought the first was capable of settlement if the colonial government could be brought around, while the spheres of influence both countries had established in the latter in 1896 might be more definitely fixed. In Africa, Étienne looked for a territorial rearrangement in the Sokoto region along the Niger River to ease French communications. Lansdowne stressed, however, that such a readjustment would require compensation for Britain elsewhere.²⁶

Lansdowne declined to put forward any definite proposals of his own, but assured Étienne that “if the French Government would put their cards upon the table and say what they wished to obtain, and what they were prepared to concede with that object,” Britain would be “ready to meet them in a similar spirit.” The Foreign Secretary noted that at the conclusion of their conversation his guest asserted that Germany was “the most serious menace to the peace of Europe,” and that an Anglo-French understanding “was the only means of holding German designs in check.” He did not record his response to this declaration, if any, but it is likely that he absorbed it with the same equanimity he practiced with regard to the ‘querulous’ assertions of the Germans. Perhaps, as Rolo has suggested, his attention was drawn instead to Étienne’s suggestion that if an agreement could be reached France was capable of exercising “a salutary influence” over Russia, and aid in reducing friction between the two countries.²⁷

²⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, July 2, 1903, BD II no.356.

²⁷ Lansdowne to Monson, July 2, 1903, BD II no.356; Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 177.

President Loubet arrived in England on July 6, and the two foreign ministers met at the Foreign Office the next morning as arranged. Lansdowne expressed first that he was confident that the disputes between the two countries were few and could be resolved amicably, while each minister declared that his nation was a satiated power and did not desire a great expansion of their colonial possessions. The Foreign Secretary broached next the subject of Newfoundland, and suggested that French attachment to its special fishing rights, the establishment of which dated back to the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, were largely sentimental considering that recent catches had been in decline. He proposed monetary compensation to French fishermen, but to his surprise Declassé called for both monetary and territorial compensation. Lansdowne did not dismiss entirely the latter demand, but was adamant that the French desire for the cession of Gambia could not be met. He chose, however, not to offer a specific territorial alternative.

After that less than satisfactory exchange, Declassé emphasized that a settlement over Morocco would allow matters like Newfoundland to be resolved all the more easily. He once again declared that the French Government had no desire to annex the country or remove the Sultan from power, and although Lansdowne was now willing to discuss the details of a settlement over Morocco, he reminded the French Foreign Minister that Britain was by no means disinterested as to the country's eventual fate. The Foreign Secretary stipulated that if and when Morocco should face partition the section of its coastline opposite Gibraltar would have to be neutralized, Spain would need to be consulted and compensated, and the 'Open Door' would have to be

maintained. Declassé readily consented to all of these points. With regard to Siam, it was generally agreed that negotiations would center on reinforcing previous agreements as to respective spheres of influence, while continuing to adhere to the guarantee that the central region of that country would remain independent. The Foreign Secretary deprecated, however, the French suggestion to partition the New Hebrides island group as the Australian colonies would most certainly object. He also insisted, as he had done with Étienne, that any readjustment of the Sokoto frontier in France's favor would necessitate territorial compensation.²⁸

It was toward the end of their conversation that Lansdowne spoke of Egypt, putting forward that "No one . . . for a moment believed that we were likely to retire from that country," while acknowledging that France, if it wished, could still cause trouble for the British occupation. He asserted, therefore, that the question of Egypt would have to be part of any larger settlement. According to the Foreign Secretary's account, Declassé agreed that it could be "disposed of satisfactorily" as "part of the larger African question," contingent on an agreement over Morocco. After some reflection, Lansdowne informed Monson that it was his belief that he was meant to be left with the impression that France would agree to British stipulations over Morocco, and with that issue settled, the French "would at other points go very far indeed to comply with our requirements."²⁹ Lord Cromer, British Consul-general in Egypt, was not as sanguine after reading Lansdowne's account of the meeting however. Although

²⁸ Lansdowne to Monson, July 7, 1903, BD II no.357.

²⁹ Ibid.

he was all for a bargain exchanging Morocco for Egypt, he wrote to Lansdowne that he could not help thinking that Declassé “went further than he intended” when agreeing so easily to Egypt forming part of the comprehensive settlement. Moreover, seeing clearly the long-term eventualities of such a deal, Cromer believed there was really only one question to be answered: “have we any objection to Morocco becoming a French province?”³⁰

Cromer’s caution proved correct for at the next meeting between Lansdowne and Cambon in late July, the French Ambassador’s reiteration of the issues discussed between the two foreign ministers made no mention of Egypt. When the Foreign Secretary pointed out this significant omission, Cambon confessed he had received no instructions on the matter from Declassé, and asked if it were possible to “leave Egypt alone for the present,” to which Lansdowne refused. Cambon also made no reference to the readjustment of the Sokoto frontier, but despite this second omission the Foreign Secretary continued to believe that a border adjustment would eventually serve as compensation for the surrender of French fishing rights in Newfoundland.³¹

When the two met again one week later, Cambon informed Lansdowne that Declassé had misunderstood the full meaning of their discussion of Egypt, thinking it centered only on the removal of some troublesome financial restrictions, not the regularization of the heretofore ‘temporary’ British occupation. He warned Lansdowne that the latter “could have no idea of the extent to which ‘l’esprit Francais’ was moved

³⁰ Cromer to Lansdowne, July 17, 1903, BD II no.359.

³¹ Lansdowne to Monson, July 29, 1903, BD II no.363.

by the Egyptian question.” Nevertheless, he announced that the French Foreign Minister had the courage to negotiate the matter, but by removing such a “big thorn from the foot of Great Britain” France would expect “*une grosse compensation.*” On this occasion, it was Lansdowne who initiated the subject of probable German reaction to an Anglo-French agreement, but again it would appear that this was not of foremost concern in the Foreign Secretary’s mind. With the French having given way on the inclusion of Egypt in any comprehensive settlement, Lansdowne informed Cambon that he would spend the summer holiday preparing a memorandum on British terms.³²

In the interval, Lansdowne received the opinions of the Intelligence Departments of the Services. The Admiralty argued that as long as there was a mechanism put in place that guaranteed the permanent neutralization for a considerable section of the Moroccan coastline, the British naval position in the Mediterranean “*would neither be worse nor better than it is now.*” This was hardly an endorsement, however, as they seriously doubted whether such a mechanism existed. The only real benefit they could point to was their confidence that if and when the French sought to conquer the Moroccans it would cost them “many men and much treasure and many years of struggle.” The War Office was no less critical, and asserted that “no reliable arrangement can be made for preventing France from eventually establishing herself throughout the whole of Morocco, not excepting that portion of the coast-line from which we are especially desirous on excluding her, if we consent to her having that political predominance in the country which she wishes us to concede.” They concluded

³² Lansdowne to Monson, August 5, 1903, BD II no.364.

that such a concession should not be “granted unless we receive a very substantial *quid pro quo* in other parts of the world.”³³ Lansdowne expected such compensation, and so with the approval of the Cabinet he sent his terms to Cambon on October 1.³⁴

After first reiterating Britain’s three major stipulations with regard to French predominance in Morocco, Lansdowne moved on to Egypt where Britain asked that France recognize that the British occupation of Egypt had, “under the force of circumstances, acquired a character of permanency.” In addition, Britain asked for the abolition of the international *Caisse de la Dette publique*—which oversaw the distribution of tax money that serviced Egypt’s foreign debts—and the ability to carry out reforms of the Egyptian government as needed with a similar right to be granted to the French in Morocco. With regard to Newfoundland, the Foreign Secretary called for an end to France’s special fishing rights, which again he characterized as having a “sentimental rather than a substantial importance.” In compensation, a readjustment of the Sokoto frontier was offered. A new declaration on Siam would also be promulgated, and Lansdowne went so far as to include the request that France close the post-office it still operated on the island of Zanzibar, and offered the withdrawal of past British protests against the French annexation of Madagascar.³⁵

Less than pleased with British terms, at their next meeting Cambon complained that the principal bargain proposed by Lansdowne was fundamentally unfair because in

³³ Service Department memoranda, August 7, 1903, PRO FO 800/126. The War Office memorandum is dated July 31, 1903.

³⁴ Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 204.

³⁵ Lansdowne to Cambon, October 1, 1903, BD II no.369.

exchange for immediate concessions in Egypt, France received only the “hope” of corresponding future benefits in Morocco.³⁶ In a letter to Declassé, the French Ambassador maintained that “In a word England, who possess nothing in Morocco, gives us what she has not got and France, who has sure and tangible advantages in Egypt, is begged to abandon them.”³⁷ Lansdowne countered, however, that as Britain was already in Egypt and had no intention of withdrawing, he was “only asking the French Government to recognize the facts as they exist.” With that in mind he simply dismissed Cambon’s suggestion that concessions be granted to Britain in Egypt *pari passu* with any future French advance in Morocco.³⁸

Cambon and Declassé both agreed that France should continue to hold out for the best possible terms, but they also recognized that their position in Egypt was lost. The official French response to Lansdowne’s letter came on October 26, and while there was a general agreement on most issues, they argued for the retention of the *Caisse de la Dette*, continued to ask for a gradual implementation of concessions in Egypt, and once again, in return for their Newfoundland fishing rights, they asked for Gambia, noting that it was “*surtout une valeur sentimentale*” for Britain.³⁹ Lansdowne’s mid-November response, as Cambon had expected, moved very little toward the French position.⁴⁰ The

³⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, October 7, 1903, BD II no.370.

³⁷ Cambon to Declassé, October 22, 1903, excerpted in Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 210.

³⁸ Lansdowne to Monson, October 7, 1903, BD II no.370.

³⁹ Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, pp. 211-213; Cambon to Lansdowne, October 26, 1903, BD II no.373.

⁴⁰ Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 217.

former accepted the continuation of the *Caisse de la Dette*, although with its powers curtailed, but was determined to stand firm against the “whittling down” of French concessions in Egypt. He also now added the condition that the French should be required to provide diplomatic support in getting the other powers to accept the final terms of the agreement. Moreover, if other powers refused to consent, France would be required to refrain from opposing any steps Britain took thereafter to give effect to the agreement. With regard to Newfoundland, Lansdowne declared that objections to the ceding of Gambia as compensation were “insuperable,” and again he offered a readjustment of the border along the Niger.⁴¹

By late December 1903, the outlines of a final agreement was nearly in place, and “in order to avoid the possibility of future misunderstandings,” Lansdowne secured the addition of a Khedivial Decree detailing the new arrangements agreed to in Egypt, which would form an annex to the final Anglo-French agreement.⁴² Negotiations were now at the “critical moment,” in the words of the Foreign Secretary, with the last major outstanding issue being territorial compensation for Newfoundland, and it proved a difficult matter to resolve.⁴³ Lansdowne believed that French demands on this matter were both “substantial” and “quite unreasonable,” and he had never conceded the idea that the relinquishing of fishing rights should result in a demand for territorial

⁴¹ Lansdowne to Cambon, November 19, 1903, BD II no.376; Lansdowne to Selborne, October 30, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 1, Private Letters: Admiralty and Colonial Office, f21.

⁴² Lansdowne to Cambon, December 24, 1903, BD II no.381.

⁴³ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 1, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff148-150; Lansdowne to Cromer, December 7, 1903, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 286-287.

compensation. Moreover, in accordance with promises made to the natives of the area, he refused pointedly to allow any readjustment of the Sokoto frontier to “affect any territory in which British administration has been definitely established.”⁴⁴ It was surely “admirable,” Cambon declared deridingly, that his British counterparts would “only concede to us territory that does not belong to England!”⁴⁵

The French, in fact, were still hoping to acquire Gambia, and negotiations soon deadlocked. Cambon resorted to having the nature of the breakdown leaked to Cromer, believing the British Consul would press the Foreign Secretary to give way.⁴⁶ As anticipated, Cromer warned Lansdowne that failure of the negotiations at their present stage would be “little short of a calamity,” and he “urge[d] most strongly the necessity either of making concessions which will enable [the] Newfoundland question to be settled or of dealing with Morocco and Egypt separately.”⁴⁷ Balfour also wrote to the Foreign Secretary expressing his belief that an agreement without Newfoundland would be better “than that we sign nothing at all,” and that a break down in talks would be “an international misfortune.”⁴⁸ Adding to these pressures, through the Chancellor of the Exchequer Lansdowne learned that Joe Chamberlain was “quite horrified” at the suggestion that a large cession along the Niger be handed over in exchange for

⁴⁴ Lansdowne to Cromer, January 5, 1903, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 288; Lansdowne to Cambon, January 5, 1904, BD II no.383.

⁴⁵ Cambon to Cogarden, January 7, 1904, quoted in Eubank, *Paul Cambon*, p. 85.

⁴⁶ Eubank, *Paul Cambon*, p. 86.

⁴⁷ Cromer to Lansdowne, January 21, 1904, BD II no.387.

⁴⁸ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 15, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f85.

Newfoundland, and would rather have the latter question left “unsettled than pay such a price.”⁴⁹ The Foreign Secretary did not like the idea of Newfoundland being left out of the bargain, however, believing it would leave the agreement “very incomplete,” and that the government would be “less liable to attacks if we are able to show that we have succeeded in clearing the French, bag & baggage, out of a British Colony.”⁵⁰ Despite such urgings then, plus new complications caused by the start of the Russo-Japanese War in early February, Lansdowne held firm.

Although it would appear that Cambon did actively attempt to speed up negotiations in order to avoid the two nations becoming entangled in the conflict between their respective allies, there is no evidence that Lansdowne did the same.⁵¹ A final settlement was not concluded until March, when finally the French accepted some 16,000 square miles of African territory bordering the Niger and Lake Chad, and the Los Islands which sat opposite the port of Conakry in French Guinea, in exchange for surrendering their special fishing rights in Newfoundland.⁵² A week before the Entente was to be signed, the French made some last minute maneuvers in order to force additional concessions on Newfoundland, but this struck Lansdowne as thoroughly

⁴⁹ Austen Chamberlain to Lansdowne, January 27, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of the Exchequer, etc., f65.

⁵⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 18, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f89.

⁵¹ Eubank, *Paul Cambon*, p. 88.

⁵² Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 242.

unscrupulous and he was prepared to break off negotiations rather than give way. Fortunately, Declassé backed down.⁵³

The Convention between the United Kingdom and France respecting Newfoundland, and West and Central Africa, the Declaration between the United Kingdom and France respecting Egypt and Morocco, and the Declaration between the United Kingdom and France concerning Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides, were signed in London by Lansdowne and Cambon on April 8, 1904. The most significant terms were to be found in the Declaration on Egypt and Morocco, which contained a total of nine published and five secret articles. In Article I, France declared it would not obstruct Britain's actions in Egypt "by asking that a limit of time be fixed for the British occupation," while in Article IX both governments agreed "to afford one another their diplomatic support, in order to obtain the execution of the clauses of the present Declaration." Lansdowne had insisted that the latter clause be part of the published agreement, but the article did not commit either country to oppose actively other powers who might object. Clarifying French obligations somewhat, the Foreign Secretary also proposed what became Secret Article V, which pledged France to accept unilateral British actions in Egypt after July 15, 1910 even if other powers objected.⁵⁴ In response to Cromer's urging for even greater support from France against other powers who might refuse to adhere to the Khedivial Decree, Lansdowne argued that such an "open announcement that we had gone over to the side of the international law-breakers would

⁵³ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 2, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff186-188.

⁵⁴ "Declaration between the United Kingdom and France respecting Egypt and Morocco," BD II, pp. 385-395.

strike a fatal blow at our reputation.”⁵⁵ In truth, however, Lansdowne had pledged Britain to breaking international law after a six year period, if necessary, in order to secure Egypt, and preserve the Anglo-French Entente.

In a letter to Monson the day the Entente was signed, and which was later published, Lansdowne pronounced the agreement advantageous to both contracting parties as well as the lesser peoples involved. He wrote:

In each of these countries [i.e. Egypt and Morocco] it is obviously desirable to put an end to a system under which the Ruler has had to shape his course in deference to the divided counsels of two great European Powers. Such a system, leading, as it must, to intrigue, to attempts to play one Power off against the other, and to undignified competition, can scarcely fail to sow the seeds of international discord, and to bring about a state of things disadvantageous and demoralizing alike to the tutelary Powers, and to the weaker State which forms the object of their solicitude. Something will have been gained if the understanding happily arrived at between Great Britain and France should have the effect of bringing this condition of things to an end in regions where the interests of those two Powers are specially involved. And it may, perhaps, be permitted to them to hope that, in thus basing the composition of longstanding differences upon mutual concessions, and in the frank recognition of each other's legitimate wants and aspirations, they may have afforded a precedent which will contribute something to the maintenance of international goodwill and the preservation of the general peace.⁵⁶

The expressions of paternalism and dedication to international peace were, of course, sincere, but Lansdowne was not blind to baser ‘balance of power’ considerations. In his memorandum to the Cabinet in September 1903, he had argued in favor of an “all-round settlement” with France because it would allow Britain “to ‘clinch’ the friendly feelings

⁵⁵ Cromer to Lansdowne, March 14, 1904, BD II no.400; Lansdowne to Cromer, March 25, 1904, BD II no.402; Cromer to Lansdowne, March 27, 1904, BD II no. 403.

⁵⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, April 8, 1904, BD II no.416.

towards us which are at this moment prevalent upon the other side of the channel,” and added that he “need not insist upon the improvement which would result in our international position, which, in view of our present relations with Germany as well as Russia, I cannot regard with satisfaction.”⁵⁷ No doubt, he saw the Anglo-French Entente as a springboard toward improved relations with Russia, but as noted above, with regard to Germany the agreement was not meant to be a message conveying a realignment of European forces, as much as it was “a test case, so far as German good will is concerned.” Unlike Declassé, who foresaw such a new European alignment through the completion of the Entente, the Foreign Secretary noted to Lascelles merely that it would be “interesting” to see how Germany reacted. “Will she put a spoke in our wheel,” he wondered, or would she “be amiable and facilitate matters?”⁵⁸ The last year and a half of his tenure at the Foreign Office very nearly disabused Lansdowne finally of the notion that friendlier relations with Germany was possible on his terms.

As for the Moroccan people, Lansdowne feared that Britain’s “Moorish friends may think we have handed them over to the French rather ignominiously,” but he did not believe a better solution could be had. If Britain had not come to terms now, in ten years she would have had nothing to offer the French. He simply did not believe the Moroccans could take care of themselves, and felt Britain was in no position to “assume

⁵⁷ Lansdowne memorandum, September 10, 1903, excerpted in Lyle Archibald McGeoch, “The Role of Lord Lansdowne in the Diplomatic Negotiations Connected with the Anglo-French Agreement of 8 April 1904” (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 1964), pp. 89-90.

⁵⁸ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 23, 1904, PRO FO 800/129; Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 186; Andrew, *Théophile Declassé*, p. 214. In an article published one year prior to his book on Declassé, Andrew was less certain as to the French Foreign Minister’s attitude toward the possible long-range impact of the Anglo-French Entente (Andrew, “France and the Making of the Entente Cordiale,” p. 105).

the parental role in competition with France.” Instead, he advised the British Minister in Tangier, Sir Arthur Nicolson, to “take as much credit as we can with the Moors for having insisted on maintaining the Sultan,” whom he did not believe the French had any intention of overthrowing.⁵⁹ At the end of the year when events in Morocco again turned ugly for the Sultan, and the French were on the verge of more substantial intervention, the Foreign Secretary confessed to Monson: “We may in our secret hearts congratulate ourselves on having left to another Power the responsibility for dealing with so helpless and hopeless a country, but we need not proclaim our feelings.”⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the new year was destined to bring new and more dangerous Moroccan difficulties.

With regard to public acceptance of the Entente, Lansdowne had warned Balfour the previous December that he was determined not to have “another Bagdad Railway fiasco.”⁶¹ It was this fear that in great part lay behind his insistence on holding firm with regard to Newfoundland, and going to the British public with an agreement that removed a foreign power “bag & baggage, out of a British Colony.”⁶² When the news of the soon to be concluded Anglo-French agreement inevitably leaked to the British press, Cambon reported to Declassé: “Opinion is unanimous in hoping that all the causes of

⁵⁹ Nicolson to Lansdowne, April 17, 1904, PRO FO 800/135; Lansdowne to Nicolson, April 21, 1904, PRO FO 800/135.

⁶⁰ Lansdowne to Monson, December 26, 1904, PRO FO 800/126.

⁶¹ Lansdowne to Cromer, December 7, 1903, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 286-287.

⁶² Lansdowne to Balfour, January 18, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f89.

misunderstanding between the two countries will be removed.”⁶³ Most Liberals and the Liberal press greeted the Entente with approval. There was some contrary comment of course, but perhaps none so impassioned as that of Lord Rosebery who reportedly told David Lloyd George—the latter being among those “delighted” at the news—that they were all wrong, and it really meant “war with Germany in the End!”⁶⁴

Lansdowne was pleased overall with the public’s reaction as well as that of the political opposition, although he hesitated to disclose to them the contents of the secret articles.⁶⁵ The Prime Minister also was quite satisfied with the agreement, and this despite his assertion five years before that France was “the incalculable quantity and the most obvious danger to European peace.”⁶⁶ Speaking before the Primrose League at the Albert Hall, he declared that unlike most other arrangements that were “admirably fitted to tide over a period of difficulty,” but eventually “come to a natural end” and never carried “any guarantee of stability of permanence,” the newly signed Entente was “going to be permanent because it is based upon the best of all principles, that the party that gives—and both parties give—gives little, and that the party that receives—and both

⁶³ Cambon to Declassé, March 24, 1904, excerpted in Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 259.

⁶⁴ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 266; David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, Vol. 1* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1938), p. 1.

⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Selborne, April 12, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 1, Private Letters: Admiralty and Colonial Office, f34.

⁶⁶ Balfour to Ridgeway, January 4, 1899, quoted in Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy*, p. 103.

parties receive—receives much.”⁶⁷ With the work completed, the Foreign Secretary was able to escape for a week’s stay in Ireland at the end of May.

Although the Entente had been signed and published, it still had to be approved by the French Chamber of Deputies, as well as accepted by the other major powers. Presented to the Chamber in early June, criticism focused primarily on the compensation received for Newfoundland. Lansdowne was forced to refuse numerous requests by Cambon for alterations to assure its passage.⁶⁸ Final passage did not come until November, and although in the end approval was overwhelming, the Deputies also approved nearly unanimously a motion that called on Declassé to reopen negotiations with regard to Newfoundland “as early as possible.”⁶⁹

Russia

Russian adherence to the Khedivial Decree appeared to be infinitely more complicated after the start of hostilities between Russia and Japan in early February 1904, a war which just two years before the Foreign Secretary did not think likely. Sandars would observe many years later that the marquis had a “constitutional dislike of violence in all its forms,” and Lansdowne’s public statements at the time only reinforce that perception.⁷⁰ Speaking at the Guildhall Banquet in early November 1904, some

⁶⁷ Balfour’s speech before the annual demonstration of the Grand Habitation of the Primrose League at the Albert Hall on May 6, 1904, *The Times*, May 7, 1904, p. 14.

⁶⁸ McGeoch, “The Role of Lord Lansdowne,” p. 149.

⁶⁹ Monson to Lansdowne, November 13, 1904, BD III no.10.

⁷⁰ Sandars to Lady Newton, 1928-1929, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c. 771, ff71-72.

nine months into the war, the Foreign Secretary pronounced: "I say that with this spectacle before us we can conceive no more terrible, no more lifelong punishment than that remorse which would be felt by any Minister or body of Ministers who, either from a fault of temper or from a love of passing popularity, or because they were unable to put themselves in the place of their opponents, brought upon their country the scourge and the calamity of a needless war." Whether anything good was likely to emerge from the present conflict, he was "sanguine enough" to believe that "the spectacle of this terrible war may do something to give a stimulus to the existing desire for the discovery of some less clumsy and brutal method of adjusting international differences." Addressing that question further, Lansdowne pointed to the recent fashion of referring disputed matters to arbitration, and noted proudly that in the last three years the Unionist Government had resorted to it some eight or nine times, and that he had had the honor of signing five such treaties. In order to prevent disputes from ever arising at all, however, he pointed to the recently signed Entente, which he hoped would not only improve relations between the two countries involved, "but that it will create a better political atmosphere, and enable those two countries to exercise upon other Powers a useful and a pacific influence."⁷¹ If the detached gentleman diplomatist was passionate about anything it was the near certainty of peace and prosperity through enlightened diplomacy; here was dogma voiced with the subdued fervor of the business-minded faithful.

⁷¹ Lansdowne's speech at the Guildhall Banquet on November 9, 1904, *The Times*, November 10, 1904, p. 4.

The months leading up to the outbreak of war had been a perilous time for British diplomacy. Russo-Japanese negotiations began in July 1903, but while Russia was unwilling to end its occupation of Manchuria or guarantee the territorial integrity of that region within China, it refused also to grant Japan a similarly privileged position throughout the whole of Korea.⁷² As both countries slowly slid toward war, Britain could not afford to provoke Russia, alienate Japan, nor get pulled into a pointless conflict with France. One historian has credited Lansdowne's "diplomatic equipoise" at the Foreign Office for handling successfully all three of these imperatives.⁷³ On closer examination, however, his actions could just as easily be characterized as hopelessly muddled and confused; the result of the tension between the obligation he felt to support an ally, his unceasing pursuit of the 'policy of the entente,' and his aversion to war itself. It was to the benefit of Britain that Balfour kept an active hand in foreign affairs, and greatly to his credit that during these crucial months Britain did not suffer that terrible scourge that Lansdowne so feared.

Even as Britain's ally was nearing war with Russia in last months of 1903, the Foreign Secretary was pursuing an Anglo-Russian agreement. In October, Lansdowne approached Cambon unofficially to request that during the impending visit to Paris of the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Nicholas Lamsdorff, it might be conveyed to him

⁷² Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 267-268.

⁷³ See B. J. C. McKercher, "Diplomatic Equipoise: the Lansdowne Foreign Office, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the global balance of power," *Canadian Journal of History* Vol. 24 (December, 1989): 299-339.

that Britain wished for greater openness in its relations with Russia.⁷⁴ Declassé reportedly advised Lamsdorff that more frank exchanges might lead to the smoothing of existing difficulties, and the latter promised to so instruct Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London.⁷⁵ Several informal meetings with Benckendorff took place in November and resulted in a sketch by Lansdowne of the heads of a possible comprehensive Anglo-Russian settlement. Centered on Afghanistan, Persia, and China, the Foreign Secretary outlined the main points in a letter at the end of November to Spring-Rice, then First Secretary at the British Embassy in St. Petersburg. While Afghanistan and Tibet, including control over their external affairs, would fall within Britain's sphere of interest, Russia would retain the right to maintain relations with these countries on matters of a non-political or purely local nature. Manchuria, on the other hand, would fall within the Russian sphere, although the 'Open Door' would be guaranteed. Moreover, Persia would be split into two spheres, Russia in the north of the country with commercial access in the south, while the southeastern province of Seistan, a traditional invasion route to India, would fall to Britain.⁷⁶ With the exception of Manchuria, this proposal essentially was the basis of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention.

During these same months, Lansdowne also was actively supporting Japan in her preparations for possible war with Russia. In the famous case of the Chilean warships,

⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Monson, October 26, BD II no.250.

⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Monson, November 4, 1903, BD II no.257.

⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, November 7, 1903, BD II no.258; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, November 17, 1903, BD IV no.181a; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, November 25, 1903, BD IV no.182.

Lansdowne had urged the Japanese in February 1903 to purchase two British built warships originally built for the Chilean navy before the Russians acquired them, but Japan delayed and then bid low. The British then took the extraordinary step of outbidding the Russians themselves, even though they had no use for the ships. One of the express purposes for the purchase, according to Lansdowne, was to prevent the balance of naval power in the Far East turning against Japan.⁷⁷

Throughout, however, Lansdowne continually sought out signs of peace. In late October, based on the information he was receiving, he believed that the Russo-Japanese negotiations were progressing and “should be capable of satisfactory arrangement,” although there were, he admitted, some “disquieting symptoms” such as Hayashi’s “anxious and worried looks,” and reports that the Japanese were buying up all the shipping they could lay their hands on. Japan also was attempting to secure a loan in London, and the banking firm Samuel Samuels asked the government for a guarantee. Arguing that Japan was pressed for money and could not hope at the moment to secure a loan without help, the Foreign Secretary asked Balfour if he might consider the proposal. Moreover, Lansdowne asserted that a loan “guarantee would enable them to strengthen themselves and would ‘clinch’ their friendship to us.” He was not blind to the fact that such an action “would be regarded by Russia as openly hostile, but she is behaving so badly to us that I should not much mind that.” After years of discussion, the Russians had recently indicated that their policy with regard to Afghanistan was simply that they would send agents into the country when they pleased. Amazingly, the Foreign

⁷⁷ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 271-272.

Secretary now advocated the benefits of fostering further antagonism for “The result might be to convince her that she could not safely continue to flout us, and to bring about, what I have always hoped to see, a frank understanding between us as to Manchuria, Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia, &c.”⁷⁸ With regard to the loan, however, Lansdowne was sorry to find that the Chancellor of the Exchequer “could not see his way to help the Japanese.”⁷⁹

It is uncertain how Balfour reacted to Lansdowne’s unique strategy for generating an Anglo-Russian entente, but two months later, following his November discussions with the Russian Ambassador, the Foreign Secretary sent the Prime Minister a fresh draft of his proposed heads of an agreement with Russia. He realized fully that with the situation in the Far East heating up, Lamsdorff’s “extremely plausible” language on Afghanistan might very well be an effort to keep Britain “quiet,” but he was pushing on regardless and wished for the Prime Minister’s views on the matter. That same day Hayashi enquired whether or not Japan might now purchase from Britain those same Chilean ships they had previously passed on. Circumstances had changed since February, however, and Lansdowne was perturbed somewhat with the request. Hayashi’s explanation that Japan’s prior inability to buy the ships was due to the fear of domestic political reaction did not hold much water with the Foreign Secretary, who noted that when he challenged it the Japanese Minister “maintained an air of childlike innocence.” Lansdowne feared that letting the ships go at this stage would “be regarded

⁷⁸ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 23, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff83-85; Foreign Office “Memorandum on Russo-Afghan Affairs,” December 11, 1905, BD IV no.466.

⁷⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, October 28, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff92-93.

by Russia as a distinct declaration of hostility on our part, and I am inclined to think that we can exert our influence more usefully in other and more pacific directions.”⁸⁰ His focus was now centered on preserving peace and forging a comprehensive Anglo-Russian settlement, and in any event Balfour, Selborne, and Chamberlain, all agreed that the ships could not now be sold to Japan.⁸¹

Lansdowne actually had already begun a week earlier his effort to use Britain’s growing relationship with France to prevent war by sounding out Cambon on possible French support for mediation. Both agreed that they ought to “‘pour as much cold water as possible’ on the embers.”⁸² On December 22, Lansdowne requested permission from the Prime Minister to attempt international mediation to prevent the coming war, and his missive contained all the elements of his seemingly contradictory overall policy. He warned Balfour that the situation in the Far East had become “precarious,” and with French and American assistance Britain had to do what it could to prevent war, leaving “no stone unturned.” Notwithstanding the Exchequer’s pronouncement that the cost of going to war would be “ruinous” for Britain, Lansdowne emphasized that “public opinion here would probably not permit us to allow Japan to be smashed,” and surely the government would not allow her to be invaded. His solution was for Britain to “tell the

⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 17, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff107-108.

⁸¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 17, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f70; Lansdowne to Selborne, December 17, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f71; Balfour to Lansdowne, December 17, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f72; A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, December 21, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff113-114.

⁸² Lansdowne to Monson, December 11, 1903, BD II no.259.

Japanese distinctly that they must be content with the best bargain they can get as to Korea” for the most recent offer from the Russians in negotiations was “upon the whole not unsatisfactory.” In addition to his own letter, he enclosed letters containing the views of Selborne and Chamberlain, each of which contained elements that advanced in part his overall policy.⁸³

Selborne began with the premise that Britain would not allow Japan to be “smashed,” but that intervention would assuredly lead to war with France. He suggested, therefore, that Britain take France into their “fullest confidence and get her to join with us in exerting such pressure that there shall not be war.” With regard to Selborne’s letter, Lansdowne deviated only on the suggestion that the government “go the length of telling the French categorically that we shall go to war to save Japan.” Chamberlain’s proposal was something different altogether. He suggested that Britain “take a leaf out of the notebook of German diplomacy, and for once play a selfish but national game.” He asked further: “If war breaks out, is not that the proper time for us to secure, and secure promptly, whatever we want in places where Russia is our rival?” Chamberlain was certain that once Japan was out of the way, Russia’s “inclination to negotiate a settlement with us will evaporate.”⁸⁴ By this time Lansdowne most likely was disinclined to favor anything that could be characterized as German diplomacy, but these three assessments he sent to the Prime Minister, as a whole, embodied his policy.

⁸³ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 22, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff109-112.

⁸⁴ Selborne to Lansdowne, December 21, 1903, BP, Add 49728, f115; A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, December 21, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff113-114.

Moreover, that policy marked a significant divergence between Balfour and his Foreign Secretary.

Ill and confined to his room, it was Balfour who set the government's state of equilibrium, first by advising that they must be "most careful not give any advice to the Japs to which, in case of war, they might point and say 'you must help us, for it was through following your lead that we find ourselves in this mess'!"⁸⁵ To this the Foreign Secretary readily agreed.⁸⁶ With regard to Lansdowne's call for Britain to play the role of mediator, Balfour was almost sanguine over the likely consequences of a war. Although still awaiting a forecast of military operations from the intelligence departments, the premier's December 22 memorandum on "Japan and Russia" maintained that while Japan could not safely send an expedition to Korea, he thought a Russian invasion of the Japanese islands "impossible." In his opinion, a war "would not 'smash' Japan in the sense of wiping it out as a military force: nor need it greatly damage her fleet." Moreover, he argued that a war would not seriously affect Japan except in Korea, which was of little concern to Britain, and "there could be nothing better for us than that Russia should involve herself in the expense & trouble of" its occupation. With these circumstances in mind, Balfour counseled against offering the Japanese advice, or offending her by pressing for the moderating of demands, and instead suggested that they "let her work out her own situation in her own way." In the end he was "disposed to think it would be better to come in as a deliverer at a later stage,

⁸⁵ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 22, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff116-117.

⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 23, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff127-128.

than to thrust unpalatable advice upon a reluctant ally in a matter with which we have no immediate concern.”⁸⁷

In his reply to Selborne, the Prime Minister declared that he would not intervene in a quarrel not his own, in which he was “expected to aid an unfriendly Power, and to put pressure on an ally, especially as I believe that if any war *could* be conceived as being advantageous to us, this is one.”⁸⁸ In their subsequent correspondence, both the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Chancellor of the Exchequer clarified their respective positions. Selborne found Balfour’s views on the matter “very ingenious,” and while still not sanguine with regard to Japan’s fate in a war, he wanted it made clear that in his opinion Britain “ought not to attempt to induce Japan to abate her moderate terms.”⁸⁹ Chamberlain, on the other hand, made it known that he in fact favored the idea of the Japanese striking quickly while they still had superiority in the region.⁹⁰

In his response to the Prime Minister, Lansdowne agreed that “at present,” a Russian invasion of Japan was “out of the question,” but he worried that “by next autumn Russia might be mistress of the situation, and might impose terms on Japan which would wipe the latter out as a military power, and obliterate her fleet.” If this occurred, he noted, “a war would not only affect Japan ‘through Korea’ but might render

⁸⁷ Balfour memorandum entitled “Japan and Russia,” December 22, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f73b.

⁸⁸ Balfour to Selborne, December 23, 1903, printed in Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power*, pp. 163-164.

⁸⁹ Selborne to Balfour, December 25, 1903, printed in Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power*, pp. 164-165. See also Selborne to Balfour, December 31, 1903, printed in Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power*, pp. 166-167.

⁹⁰ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 150.

her an almost negligible factor in Far eastern politics instead of at present a potential ally of great importance to us.” The risks involved, he believed, certainly outweighed the benefits of a Russia stuck in a Korean quagmire. Although Lansdowne concurred with Balfour that caution against giving Japan advice was wise, he thought Japanese diplomacy not very “adroit” and in need of outside assistance and considered the current Russian counter-proposals with regard to Korea very favorable to Japan. Despite the Prime Minister’s views to the contrary, the Foreign Secretary was still inclined to believe that the best option for peace was an arrangement involving all interested powers, and confessed to his chief: “I attach I think more importance to averting war than you do.” In sum, Lansdowne pointed to three unacceptable risks for Britain if war broke out:

- (i) the possibility that our ally may be crushed:
- (ii) the possibility that we may ourselves become implicated, not on account of our Treaty engagement to Japan, but because the British public will not sit still while the crushing is being done:
- (iii) the aggravation of our present financial difficulties, already grave enough.

He preferred, therefore, that Britain “try its hand as a mediator, or at all events as a friendly counselor, rather than wait until it can appear on the scene in the role of a ‘deliverer.’”⁹¹

Balfour responded simply that if Japan was unlikely to be invaded at any point in the war, and Russia could not then impose terms, then the former “cannot be crushed,” and therefore “British public opinion is not likely to drive

⁹¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 24, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff130-132.

us into war.”⁹² Two days later he wrote to the King that, “The interest of this country is now and always—Peace,” but not all war was “an unmixed curse.”⁹³ Lansdowne, on the other hand, held to his belief that it was in Britain’s interest to “make every effort to avert war,” and be ready to mediate if called upon, but he agreed to move forward only if the Japanese were favorable to the idea.⁹⁴ Defending his policy to Chamberlain, Lansdowne maintained that he had “no idea of applying pressure to the Japanese,” but he was “not at all sure that they are not, so far as Manchuria is concerned, attaching too much importance to the question of form.” If given the “chance of building a bridge for them, or for the Russians,” he was going to “take it.”⁹⁵

Even before he received Lansdowne’s letter of December 22, Balfour had written down his thoughts on the possibility of any comprehensive agreement with Russia. Declaring that he believed there was “no British Government that would not gladly make a permanent arrangement with Russia in Central-Asia and the Far East, and Russian statesmen and diplomatists have from time to time expressed a desire to see some such arrangement carried into effect,” he felt compelled to ask, “Why then, with this good-will, or at least appearance of good-

⁹² Balfour to Lansdowne, December 26, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f76.

⁹³ Balfour to the King, December 28, 1903, quoted in Sydney H. Zebel, *Balfour: A Political Biography* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 108.

⁹⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 29, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff139-140.

⁹⁵ Lansdowne to A. Chamberlain, December 31, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of Exchequer, etc., f61.

will, on both sides, has no such arrangement yet been found practicable?"

Notwithstanding certain present barriers, he pointed to two causes "of a permanent character" that made such an agreement difficult to forge. The first of these was the worthlessness of Russian assurances, which he noted "may be sincere at the moment, but they are purely temporary in their operation." On the rare occasion that Russia agreed to a more formal treaty, he argued that she was no more scrupulous in its observance.⁹⁶

The second and more significant difficulty standing in the way of a useful agreement, according to the premier, was that if Russia broke its word and advanced into a forbidden territory, Britain had no means of retaliation. Balfour pointed out that, "There is really nothing in the way of territory which Russia possesses and we desire." Moreover, he noted that such "Petty acts of bad faith [committed by Russia], taken each by themselves, supply very poor reasons for plunging the world into war, yet if they are condoned they mount up to what is, in its cumulative effect, a serious menace to the British Empire, and in the meanwhile it seems extremely difficult to erect any diplomatic barrier in front of this slowly-creeping tide." In the Prime Minister's opinion, such circumstances hardly supplied "the elements of a bargain." Nevertheless, he admitted that "Temporary arrangements" were "better than nothing," and might serve to postpone the "evil day" if it was to come. The permanent security of the British Empire, however, could only be found in laying down "certain well-defined

⁹⁶ Balfour memorandum (no title), December 21, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff118-124.

principles (e.g. the integrity of Afghanistan) which, if broken, we should regard as a *casus belli*.” These principles, he confessed, were “not easy to formulate,” and it was also:

not easy—perhaps it is not possible—to find some definite ground of understanding at once so clear in itself, and of such obvious importance to our Imperial interests, that the British people would consent to make its attempted infraction at once regarded as a sufficient ground for putting forth their whole strength in its defence.⁹⁷

Balfour’s objection to Lansdowne’s specific proposal for Anglo-Russian agreement was much more present-minded, and even more pointed. Although he conceded that the proposal “might afford the basis of a satisfactory settlement,” and that there were good arguments as to its advantageous timing, he believed there was “a certain feeling of incongruity in making an arrangement with a power at the very moment when a war may be on the point of breaking out between it and our Eastern ally.”⁹⁸ The Prime Minister asked Lansdowne to circulate his proposal for observations, but for all intents and purposes it was a dead letter for the duration of the war. It was sent around to the Cabinet, but on the disingenuous basis that it was meant only to keep Benckendorff happy, for it was “difficult to refuse some indication of our views.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 31, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f78.

⁹⁹ Lansdowne’s “Proposed Agreement with Russia,” January 1, 1904, quoted in Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 282; Lansdowne to Balfour, January 1, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff148-150; See also Lansdowne to Halsbury, January 11, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of Exchequer, etc., f132.

On December 29, Hayashi asked if Japan might expect Britain to exercise “benevolent neutrality” in case of war with Russia, and as instructed by Balfour, Lansdowne replied that Britain’s “obligations . . . under [the] the Anglo-Japanese Agreement would be fulfilled according to the spirit as well as the letter.” The Japanese Ambassador’s request for the use of British coaling facilities, communications assistance, and once again a loan guarantee—up to £20 million—faced “serious difficulties,” however, and the Foreign Secretary responded that he would have to consult his Cabinet colleagues.¹⁰⁰ Most important to the Japanese was the request for money, and Lansdowne asked the Prime Minister if his “mind was open upon this subject,” but Balfour argued that “morally such a loan in present circumstances would be ‘an act of war.’” The Chancellor of the Exchequer also saw no difference between the proposed loan, and the proposed sale of the Chilean warships.¹⁰¹ Contrary to the views of his Cabinet colleagues Lansdowne had hoped it was still possible to ease Japan’s financial difficulties. It is difficult, however, to understand how he intended to reconcile his effort to fund the Japanese war machine—which could possibly draw Britain into the war—and his determination to take every opportunity to build for the Japanese an undesired, and most certainly resented, bridge to peace with Russia. Acceding to the views of the Cabinet, he was forced to tell Hayashi that Britain must refuse the loan

¹⁰⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, December 29, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f77; Lansdowne to MacDonald, December 30, 1903, BD II no.265; Lansdowne to Balfour, December 29, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff137-138.

¹⁰¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, December 29, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff139-140; Balfour to Lansdowne, “Russia and Japan,” December 31, 1903, BP, Add 49728, ff141-145; A. Chamberlain memorandum, “Proposed Japanese Loan,” January 1, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: Chancellor of Exchequer, etc., f63.

request due to “political as well as financial considerations.” If a large sum backed by the government was lent to Japan “at the present moment,” the Foreign Secretary informed the Ambassador, “the impression would be created that we were departing from our neutrality, and, in effect, giving active encouragement to Japan.”¹⁰²

Lansdowne’s efforts at mediation were equally unsuccessful. Hayashi repeatedly rebuffed the Foreign Secretary’s enquiries as to whether Japan might be receptive to some sort of multi-power intervention, or even diplomatic assistance.¹⁰³ On January 13, 1904, Declassé also offered to mediate, but Japan again refused.¹⁰⁴ As Lansdowne had anticipated, he was subsequently approached by Cambon who asked if Britain might use its “influence to bear on Japan,” but knowing well Japan’s stance the Foreign Secretary declined, although he was not without hope that something might come of continued efforts for peace.¹⁰⁵ As the month of January slipped away, however, such hopes faded. Cambon again brought up the matter of multi-power mediation on January 27, but Lansdowne could only observe that it was pointless if neither Russia nor Japan really desired it.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary approached Hayashi again with the proposal two days later, only to be told by the Ambassador that in Japan “There was no

¹⁰² Lansdowne to Knollys, January 2, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f147; Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 6, 1904, BD II no.269.

¹⁰³ See Lansdowne to MacDonald, December 30, 1903, BD II no.265 and Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 5, 1904, BD II no.268.

¹⁰⁴ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 280; Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 16, 1904, BD II no.278.

¹⁰⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 8, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff151-152; Lansdowne to Balfour, January 14, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff158-159; Lansdowne to Balfour, January 18, BP, Add 49728, ff160-161; Lansdowne to Scott, January 19, 1904, BD II no.280.

¹⁰⁶ Lansdowne to Monson, January 27, 1904, BD II no.283.

peace party now,” and if even Russia were to issue an assurance with regard to the territorial integrity of Manchuria in China, such declarations were no longer trusted.¹⁰⁷ Lansdowne was forced to concede the truth of the Japanese complaint, and the next day minuted wryly: “I wish someone would guarantee the integrity of the Russian Government.”¹⁰⁸ A last minute request by Benckendorff on February 7 for British intervention, following the breaking off of diplomatic relations by Japan, proved fruitless.¹⁰⁹

In the end, Britain did not intervene for mediation, prod Japan into war, or get drawn into the fight, but this was thanks largely to Balfour’s equipoise rather than that of Lansdowne. The Foreign Secretary’s diplomatic skills were more evident during the war than prior to hostilities, and there is little question that Britain maintained its neutrality more scrupulously than the French. The Japanese eventually did secure a large portion of their war expenditures from British banks, but these were private loans.¹¹⁰ Lansdowne did not see any reason to object to this, or to interfere with them acquiring arms and ammunition in Britain, and though he knew the Russians would “of course be cross,” he also knew that they would be borrowing a great deal of money in Paris.¹¹¹ Even relatively minor matters drew his attention as exemplified by his request that the

¹⁰⁷ Lansdowne to MacDonald, January 29, 1904, BD II no.284.

¹⁰⁸ Lansdowne minute on Scott to Lansdowne, January 21, 1904, BD II no.282.

¹⁰⁹ Lansdowne to Scott, February 8, 1904, BD II no.296.

¹¹⁰ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 288-289, 292.

¹¹¹ Lansdowne to Sandars, February 21, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff180-181; Lansdowne to Balfour, December 22, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f123.

King take any opportunity that might present itself to pay more attention to Hayahsi, as Benckendorff at the time was much more popular in higher social circles.¹¹² It was a difficult task to remain uninvolved in “this wretched war,” the Foreign Secretary wrote to Durand in December 1904: “Scarcely a day passes without some more or less awkward question arising, and we shall be lucky if we don’t get into trouble both with our own people and the belligerents.”¹¹³ He was inclined to believe, however, “that the closeness of our relations with France, and of her relations with Russia, may prove useful to all concerned when the time comes for bringing the war to a close.”¹¹⁴

This certainly proved to be the case in gaining Russian adherence to the Khedivial Decree. One day before the Entente was signed, Lansdowne learned from Cambon that the French were confident that they could “persuade the Russians to accept the Khedivial decree,” and less than two weeks later, he learned again from the French Ambassador that Russian adherence could be had in exchange for “something reassuring” with regard to British intentions in Tibet.¹¹⁵ Both sides agreed that any comprehensive Anglo-Russian agreement was not possible while the war continued, but since such assurances with regard to Tibet had in fact already been given on numerous occasions, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed gladly in a memorandum given to

¹¹² Lansdowne to Buckle, November 30, 1904, LP, Further Correspondence, K. no.5, G. E. Buckle, 1895-1908; Lansdowne to Knollys, December 9, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f191; Lansdowne to Knollys, December 12, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f192.

¹¹³ Lansdowne to Durand, December 11, 1904, PRO FO 800/144.

¹¹⁴ Lansdowne to Monson, December 26, 1904, PRO FO 800/126.

¹¹⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 7, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff189-192; Lansdowne to Monson, April 20, 1904, BD III no.28.

Benckendorff on May 10 that as long as no other power intervened in Tibetan affairs, Britain would “not attempt either to annex it, to establish a Protectorate over it, or in any way to control its internal administration.”¹¹⁶ The following day Russia announced its adherence to the Khedivial Decree.¹¹⁷

In the last weeks of August 1904, Lansdowne was enjoying the first spell of “comparative idleness” in his heavy workload in a long time, and he assured Sir Charles Hardinge, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, that he “need have no uneasiness as to Lhasa [*sic*],” the Tibetan capital.¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, the issue of Tibet did not recede quietly. In September of the previous year the Cabinet reluctantly had authorized a mission under Colonel Sir Francis Younghusband to advance into the country to negotiate with Tibetan and Chinese representatives. The mission was launched at the behest of the Viceroy who was fearful that the Chinese, who claimed suzerainty over Tibet, secretly had granted Russia a protectorate over the region.¹¹⁹ The Tibetans also were refusing to uphold treaty obligations or negotiate, and allegedly had killed British subjects and stolen property.¹²⁰ At the very least, the British were determined that the country should remain a buffer state within Britain’s sphere of influence. Although he

¹¹⁶ Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, April 22, 1904, BD IV no.183; Lansdowne to Knollys, May 24, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f159; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, November 7, 1903, BD II no.258; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, May 4, 1904, BD IV no.184; Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, May 10, 1904, BD IV no.291.

¹¹⁷ McGeoch, “The Role of Lord Lansdowne,” p. 141.

¹¹⁸ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, August 24, 1904, PRO FO 800/140.

¹¹⁹ Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 141-142.

¹²⁰ Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, November 17, 1903, BD IV no.289.

disliked “entangling” Britain in such regions, Lansdowne wrote to Knollys that he had come to the conclusion that there was little choice but to back Curzon and the Indian Government.¹²¹ The Cabinet, however, issued specific restrictions on the mission; foremost of these was that there was to be no permanent occupation of Tibet. In late March 1904, the two-hundred man mission wiped out a contingent of Tibetan soldiers resisting the British advance, and Younghusband reached Gyantse in mid-April.¹²² Apprehensive over likely negative foreign comment Lansdowne observed: “I wonder what we should have said if it had been a Russian instead of a British ‘political mission’!” Although he was not happy about the clash, he concluded, however, that it might in the end do good and was probably unavoidable.¹²³ It was one month later that Lansdowne gave his assurance with regard to Tibet to Benckendorff. Finding no one with which to negotiate at Gyantse, Younghusband was authorized to advance to Lhasa in May. Once again, however, the Cabinet issued specific restrictions. The Colonel was not to place a British resident at Lhasa, or occupy the Chumbi Valley for longer than three years, during which an indemnity for commercial damages was to be paid by the Tibetans. Younghusband disobeyed his orders, however, and on September 7 concluded a treaty which called for the payment of £500,000, to be paid in seventy-five annual

¹²¹ Lansdowne to Knollys, October 1, 1903, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f138.

¹²² Balfour to the King, November 6, 1903, quoted in Young, *Arthur James Balfour*, p. 238.

¹²³ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 2, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff186-188.

installments, and during which time the Chumbi Valley would remain occupied.¹²⁴ To the Russians the treaty appeared to be the creation of a “virtual protectorate,” and at odds with British assurances.¹²⁵

The Cabinet was aghast and unanimous in its disapproval. Lansdowne knew Britain had been “placed in a very embarrassing position,” and suggested that the government immediately and publicly announce that with regard to the indemnity and occupation that the treaty would be amended and its terms reduced severely. Most importantly, he required something to tell Benckendorff as the Russian adherence to the Khedivial Decree was contingent on British assurances with regard to Tibetan independence.¹²⁶ Balfour was disturbed especially, observing that by his conduct Younghusband had placed Britain “in the position of either disavowing him, or appearing to modify our Tibetan policy in consequence of Russian pressure.” Moreover, by allowing critics through his disobedience to say that Britain had “taken a leaf out of Russia’s book,” he had “touched the honour of his country.”¹²⁷ The Prime Minister disliked the idea of disavowing Younghusband and the treaty publicly, however, and without anyone having yet had the opportunity to question the Colonel suggested that the Foreign Secretary tell the Russian Ambassador that the extended period of occupation

¹²⁴ Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 169-171; “Convention between Great Britain and Thibet,” September 7, 1904, BD IV no.298.

¹²⁵ C. Hardinge to Lansdowne, September 23, 1904, BD IV no.299.

¹²⁶ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 4, 1904, PRO FO 800/141; Lansdowne to Brodrick, October 3, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters: India Office, f84.

¹²⁷ Balfour minute, October 4, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters: India Office, f86.

was settled on at the request of the Tibetans themselves in order to ease the level of their annual indemnity payment.¹²⁸ Recognizing that any perceived deviation from the assurance he had given the Russians in May would blacken his own face more than any other, Lansdowne relayed this trumped up story to Benckendorff, anxious that Lamsdorff, who favored rapprochement with England, did not lose face either.¹²⁹ The final Anglo-Tibetan Convention, ratified on November 11, was a modified version of Younghusband's treaty and stipulated an indemnity only a third of that originally agreed, and an occupation to last only three years. In addition, it was agreed that there would be no need for a British agent with the right of access to Lhasa.¹³⁰

Not long after Younghusband's misstep in Tibet, the Russians made an even more egregious blunder. In the early morning of October 22 the Russian Baltic fleet, on its long fateful voyage to the Far East, mistakenly fired on a fleet of British fishing trawlers off the Dogger Bank in the North Sea thinking they were Japanese torpedo boats. The King called the unprovoked attack, "A most dastardly outrage," and the Cabinet and the country were soon in a profoundly warlike mood.¹³¹ Since the war began Lansdowne had done his best to prevent an Anglo-Russian rift over the illegal

¹²⁸ Brodrick to Lansdowne, October 4, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters: India Office, f85.

¹²⁹ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 4, 1904, PRO FO 800/141; Lansdowne to Brodrick, October 5, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters: India Office, f87; Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 5, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 2, Private Letters: India Office, f89.

¹³⁰ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 171.

¹³¹ The King's minute on Messrs. Jackson and Co. to Lansdowne, October 23, 1904, BD IV no.5; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 172.

search and seizure of British merchant ships on the high seas by Russian warships looking for contraband. While he had managed largely to keep “the hotheads who want us to bluster and bounce” at bay, and “blacken” the faces of Benckendorff and Lamsdorff “as little as possible,” this incident would require the Foreign Secretary to be skillful and swift. Monger was not wrong to suggest that “all depended on Lansdowne.”¹³² The Foreign Secretary deserved much credit for calming inflamed feelings and suppressing incautious words that might have provoked an Anglo-Russian war.

Immediately upon hearing of the attack, Lansdowne informed Benckendorff that it was “impossible to exaggerate the indignation which has been provoked,” and that the incident was only “aggravated by the callousness of the Russian commanding officer, who must have known before resuming the voyage that his fleet had fired upon and seriously injured innocent and defenceless people.”¹³³ That same day, Balfour telegraphed the Foreign Secretary asking what he proposed to do “about [the] outrage in the North Sea.” The Prime Minister’s first impulse was “to stop the Russian Fleet at the first convenient place and exact [an] explanation.” Moreover, he declared that he “should be sorry to see so gross and gratuitous a blunder left to the slow methods of diplomacy.”¹³⁴ With the rest of Cabinet in an equally aggressive mood, Lansdowne

¹³² Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, July 27, 1904, PRO FO 800/140. The letter is also excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 313-314; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 174.

¹³³ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 24, 1904, PRO FO 800/141. The letter is also printed in BD IV no.6.

¹³⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, October 24, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f115.

suggested immediately to M. Serge Sazonov, Russian Chargé d'Affairs at the London embassy, that a spontaneous and prompt offer of reparations would be wise lest public feeling on the matter become "uncontrollable."¹³⁵ The next day he informed Benckendorff that besides an "ample apology and disclaimer from the Russian Government," Britain would expect and insist on referring the whole matter to an independent international court to assess and assign blame and punishment of those responsible.¹³⁶

The Foreign Secretary hoped the Russians would have "the good sense to say all that is necessary at once," and it would appear that Lansdowne was isolated in the Cabinet in pressing for caution and diplomacy.¹³⁷ Anticipating his speech at Southampton on October 26, the Prime Minister told the Cabinet that he was prepared to say "either that all our demands have been accepted, *or*, if I am not in position to say this, then to hint—politely but not obscurely—that we cannot allow the criminals to vanish into the Far East without immediate trial." He was well aware that the latter statement would be "very like a declaration of war and bring the country perilously near

¹³⁵ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 24, 1904, BD IV no.8.

¹³⁶ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 25, 1904, PRO FO 800/141. The letter is also printed in BD IV no.12.

¹³⁷ Lansdowne to Lascelles, October 26, 1904, PRO FO 800/129; A. Chamberlain to Lansdowne, October 29, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 6, Private Letters: 1899-1905, Chancellor of Exchequer, etc., f73. Austen Chamberlain wrote to Lansdowne following a Cabinet meeting to apologize for using "one clumsy sentence which may have seemed to you an attempt to distinguish between yourself & your colleagues & a criticism of your attitude." Maintaining that his words were "not so intended," the Chancellor conceded that it was the Foreign Secretary's "duty to B[alfour] of the effect his words might have in Russia."

to overt hostilities,” but he saw no other possible course of action.¹³⁸ Fortunately, emotions were soon calmed, with Russia agreeing to British demands, and their Baltic fleet was delayed at Vigo in Spain so a proper enquiry could be made. The British fleet that was being assembled quickly at Gibraltar in case the Russian fleet had to be forcibly stopped went unused.¹³⁹ Four months later, an investigative commission awarded Britain’s fishermen £65,000 but found that Russian Vice-Admiral Zinovii Rozhdestvensky had not acted intentionally so his actions did not warrant punishment.¹⁴⁰

Just how close the two countries came to war can be judged by Lansdowne’s admission to Hardinge that some three days into the crisis it looked to him “as if the betting was about even as between peace and war.” While he observed that the Ambassador and he had managed to get “the Russians out of the scrape this time,” he could not rid his mind of “the apprehension that they, [the Russians], will through stupidity or perversity or both tumble into another.”¹⁴¹ Sir Valentine Chirol’s well-informed opinion was that the Foreign Secretary had indeed “kept a very cool head,” even though at first it seemed to him that Lansdowne went “too far in the direction of minimizing the whole business.”¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Balfour memorandum, October 26, 1904, excerpted in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. I, pp. 384-385.

¹³⁹ Admiralty to Foreign Office, October 28, 1904, BD IV no.19, enclosure no.2.

¹⁴⁰ White, *Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War*, p. 182.

¹⁴¹ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 29, 1904, PRO FO 800/141. The letter is also excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 317. Newton mistakenly reversed the names of correspondents however.

¹⁴² Chirol to C. Hardinge, November 1, 1904, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 174.

The Foreign Office remained largely passive throughout the rest of the war for fear of alienating or offending Japan by offering unwanted mediation. In late January 1905, acting on information from Tokyo that Japan might at least be open to such an offer, Lansdowne did approach Theodore Roosevelt informally with an outline of provisional Japanese terms, but the American President declined this opportunity to intervene.¹⁴³ Once again, Lansdowne's efforts were not entirely in line with the views of the Prime Minister, who only the day before informed his Foreign Secretary that while he too was anxious that Britain should do everything it could to end the war, he had to admit that "from a narrowly national point of view, the balance of advantage, I suspect, is on the side of continued hostilities."¹⁴⁴ British inaction with regard to mediation actually led Roosevelt at one point to conclude that Britain was actively encouraging the Japanese to continue fighting. Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's stated views above, Lansdowne protested to Durand that Britain "should be glad to see peace concluded, first of all for reasons of humanity, which after all must be allowed to count for something, and in the next place because the war, with all reactions in other parts of the world, is a bad thing for us all."¹⁴⁵ By the time the Russo-Japanese War ended in September 1905 with Japan victorious, however, Lansdowne was convinced that it would have been "a

¹⁴³ Lansdowne to Durand, January 28, 1905, PRO FO 800/116; Durand to Lansdowne, January 30, 1905, PRO FO 800/116.

¹⁴⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, January 24, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f140.

¹⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Durand, July 10, 1905, PRO FO 800/144. Unsurprisingly, the one exception to Lansdowne's general abhorrence of war concerned Ireland. In May, upon receiving information that separate trainloads carrying the partisans of John Redmond and William O'Brien had both journeyed recently to Cork, he invited Balfour to join him in the "hope that a proper amount of bloodshed took place" (Lansdowne to Balfour, May 23, 1905, BP, Add 49729, f129).

great mistake” to have pressured Japan to moderate her demands, even to end the war more quickly.¹⁴⁶

Lansdowne’s one great accomplishment in the name of peace during the war was the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which he thought would make it easier for the Japanese to come to terms with Russia.¹⁴⁷ Although the alliance was not due to expire until 1907, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Percy, suggested to Lansdowne and Balfour in mid-January 1905 that Britain’s friendship for Japan might be shown effectively by renewing the existing alliance immediately for additional five-year term.¹⁴⁸ Doubting the wisdom of granting the Japanese Emperor the Garter, or elevating the British legation in Tokyo to an Embassy while the war continued, Lansdowne agreed that if anything was to be done “to show the Japanese that our affection is unabated,” he was “inclined to offer them now an extension of the A[nglo] J[apanese] Agreement for another term of 5 years.”¹⁴⁹ The Cabinet decided, however, to wait for a sign of Japanese receptiveness.¹⁵⁰

Upon receiving reports of encouraging language from Japan’s Foreign Minister and Japanese newspapers, Lansdowne approached Hayashi in late March about renewing and possibly expanding the treaty. The Ambassador responded positively, but asked if

¹⁴⁶ Lansdowne to Durand, September 6, 1905, PRO FO 800/144.

¹⁴⁷ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, August 21, 1905, PRO FO 800/141; Lansdowne to Benckendorff, September 4, 1905, PRO FO 800/141.

¹⁴⁸ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 299.

¹⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 16, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, (unnumbered folio—between f136 and f137).

¹⁵⁰ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 300.

the United States might be asked to join. While the Foreign Secretary believed the United States would undoubtedly move along “parallel lines” with Britain and Japan, he did not think they would abandon their tradition against entangling alliances.¹⁵¹ After consulting his superiors, Hayashi informed Lansdowne that his country desired to extend the term of the alliance, but not its scope.¹⁵² In early May, the Japanese presented their draft for a straight renewal of the treaty, although it also recognized the greater predominance Japan now had in Korea due to its recent military victories.¹⁵³

In order to avoid the appearance this time of a one-sided treaty, however, the Cabinet decided to hold out for an “amplification of its scope.” When asked by Hayashi a week later what exactly Britain had in mind, Lansdowne noted that two of the more “obvious” amplifications that came to mind would be to require each nation to provide military support to the other on the unprovoked attack of a single power, instead of two, and an expansion of the area covered by the treaty to include India. The Ambassador believed initially that it was unlikely his government would agree to the inclusion of India, but Japan’s leaders in a unanimous decision in fact decided that an expanded treaty would provide ample protection against any future Russian war of revenge.¹⁵⁴ The essentials of the treaty were therefore accepted by Japan in late May leaving only the particulars of the military assistance each power would provide the other in case of

¹⁵¹ Lansdowne to MacDonald, March 24, 1905, BD IV no.111.

¹⁵² Lansdowne to MacDonald, April 19, 1905, BD IV no.112.

¹⁵³ Lansdowne to MacDonald, May 10, 1905, BD IV no.114.

¹⁵⁴ Lansdowne to MacDonald, May 17, 1905, BD IV no.115; MacDonald to Lansdowne, May 25, 1905, BD IV no.116; Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 309-311.

war to be hammered out later. Significantly, this all transpired before, not after, the Japanese Navy sent the greater portion of the Russian Baltic fleet to the bottom of the sea.

Although characterized as a renewal of the 1902 alliance, at its heart the new treaty was an exchange of military support for the defense of each power's most vulnerable imperial possession; India for Korea. From the beginning of the negotiations the British had accepted as inevitable that the latter country would become a Japanese protectorate. The other major alteration to the original treaty was that, as proposed, an unprovoked attack by a single power, not two, with regard to the regions covered would now constitute a *casus foederis*.¹⁵⁵ Lansdowne considered this alteration in particular a significant improvement on the first treaty with regard to its deterrent effect on future wars. Speaking at a dinner on June 1, and before the new treaty had even taken its final form, he declared that if the Anglo-Japanese alliance—that “potent influence for peace”—proved possible to modify and strengthen, “it would not only prevent the spread of the conflagration, when the conflagration had begun, but prevent a conflagration from taking place at all.”¹⁵⁶

The new alliance was signed on August 12, 1905, and contained no secret articles or exchange of diplomatic notes. It was to run for a term of ten years, and the details concerning the level of military support each power would provide the other were left to

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 321; Text of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement of August 12, 1905 printed in BD IV no.155.

¹⁵⁶ Lansdowne's speech given in the King's hall of the Holborn Restaurant on June 1, 1905, *The Times*, January 2, 1905, p. 10. Unlike the negotiations for the first treaty, this time the public was given some idea early on of what was transpiring; See also Lansdowne to MacDonald, May 17, 1905, BD IV no.115.

be settled at a later date. Unlike three years before, on this occasion there was no Franco-Russian counter-declaration.¹⁵⁷ Lansdowne did his best to reassure the Russians that true to the stated objectives of the new treaty, it was not intended to be provocative, and he wrote to Hardinge on September 4 with this purpose in mind. He wrote:

You will receive simultaneously with this letter, or soon after it, a despatch briefly setting forth the objects of the Alliance, which you will communicate to Count Lamsdorff. I earnestly trust that you will be able to convince him that it contains nothing to which the Russian Government can reasonably take exception. I do not of course mean to say that the new Agreement is not, from the force of circumstances, aimed at Russia more than at any other power, but this is inevitable. All measures of precaution, whether they take the shape of military and naval preparations or, as in this case, of Alliances, must be directed at somebody, and no country has, it seems to me, the right to take offence because another country raises the wall of its back garden high enough to prevent an over-adventurous neighbor, or that neighbor's unruly or over-zealous agents, from attempting to climb over it.

I can at any rate say with absolute conviction that this new arrangement must not be taken as an indication of unfriendliness on our part. I have, as you know, always desired and still desire that we should live on neighborly terms with Russia, and this view, which Benckendorff has often expressed to me, represents, I believe, the feelings of his Chief. So far as we are concerned, there can be no reason why, in the new chapter of history which is now beginning for Russia, we should not work with her for the good of the civilised world.¹⁵⁸

For the time being, however, Lansdowne was prepared to “mark time,” believing no Anglo-Russian agreement could presently be had, “partly on account of difficulties which are inherent, partly because the Russian statesmen would, I believe, not be

¹⁵⁷ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 339.

¹⁵⁸ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, September 4, 1905, PRO FO 800/141. The letter is also excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 327-328; See also Lansdowne to Cambon, September 4, 1905, PRO FO 800/127 and Lansdowne to Benckendorff, September 4, 1905, PRO FO 800/141.

allowed to accept the conditions upon which we should have to insist, e.g. in regard to Afghanistan and Persia.”¹⁵⁹

Germany

With the failure to forge an Anglo-German alliance in 1901, German policy toward Britain shifted, temporarily at least, to ensuring that the British did not come to terms with any of Germany’s enemies. Initially, Germany’s leaders had little fear that Britain would be able to settle its differences with France, much less Russia. The first sign of worry came from Eckardstein, whose May 1903 report to the German Foreign Office warned of an impending Anglo-French agreement which could lead eventually to the formation of a new British-French-Russian alliance. This warning was not taken seriously, however, either by Holstein or Chancellor Bülow.¹⁶⁰ Writing to the Emperor just a couple of weeks after the visit of Edward VII to Paris, the German Chancellor dismissed Eckardstein’s concerns.¹⁶¹ He believed, in fact, that the purpose behind the King’s visit was a British attempt to break up the Dual Alliance.¹⁶²

When more definite news of the Entente began to leak out it was worrisome. It merely reaffirmed the Kaiser’s suspicions that Britain was “underhandedly” trying to

¹⁵⁹ Lansdowne to C. Hardinge, October 17, 1905, PRO FO 800/141; Lansdowne to Cromer, September 10, 1905, excerpted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 217-218.

¹⁶⁰ Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 672-674; Bülow to Alvensleben, May 13, 1903, GDD III, pp. 172-174.

¹⁶¹ Bülow to the Kaiser, May 20, 1903, excerpted in Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, p. 675.

¹⁶² P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 267.

isolate Germany.¹⁶³ Although throughout the Anglo-French negotiations Lansdowne consistently played down the effect the Entente would have in Germany, surprisingly more so than even Entente advocates like Lord Cromer, there is no evidence that he ever contemplated purposely isolating Germany.¹⁶⁴ He did believe that Germany's reaction would be "interesting to see," and among the potentially dissenting powers, it would be "the most formidable." Moreover, in March, a few weeks before the Entente was signed, it remained an open question for the Foreign Secretary whether the Germans would "put a spoke in our wheel and stand out for all her privileges even if France, which has an infinitely larger stake in Egypt, consents to abdicate hers," or "be amiable and facilitate matters?"¹⁶⁵ This was hardly antagonism, however, and having obtained the adherence of all the other interested powers to the Khedivial Decree he predicted that the Germans would "scarcely venture to stand out."¹⁶⁶

The German response came quickly with Lascelles reporting on April 23 that Richthofen had suggested that compensation for German sacrifices in Egypt should take the form of an all-round understanding between the two countries.¹⁶⁷ Germany's policy, as formulated by Bülow and Holstein, was intended to diminish the importance of the Entente by following in French footsteps and securing compensation from England for

¹⁶³ The Kaiser quoted in Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, p. 680.

¹⁶⁴ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 145.

¹⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 18, 1904, PRO FO 800/129; Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 23, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 7, 1904, BP, Add 49728, ff189-192.

¹⁶⁷ Lascelles to Lansdowne, April 23, 1904, PRO 800/129.

Germany's rights in Egypt, as well as collecting indemnity claims for past incidents in Samoa and the Transvaal. The Chancellor confidently informed Richthofen on April 19 that Egypt was "the best nail to hang all the rest on."¹⁶⁸ While the Germans might have had legitimate cause to seek some compensation with regard to Egypt, Lansdowne showed considerable exacerbation, and this was in direct contrast to his apparent willingness to offer additional, if undeserved, inducements to Italy—underserved because he believed that Britain had "behaved like gentlemen to them about Tripoli"¹⁶⁹

It was at this stage, in his final year and a half at the Foreign Office, that there appeared a distinct change in Lansdowne's attitude toward Germany. The comprehensive settlement the Germans attempted to force as compensation for the "perfectly innocuous arrangement in Egypt," he believed would look "to an ordinary observer like a great piece of effrontery." Moreover, he resented the additional implied threat that Germany was as yet undecided on whether they would "turn to the East or to the West."¹⁷⁰ A year later, in a letter to Lascelles, the Foreign Secretary noted that although he was sure the Emperor was "much annoyed" with the Anglo-French Entente, he was not willing to let the Germans use it as "the pretext for a showy understanding which they might have put in their shop window."¹⁷¹ After contemplating exactly how far Britain might go in settling the claims on Germany's list, he confessed to Balfour that

¹⁶⁸ Bülow to Richthofen, April 19, 1904, GDD III, p. 192.

¹⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 18, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Lascelles, May 6, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁷¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 9, 1905, PRO FO 800/130.

he could “see no particular object in gratifying her, or at any rate in shewing much eagerness to do so.”¹⁷²

Telling Bertie that “the only thing to do was to hold Germany at arm’s length,” Lansdowne rebuffed German claims, and emphasis was to be given to the fact that all the other interested powers had adhered to the Decree except Germany. The Foreign Secretary still believed that it would “not be easy for Germany to obstruct what is admittedly a good arrangement for all concerned.” Metternich was of the opinion, however, that Lansdowne was demanding of Germany “a policy altogether too altruistic.” Nevertheless, the Germans drew back from their request for an all-round settlement claiming it was all a misunderstanding, and declared that they had no intention of obstructing British actions in Egypt. They simply wanted corresponding commercial equality in Egypt as had been granted to France for thirty years.¹⁷³ The Foreign Secretary at first was reluctant to agree to commercial equality on the terms given to France because to his mind Germany wanted “all that Great Britain has given to French commerce, but to give nothing to British commerce in exchange,” as France had done in Morocco.¹⁷⁴ He soon relented, however, and agreed to grant them “most-favoured-nation treatment” in Egypt for thirty years.¹⁷⁵ Germany’s adherence to the

¹⁷² Lansdowne memorandum, entitled “Germany & Egypt,” May 11, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 9, Cabinet Memoranda on Miscellaneous Subjects, 1892, 1901-1904, f17.

¹⁷³ Lansdowne to Bertie, May 30, 1904, quoted in Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 162; Lansdowne to Knollys, May 24, 1904, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 4, Private Letters: Court, f159; Lansdowne to Lascelles, May 24, 1904, BD III no.16; Metternich to the German Foreign Office, June 4, 1904, GDD III, pp. 193-194; Lascelles to Lansdowne, June 3, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Metternich, June 6, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Metternich, June 15, 1904, BD III no.19.

Khedivial Decree came on June 19, 1904, and they agreed, moreover, not to ask for a time-limit for British occupation.¹⁷⁶

What Lansdowne had referred to as “a test case, so far as German good will is concerned,” Holstein characterized now as “a test of strength,” arguing that “a German retreat in the face of Anglo-French resistance would in no way be conducive to bringing about better German-English relations, but would on the contrary give the English, the French, and the rest of the world practical proof that one gets most from Germany by treating her badly.” In his view, to follow such a course would “only be preparing the way for future conflicts.”¹⁷⁷ Notwithstanding the failure to force Britain to make a comprehensive settlement over Egypt, Holstein had formulated already Germany’s next move to demonstrate the worthlessness of the Entente. Germany would become the champion of international law and the upholder of the legitimate rights of other powers by challenging French designs on Morocco. After all, the Madrid Convention of July 1880 committed all the European powers and the United States to support the Open Door in Morocco. Holstein also assumed that the diplomatic support the Entente required Britain to provide France would “remain platonic.”¹⁷⁸ Richthofen concurred, asserting that “England is now out of it, for it no longer has any interest in how Germany

¹⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Metternich, June 15, 1904, BD III no.20; Lansdowne to Whitehead, June 19, 1904, BD III no.21; Metternich to Lansdowne, June 19, 1904, BD III no.22.

¹⁷⁷ Lansdowne to Lascelles, March 23, 1904, PRO FO 800/129; Holstein memorandum, June 5, 1904, excerpted in Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, p. 683.

¹⁷⁸ Holstein memorandum, June 3, 1904, GDD III, pp. 220-221; Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, p. 684.

deals with France over Morocco.”¹⁷⁹ Once again, German complaints had some legitimacy, but for the time being they laid low.

The Dogger Bank incident in October 1904 presented the Kaiser with a perfect opportunity to attempt a Russo-German alliance, but when the danger to Russia had receded Germany was informed that before negotiations could continue France would first have to be consulted. This of course signaled the end of the venture, and the Anglo-Russian crisis was soon followed by an Anglo-German war scare beginning in late November. Germany’s leaders became alarmed at the prospect of an imminent British attack, as the suspicions of many in Britain that the Germans were secretly behind the Russian attack in the North Sea helped ignite the usual Germanophobia. This included the appearance of articles in *Vanity Fair* and the *Army and Navy Gazette* that called for the German fleet to be ‘Copenhagen-ed.’¹⁸⁰ Although perhaps not as apprehensive as the rest, even Bülow advised the Emperor that the “attitude of the big English papers was in fact a fine indication of how British policy was going, for the final decision lay with public opinion.”¹⁸¹

Lansdowne was mildly incredulous at the whole affair, and informed Lascelles that he did “not believe that it would be possible to find a sane individual in these islands who thinks that it would be for our interest, or was likely to become our duty to fasten a

¹⁷⁹ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 276.

¹⁸⁰ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 272.

¹⁸¹ Bülow to the Emperor, December 26, 1904, GDD III, pp. 212-213.

quarrel upon Germany.”¹⁸² Moreover, with regard to the fears and complaints expressed officially by Bülow and Holstein, he confessed that it was “a little difficult to follow the working of these great minds,” and wondered that they could “seriously believe that we are meditating a coup against them.” In jest, he asked Lascelles, “Are they perchance meditating one against us & are they seeking to justify it in advance?”¹⁸³ While Lansdowne might have been inclined to agree that the “tone” of the British press could be “quite needlessly exasperating,” he found it immensely “irritating to find serious diplomatic complaints founded upon articles in the ‘Army and Navy Gazette’ and ‘Vanity Fair.’”¹⁸⁴

As noted already, the crumbling of the Sultan’s authority in Morocco in the last months of 1904 forced the French to act on their plans much sooner than anticipated. On January 25, 1905, they began talks with the Sultan, and thereafter Germany’s leaders made their decision to come to the aid of the Moroccan ruler. In search of a dramatic demonstration of their backing, Bülow and Holstein decided that during his planned Mediterranean cruise the Kaiser would land personally at Tangier, ignore French pretensions in the country, and declare Germany’s support for the Sultan’s independence and the Open Door in Morocco. Indeed, Bülow believed the latter to be Germany’s “trump card” as all the European powers and the United States had signed treaties to uphold commercial equality in the country. The reluctant and fearful Emperor’s visit to

¹⁸² Lansdowne to Lascelles, December 27, 1904, PRO FO 800/129.

¹⁸³ Lansdowne to Lascelles, January 5, 1905, PRO FO 800/130.

¹⁸⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, January 18, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f138.

Tangier on March 31 provoked the first Moroccan Crisis and Germany's strong legal position prompted Holstein to insist on forcing on the French an international conference. He was convinced that Germany would have the support of the other European powers like Spain and Italy, as well as America. Inexplicably, he continued to believe this despite prior intimations from Roosevelt that the United States did not wish to become entangled in the Morocco affair.¹⁸⁵

Lansdowne hoped initially that Wilhelm's rather short excursion would not do much harm, but within the week he recognized the Emperor's "Tangier escapade as an extraordinarily clumsy bit of diplomacy," and suspected that it was not likely to be an isolated incident. He even suggested to Salisbury (the fourth marquis) that His Imperial Majesty deserved a "judicious spanking," but what he could not fully explain was the Emperor's displeasure at the Moroccan agreement, unless it was, he theorized, to force the Sultan to purchase more German guns. If this was his object, Lansdowne believed it would "certainly not add to the reputation and popularity of his country."¹⁸⁶

Hoping to avoid the humiliation of an international conference, Declassé tried to tempt the Germans with a bilateral deal on Morocco—never intending, however, to go further than to guarantee Germany commercial freedom in the country—but again

¹⁸⁵ Bülow to the Emperor, April 4, 1905, GDD III, pp. 224-225; Baron W. von Schoen to the German Foreign Office, March 31, 1905, GDD III, p. 224; Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 693-695, 700-701.

¹⁸⁶ Lansdowne to Bertie, April 3, 1905, PRO FO 800/127; Lansdowne to Lascelles, April 9, 1905, PRO FO 800/130; Lansdowne to Salisbury (fourth marquis), April 11, 1905, quoted in P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, p. 277. Moreover, Lansdowne had long been under the impression, based on his conversations with Metternich the previous year, that Germany had known a good deal of the details of the Moroccan deal very early on from leaks (Lansdowne to Cromer, November 17, 1903, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 285; Lansdowne to Bertie, April 3, 1905, PRO FO 800/127).

Holstein wanted to force an international conference on France to put them in the wrong. Under the cover of a conference Germany would then be able to wriggle out of its commitments to the Sultan and its pronouncements in support of international law and possibly acquire a slice of Morocco.¹⁸⁷ Declassé was able to remain strong in his resistance to German demands during the crisis in part because he received British diplomatic support early on. Lansdowne thought Germany's attitude completely "unreasonable," and on April 22 authorized Bertie, now Ambassador in Paris, to inform the French Foreign Minister that Britain was prepared to give its support in opposing any German request for a Moroccan port.¹⁸⁸ Declassé's anti-German policies were increasingly under attack at home, however, and receiving little support from his political colleagues he tendered his resignation. He managed to survive for the time-being, and Lansdowne, for one, was pleased the "cabal against him" had failed.¹⁸⁹

Lansdowne recognized fully now that the French were "thoroughly frightened," as they had little hope of Russian help and were still somewhat unsure of British assistance. The Foreign Secretary, however, was unsure himself that Britain should support France "except in certain eventualities." His request for the opinion of the Admiralty on the strategic impact for Britain if Germany were to gain a port on the Moroccan coast resulted in what he characterized as a "characteristic effusion" from the new First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher. Fisher argued that events had provided a "golden

¹⁸⁷ Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 704-708; Andrew, *Théophile Declassé*, p. 274.

¹⁸⁸ Lansdowne to Bertie, April 22, 1905, BD III no.90.

¹⁸⁹ Andrew, *Théophile Declassé*, p. 277; Lansdowne to Bertie, April 26, 1905, PRO FO 800/127.

opportunity” to go to war with Germany, and maintained that Britain “could have the German Fleet, the Kiel Canal, and Schleswig-Holstein within a fortnight.” Lansdowne did not take the suggestion seriously, believing it to be more than a little ahead of the extant crisis, and despite the Admiral’s views and the efforts of the anti-German faction in the Foreign Office, his ‘guarantee’ of support to France fell well short of the offer of military assistance. Citing Lansdowne’s unfinished letter to the Prime Minister of April 23, 1905, quoted above, Monger argued that Lansdowne was in fact prepared and willing to go to war with Germany, but only in “certain eventualities,” but there is no additional evidence to suggest that this is the level of support he actually meant.¹⁹⁰

In mid-May, Lansdowne emphasized again, this time to Cambon, that both governments “should continue to treat one another with the most absolute confidence, should keep one another fully informed of everything which came to their knowledge, and should, so far as possible, discuss in advance any contingencies by which they might in the course of events find themselves confronted.”¹⁹¹ As far as Lansdowne was concerned this was the extent of Britain’s so-called ‘guarantee’ to France during the crisis. Others went further however. On receiving the Foreign Secretary’s instructions of April 22, Bertie gave Declassé, purposely or not, a selectively edited version of Lansdowne’s instructions, stating that Britain offered “all the support in its power,” and on his own initiative might have later promised even more.¹⁹² Moreover, Cambon told

¹⁹⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, April 23, 1905, BP Add 49729, ff116-117; Fisher to Lansdowne, April 22, 1905, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 334-335; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 192.

¹⁹¹ Lansdowne to Bertie, May 17, 1905, BD III no.94.

¹⁹² Andrew, *Théophile Declassé*, pp. 281,286.

Declassé that he believed Lansdowne's assurances given in May, "constitute, in reality, an alliance."¹⁹³

Germany's leaders, based on the reports of their own secret informants, became convinced that an offensive and defensive alliance had been concluded between France and Britain, and no amount of denials would shake them from that belief.¹⁹⁴ In the midst of these multiple denials Lansdowne did amplify, somewhat indirectly, his support of France, warning Metternich twice, first on June 28 and later on July 19, that "although there was no alliance, public opinion here might become uncontrollable if Germany were to fasten a quarrel upon France merely because the latter had come to a friendly arrangement with us." Afterward in a letter to Lascelles, he noted that the German Ambassador "made a good deal" of the observation, but the French were not told.¹⁹⁵ By late October, it was clear to the Foreign Secretary that the agreement with France had "no doubt been interpreted in a perverse fashion by a certain section of German opinion & I am afraid the German Gov[ernment]."¹⁹⁶ Some six years later he was still of the same mind. When publication of Entente's secret clauses was forced by a leak to the press, Lansdowne confessed to his successor at the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey, his relief that he would "at any rate hear no more of the confident statements which are still

¹⁹³ Cambon quoted in Eubank, *Paul Cambon*, p. 100.

¹⁹⁴ Lascelles to Lansdowne, June 12, 1905, BD III no.97; Lascelles to Lansdowne, June 12, 1905, BD III no.98; Lansdowne to Lascelles, June 16, 1905, BD III no.99.

¹⁹⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 5, 1905, PRO FO 800/130; Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 204 n.3.

¹⁹⁶ Lansdowne to the Archbishop of Canterbury, October 26, 1905, LP, Further Correspondence, K. no.4 Archbishop of Canterbury 1905-1914.

being made to the effect that we had bound ourselves by these Articles to afford one another material assistance of a definite kind in certain eventualities.”¹⁹⁷

Unable to secure a deal with Germany, on June 6, 1905, Declass  was forced finally by his political colleagues and an apprehensive and fearful public to resign. Lansdowne found the unseating of Declass —a man he referred to as a personal “ally” and friend—“disgusting,” and was sure it had “sent the ‘entente’ down any number of points in the market.”¹⁹⁸ This was especially so as Declass ’s replacement, Maurice Rouvier, now Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister, was an advocate of conciliating Germany. Rouvier was of the opinion that British support meant little when facing a German land invasion, the threat of which he took more seriously than his predecessor.¹⁹⁹ On finding, however, that he too was unable to construct a Franco-German deal over Morocco, he stiffened in his resistance to a conference. After less than two months as Foreign Minister, he was forced to admit that the actions of the German Emperor threatened to make him “as Germanophobe as Declass .”²⁰⁰

Rouvier still had Britain’s diplomatic support, and Lansdowne was pleased to hear that the new Foreign Minister at least for the time being would not accept a conference. If it turned out, however, that the French were “really on the run,”

¹⁹⁷ Grey to Lansdowne, November 22, 1911, LP, Alphabetical Correspondence, Box 3 (E-H), no.7 Lord Grey of Falloden; Lansdowne to Grey, November 22, 1911, LP, Alphabetical Correspondence, Box 3 (E-H), no.7 Lord Grey of Falloden.

¹⁹⁸ Lansdowne to Declass , June 17, 1905, PRO FO 800/127; Lansdowne to Salisbury (fourth marquis), June 13, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 3, Private Letters: Irish Secretary, Board of Trade and War Office, f28.

¹⁹⁹ Andrew, *Th ophile Declass *, p. 289.

²⁰⁰ Rouvier quoted in Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 275.

Lansdowne had come to the rather naïve conclusion that a conference might still produce a satisfactory settlement as Germany's stated aim was to uphold "the legal status of Morocco, an attitude which would scarcely be reconcilable with a proposal to steal territory from the Sultan."²⁰¹ In addition to British support, the United States had informed the French that it would decline to attend a conference if asked. Moreover, anxious to keep his hope of a Russo-German alliance alive, the Kaiser was urging his own government to be conciliatory, and might even have let slip to a French general that Germany had no intention of going to war over Morocco.²⁰²

Nevertheless, the French succumbed to external and internal pressures and on July 8 agreed to the German demand for an international conference. As a sign of how much the German position had been undermined, however, they did so only on the conditions that Germany recognize their "legitimate interests" in Morocco, and that there be joint approval of the agenda. Moreover, the French now knew that when the conference took place early the following year they would have the majority support of the participating powers.²⁰³ The German scheme had failed, and Lansdowne observed that if French conditions for the conference held true, the conferees would have little to do but occupy themselves "with the whitewashing of the prisons and such-like domestic questions."²⁰⁴ He also believed, however, that the French had "played their cards badly

²⁰¹ Lansdowne to Bertie, June 12, 1905, PRO FO 800/127.

²⁰² Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 709-710.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 712-713.

²⁰⁴ Lansdowne to A. Nicolson, July 10, 1905, PRO FO 800/142.

in Morocco” and dismissed an appeal by Reginald Lister, the Second Secretary at the British Embassy at Paris, for a more definitive ‘guarantee’ to France. Arguing that the moment would not “be a very opportune one for suggesting either to the Cabinet or to the country an extension of the understanding already arrived at,” he pointed out that “Recent events [had] . . . undoubtedly shaken people’s confidence in the steadfastness of the French nation.”²⁰⁵ Lansdowne’s own confidence in the Entente was not shaken, but he did have to admit to Bertie that the “instability of French gov[ernmen]ts is much to be regretted, & affords an argument to those who do not believe in the possibility of an enduring understanding with France.”²⁰⁶

Paul Kennedy argued that Lansdowne never really showed “resentment” toward German actions—merely critiquing the Emperor in “schoolmasterly fashion”—because he was overly preoccupied with imperial concerns and this due to an overwhelming fear of Russian encroachments in Asia which he shared with Balfour. While Balfour never really considered the episode a true ‘crisis’ for Britain, as shown above there indeed was a change in the Foreign Secretary’s attitude toward Germany which was the result of the latter’s reaction to the Anglo-French Entente, even if that attitude remained tinged with Whiggish detachment and liberal optimism. The Foreign Secretary’s reaction to the Emperor’s Tangier “escapade” appeared mild to Kennedy, but it was not indicative of distraction or lack of due interest, it was more a reflection of Lansdowne’s nature.²⁰⁷ If,

²⁰⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, August 5, 1905, PRO FO 800/130; Lansdowne to Lister, July 10, 1905, PRO FO 800/127.

²⁰⁶ Lansdowne to Bertie, September 12, 1905, PRO FO 800/127.

²⁰⁷ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 277-278; Mackay, *Balfour*, p. 180.

in Lansdowne's opinion, France had played its cards "badly," he believed Germany had "shown herself inconceivably stupid about Morocco."²⁰⁸ Their policy having failed utterly, Germany's leaders had managed finally to antagonize their last great defender in the British Cabinet, and their perceived bullying methods only served to drive Britain and France closer together.²⁰⁹ What Lansdowne might have only unconsciously perceived at the time, however, was that his own 'policy of the entente' also was wrecked by German imperial ambition and diplomatic stupidity.

With the first Moroccan Crisis on the path to settlement, the Kaiser convinced the Czar to meet him on his yacht in the Bay of Björkö (Primorsk). On July 24, 1905, the Czar signed a Russo-German defensive alliance on the belief, as attested to by the Emperor, that Germany and France soon would be friends.²¹⁰ A description of the meeting that Lansdowne received in August from Reginald Tower, British Minister Resident at Munich and Stuttgart, and which he thought was the only account so far that had "any pretence to authenticity," filled him with "disquiet" with regard to the "Emperor's language and demeanor." In addition to the Foreign Secretary's desire that Russia and Germany not come to terms with one another, according to Tower, when the Emperor chose to speak at all, he talked "vehemently," and then mostly of "alliances and political combinations," such as his dream of forging a Germany-France-Russia coalition against Britain. Lansdowne could only wonder: "What may not a man in such a frame

²⁰⁸ Lister to Lansdowne, August 25, 1905, PRO FO 800/127; Lansdowne to Lister, August 9, 1905, PRO FO 800/127.

²⁰⁹ Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 712-713.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 714-715.

of mind not do next?”²¹¹ Notwithstanding his own “disquiet,” a month later Lansdowne was compelled to attribute at least some of the Emperor’s ill-feeling to the actions of Edward VII, who continued, the Foreign Secretary noted, to talk and write “about his Royal Brother in terms which make one’s flesh creep.”²¹²

With a Russo-German alliance now signed, the Kaiser and Bülow pushed for conciliation with France over Morocco believing it to be the perfect bait for gaining French adherence to the new alignment. Holstein dissented arguing, correctly as it turned out, that conciliation would only serve to increase French resistance and strengthen the Entente. Germany compromised on the conference agenda in late September, and less than two weeks later in a repetition of what had occurred the year before, the Czar informed the Kaiser that ratification of the recently signed Russo-German alliance would need to be postponed until the exact views of France were known.²¹³ At the Moroccan conference convened at Algeciras in Spain in January 1906, France and Britain relied on each other’s support more than ever, while Germany found out quickly that it could only count on the support of Austria and Morocco.²¹⁴

Nearing the end of his term at the Foreign Office, Lansdowne, ever the liberal optimist, considered Anglo-German relations still not nearly “so deplorable” as others

²¹¹ Tower to Lansdowne, August 13, 1905, PRO FO 800/130; Lansdowne to Tower, August 20, 1905, PRO FO 800/130; Lansdowne to Balfour, October 27, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f166.

²¹² Lansdowne to Lascelles, September 25, 1905, PRO FO 800/130.

²¹³ Rich, *Holstein*, Vol. II, pp. 717, 727.

²¹⁴ Andrew, *Théophile Declassé*, p. 303.

believed, “considering that the two Governments have (so far as I am aware) absolutely no outstanding questions by which those relations might be embarrassed.”²¹⁵ Five days earlier, he had written along the same lines to Randall Thomas Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury. In response to the Archbishop’s request for advice on associating himself with the Anglo-German Conciliation Committee, the Foreign Secretary had no doubt that the movement was “well meant,” but he was not sure it would have much effect. He was confident, however, that there was “no misunderstanding & certainly no quarrel between the British & German Gov[ernmen]ts.” Moreover, there was “No question as to which we could fall out” so far as he was aware.²¹⁶ It is ironic that many modern historians have since pointed to this very lack of outstanding disputes between the two countries as the primary obstacle to an Anglo-German understanding.²¹⁷

A Brief Assessment

In early December 1905, the Balfour Ministry finally fell, having outlasted most political prognosticators. In the subsequent elections held in January and February 1906 the Unionists suffered one of the greatest parliamentary defeats in British history. It was a defeat at the hands of tariff reform, however, not foreign policy. Lord Newton

²¹⁵ Lansdowne to Lascelles, October 31, 1905, PRO FO 800/130.

²¹⁶ Lansdowne to the Archbishop of Canterbury, October 26, 1905, LP, Further Correspondence, K. no.4 Archbishop of Canterbury 1905-1914.

²¹⁷ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 44; Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), p. 27; Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, p. 53.

maintained that Lansdowne was “the only one who had emerged from the *débâcle* with an enhanced reputation.”²¹⁸ Party officials, however, had to plead with their popular, but largely unseen, Foreign Secretary just to get him to give a speech sometime before the election. They were forced to turn to Balfour, who pressed Lansdowne to address a mass meeting in Manchester in December arguing there was “no member of the Government whom the country more desires to hear than yourself.”²¹⁹

Lansdowne relented and spoke on January 8 before a mass meeting of Conservatives and Unionists at Manchester’s Free Trade hall. Proud of his achievements as Foreign Secretary, he told the crowd that he could not hope to find a more fitting epitaph to be engraved upon his “political tombstone” than a declaration recently given by the Liberal caretaker government’s Chancellor of the Exchequer, Herbert Henry Asquith, that, “he did not know where the enemies of England were to be found.” Lansdowne also was more than a little amused to note a recent pronouncement by the Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, that Britain’s Foreign Policy over the last five years was in fact Liberal foreign policy. He certainly did not hesitate to deprecate Campbell-Bannerman’s plans for general disarmament and the formation of a “league of peace” under the direction of Britain.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 348.

²¹⁹ Sir William Houldsworth to Balfour, November 8, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f168; Balfour to Lansdowne, November 10, 1905, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 5, Private Letters: Prime Minister, f167.

²²⁰ Lansdowne’s speech at the Free Trade hall in Manchester on January 8, 1906, *The Times*, January 9, 1906, p. 7.

Throughout the months leading up to the election, the Liberals stressed continuously that they wished for continuity in foreign policy, which prompted Lansdowne to ask publicly why a government so successful in foreign affairs should then be turned out by the electorate.²²¹ Sir Edward Grey, who had nothing but praise for the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Anglo-French Entente, as well as the general understanding with America, was forced to observe, however, that there was “a *naïveté* about that question of Lord Lansdowne’s which has the charm of engaging simplicity, but it is not creditable to his appreciation of political issues at home.” The coming election, he pointed out, was going to be fought “not about something about which we are agreed, but about something about which we differ.”²²² There were important differences, however, in the ‘policy of the entente’ as conceived by Lansdowne and that to be carried out by Grey. The latter was much closer in his thinking to the anti-German faction in the Foreign Office, who for five years had largely backed their chief’s foreign policy, but with motivations and predispositions wholly at odds with his.

Germany’s leaders looked forward with pleasure to the succession of the party of Gladstone, anticipating perhaps a “Cobdenite foreign policy.”²²³ They might have reconsidered, however, if they had known that none other than the old radical Liberal, John Morley—who in August 1914 would resign his place in the government rather than

²²¹ Lansdowne’s speech given in the King’s hall of the Holborn Restaurant on June 1, 1905, *The Times*, January 2, 1905, p. 10.

²²² Grey’s speech at the Canon-street Hotel in London on October 20, 1905, *The Times*, October 21, 1905, p. 5.

²²³ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 282-283.

go to war with Germany—had a year earlier told President Roosevelt and Secretary Hay that when his party took power again they would have only one regret, that there would have to be change at the Foreign Office. Hearing of this from Ambassador Durand, Lansdowne recalled that Morley had “curiously enough” once said the same thing to him, but then had to admit that “it was not practical politics.”²²⁴ In July 1905, Campbell-Bannerman made to the new American Ambassador, Whitelaw Reid a similar remark of regret at the loss of the Unionist Foreign Secretary.²²⁵

Once again Germany’s leaders had severely misjudged the situation, as Grey was much more concerned with the balance of power in Europe than Lansdowne, and would eventually take the ‘policy of the entente’ farther than his predecessor ever intended.²²⁶ As early as 1895, Grey had formulated a clear conception of Britain’s position in the world. He wrote:

The fact is that the success of the British race has upset the tempers of the rest of the world and now that they have ceased quarreling about provinces in Europe and have turned their eyes to distant places, they find us in the way everywhere. Hence a general tendency to vote us a nuisance and combine against us. I am afraid we shall have to fight sooner or later, unless some European apple of discord falls amongst the Continental Powers, but we have a good card on hand to play and I think a bold and skilful Foreign Secretary might detach Russia from the number of our active enemies without sacrificing any very material British interests.²²⁷

²²⁴ Durand to Lansdowne, November 29, 1904, PRO FO 800/144; Lansdowne to Durand, December 11, 1904, PRO FO 800/144.

²²⁵ Reid to Roosevelt, July 29, 1905, printed in David R. Contosta, Jessica Hawthorne, and Whitelaw Reid, “Rise to World Power: Selected Letters of Whitelaw Reid 1895-1912,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* Vol. 76, No. 2 (1986): 95-97.

²²⁶ P. Kennedy, *Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 282-283.

²²⁷ Grey’s letter, 1895, excerpted in Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, p. 40.

Lansdowne had done much of the work already, and Grey would continue it by restarting Anglo-Russian negotiations in the spring of 1906, but the new Foreign Secretary saw clearly that Germany was Britain's most active enemy. In Steiner's words, Grey "fully grasped what Lansdowne had only glimpsed," and even if this is accepted, he "glimpsed" it only in the latter part of his tenure as Foreign Secretary.²²⁸

Highlighting Lansdowne's emphasis on securing imperial interests over the balance of power in Europe, Steiner noted that "What is most curious about Lansdowne's diplomacy is the degree to which events rather than a conscious choice of alternatives determined the direction of his policy." Moreover, she asserted that if the Foreign Secretary "was reacting to pressures on his imperial borders, his responses were not based on any deep perception of the consequences involved."²²⁹ In this assessment, and in the work of nearly all diplomatic historians of Edwardian Britain, one can detect the influence of George Monger's seminal work, *The End of Isolation*. Although now over four decades old, it remains one of the most important works covering the period, along with the major studies by J. A. S. Grenville and Ian H. Nish.

Throughout Monger's study there is the sense that Lansdowne was continuously "borne along by events he could not control." If true, it is

²²⁸ Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, p. 41.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

understandable that Lansdowne would have benefited more from having “stood apart” from his colleagues, because, as Monger noted, “he adopted a less dogmatic, more empirical, approach to diplomacy.”²³⁰ A picture is therefore drawn of an enlightened gentleman diplomat collecting and accumulating data from which he drew reasoned conclusions, and only then did he formulate his policy. Indeed, in reading Monger one is given the impression that Lansdowne faced endless alternatives on every issue, every day, and his decisions, although reasoned, were not part of conscious deeply thought-out policy, but calculated on the moment. Founded on similar bases was Grenville’s conclusion that the marquis had no perceivable “master plan.”²³¹

Many of the impressions one draws from reading Monger, however, are in fact the product of the ambitious structure of his book. More than any other historian, before or since, he attempted to place all the countless foreign policy questions Lansdowne dealt with in his five years at the Foreign Office in chronological order. It was a near monumental, if not impossible, task if one wished to present the reader with an elegant and flowing story of the past, but important in order to provide the most perfect context for the daily decisions the Foreign Secretary had to make. No matter how useful the structure, however, the very approach too often does not allow the mind to encompass influencing factors beyond the limited horizons of a few months or a few days in the

²³⁰ Monger, *End of Isolation*, pp. 123, 152.

²³¹ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury*, p. 434.

chronology. In fact, it is all the more likely to lead one inexorably down the path of ‘*post hoc ergo propter hoc.*’

It is true that as Foreign Secretary Lansdowne was inclined to show greater concern for imperial security than the balance of power in Europe, although it should never be asserted that he neglected the latter completely. Moreover, more often than not he did find himself “borne along by events he could not control.” His diffident nature should not be denied as part of this either, as it was noted by such disparate persons such as Sandars, Selborne, and Cambon, and borne out in the fact that neither of his greatest accomplishments, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Anglo-French Entente, were in their origins the product of his own initiative.²³² Indeed, one of the more unusual aspects of his foreign policy is that it was almost entirely reactive.

These now widely accepted conclusions do not, however, explain fully Lansdowne’s foreign policy, and Monger went too far in concluding that Lansdowne “never regarded any feature of his policy as fundamental or unalterable,” and “never expected too much, either from himself or from others.”²³³ Notwithstanding his somewhat passive nature, Lansdowne did make conscious policy decisions as Foreign Secretary founded in principles and beliefs that existed in his mind prior to the last telegram or memorandum he received.

He reacted and fought against those forces that dragged him in directions he did

²³² Sandars to Lady Newton, 1928-1929, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c. 771, ff71-72; Selborne Notes 1916, MS Selborne 80, f289; Cambon to Declassé, August 6, 1903, quoted in Rolo, *Entente Cordiale*, p. 171.

²³³ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 330.

not want to go, and that ran counter to his foreign policy beliefs. The foremost of these forces were public opinion—of which he always expected more—shabby diplomacy, and irrational thought in general. He simply lost on all accounts. Beyond the preeminence that imperial security held in his thinking, the other important constant in Lansdowne's foreign policy, and the least emphasized, was his gentlemanly nature, his liberal devotion to peace, his abhorrence of war, and the often unnoticed drawbacks associated with his famed 'Whiggish detachment.' With regard to that latter seemingly beneficial trait—that famed freedom from foolish emotion and ill-considered prejudice when conducting foreign affairs—no one demonstrated more than the marquis himself that he was nearly incapable of truly putting himself in the place of his opponents. These aspects of the man and his character help explain more fully his 'policy of the entente,' and make sense of his so-called 'Peace Letter' of November 1917.

In his last major speech as Foreign Secretary in early November 1905 presented at a congratulatory banquet given in his honor by the Junior Constitutional Club on the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Lansdowne laid out those beliefs that guided his foreign policy. He told those assembled that the time for holding a "prejudice" against so-called 'entangling alliances' had "passed by." Pointing to the grouping of other nations, to countries "arming themselves to the teeth," and to the breathtaking suddenness of modern war, he asserted that "no nation which intends to take its part in the affairs of the civilized world can venture to stand entirely alone." For those who were inclined

to follow still a “solitary and aloof” foreign policy as Britain had once practiced, he asked to consult the most recent Army and Navy estimates.

Lansdowne suggested further that the question was no longer whether alliances were inherently good or bad, but what was the character of the people of the country with which one might potentially ally. With regard to Japan, he noted that Britain was “attracted by the straightforwardness and sincerity of their diplomacy,” and even more importantly, the first object of their alliance was the “maintenance of peace, the greatest of all British interests.” In response to those who regarded the renewed alliance as provocative in character, he asked if they would similarly argue that taking out fire insurance actually provoked conflagrations. Moreover, he rejected absolutely the suggestion that Britain’s alliance with Japan and friendly agreement with France must necessarily cause estrangement from other powers. The very suggestion seemed to him “to proceed upon the altogether untenable theory that the stock of international good will and international good manners is so limited that if a certain amount of it has been served out there is none left for any of those who may afterwards apply for it.”²³⁴

Underlying these words was Lansdowne’s desire to deny the immutability of the operation of ‘balance of power’ among nation-states, and although he criticized Campbell-Bannerman’s ‘league of peace,’ his own ‘policy of the entente’ was not very far removed in its conception. If he was to be judged a

²³⁴ Lansdowne’s speech before the Junior Constitutional Club on November 6, 1905, *The Times*, November 7, 1905, p. 6.

success as Foreign Secretary, Monger was right in the qualification that it was in great part because “he was extremely lucky.”²³⁵ It was luck, however, in the sense that his foreign policy, far from being successfully carried out, actually failed, but fortunately was rendered more sensible by Salisbury and Balfour, and was readily adaptable to the slightly less detached and marginally more impassioned worldview of his successor.

²³⁵ Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 233.

CHAPTER VIII

OPPOSITION, WAR AND DISSENT, 1906-1927

Opposition

Lansdowne spent the next ten years in Opposition, and although much of his energy was expended on the great and increasingly divisive political and constitutional questions of the age, he retained a keen interest in foreign affairs. Fortunately, it was thought by the majority of both parties that Britain's foreign policy should remain above the unpleasant nature of Edwardian politics; and after all, Grey proclaimed throughout that his was merely a continuation of predecessor's policy. One of the newly elected Labour MPs, J. Ramsay MacDonald, however, contended that the government was carrying out the marquis's foreign policy "to extremes."¹

Lansdowne welcomed the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, which was unsurprising as it followed roughly the outlines of the proposed agreement he put forward in late 1903, even if Grey's was a little more favorable to Russia with regard to the Persian Gulf. He assured the Lords, however, that like most he was "willing to pay a liberal price and to make sacrifices on points of secondary importance, and most of us will be ready to regard an arrangement of this kind as a whole and not merely in respect of its effect upon those particular regions in which the contracting Powers are brought into immediate contact." He also was overly sanguine, at least publicly, in expressing confidence that Russian assurances would prove more trustworthy now that Britain had

¹ MacDonald excerpted in Frank McDonough, "The Conservative Party and the Anglo-French entente, 1905-1914," in Sharp and Stone, eds., *Anglo-French Relations*, p. 41.

“a contract recorded in a formal document founded upon reciprocal concessions and reciprocal obligations.”²

It was his suspicions with regard to German policy that increased greatly during his years out of office. In October 1908, the Austrians annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina which led many in Serbia and Russia to call for war, but while the Entente powers backed the Russian government’s proposal for an international conference to settle the dispute, Germany gave the Austrians their complete support against making any concessions. The Asquith Government could not come to any other conclusion than that Germany wanted war. An “extremely perturbed” Prime Minister consulted with Balfour in early November about the very grave situation in Europe, and the latter “observed that the almost incredible frivolity of the excuse for hostilities which the Germans had devised would shock the civilized world beyond expression, and that it was difficult to see what Germany expected to gain by a war in which she must lose so much morally; and was by no means certain to gain anything materially.” Both men feared that in a general war, “the temptation [for the Germans] to invade Belgium might prove irresistible.” Especially struck by Asquith’s “pessimistic tone,” Balfour informed Lansdowne that he had promised the Prime Minister the support of the Opposition in any “national difficulty.”³

Lansdowne admitted that such speculation as to Germany’s true intentions was “not pleasant reading,” and that it was “almost inconceivable that they should provoke a

² Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Lords, Vol. CLXXXIII, February 10, 1908, columns 1323-1335.

³ Balfour to Lansdowne, November 6, 1908, LP, Named Correspondence, A. J. Balfour, August 1895-January 1915.

European War, but the Emperor is becoming more irresponsible with every year that passes.” He agreed fully with Balfour’s promise of support to Asquith, and speaking in Manchester less than two weeks later, the marquis was glad to be able to declare that “so far as foreign affairs are concerned this country speaks with an undivided voice,” but he also had to confess that “Recent events have shown how little dependence can be placed upon paper securities for the maintenance of international compacts.”⁴ Nevertheless, Lansdowne continued to believe that much good could be done by the cultivation of amicable understandings with one’s neighbors, declaring that:

If we can get rid of points of friction; if we can keep our tempers, and not pay too much attention to irritating episodes, it should not be beyond our power to create a serener international atmosphere, the environment of which would enable us and other nations to diminish our insensate expenditure upon armaments, which is at once a threat to the peace of the civilized world and a serious drain upon its resources.⁵

Significantly, however, Unionist Party campaign literature which in prior years had referred exclusively to the Entente as a “colonial agreement,” now declared that it had in fact “restored the balance of European power.”⁶

During the second Moroccan Crisis of 1911, the Unionist Party and the marquis both had come to the conclusion that for peace of the world, ‘balance of power’ concerns required that Britain not allow France to be crushed by Germany. The second crisis, sparked by the dispatch of a German warship to the Moroccan port of Agadir in response

⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, November 11, 1908, LP, Named Correspondence, A. J. Balfour, August 1895-January 1915.

⁵ Lansdowne’s speech in Manchester on November 20, 1908, *The Times*, November 21, 1908, p. 9.

⁶ McDonough, “The Conservative Party and the Anglo-French entente, 1905-1914” in Sharp and Stone, eds., *Anglo-French Relations*, p. 43.

to France's decision to militarily occupy the country, moved Lansdowne to call on the party to give Grey its "unqualified support."⁷ Although the crisis was settled by a Franco-German Treaty in November 1911, in answer to the King's speech in February of the next year the marquis told the House of Lords that it was "impossible for any one to look at the general situation of international politics without a feeling of very considerable uneasiness." It was not the fault of the diplomats, however, and Lansdowne came to their defense in the form of his presenting a diplomatist's advice. Observing that "Great changes" were in progress, and that "great problems" were presenting themselves, he proposed that the solution to these problems depended "upon the temper in which they are approached." Not so many months ago, he reminded them, "this country was on the eve of a serious quarrel—a serious quarrel with a Power with which every right-thinking Englishman desires not only to live at peace, but to cooperate in the discharge of the great obligations which belong to two great progressive and civilizing Powers." He found it lamentable, as he always had, that "these misunderstandings and apprehensions should exist" between Britain and Germany, and sought to remind his countrymen that it was "the duty of all right-thinking people to endeavour to dispel them."⁸ It was not to be.

⁷ Lansdowne quoted in McDonough, "The Conservative Party and the Anglo-French entente, 1905-1914" in Sharp and Stone, eds., *Anglo-French Relations*, pp. 40, 44.

⁸ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, Fifth Series, Vol. XI, February 14, 1912, columns 19-22.

War

When the First World War began some two and one half years later, Lansdowne was sixty-nine years old, an elderly “*grand seigneur*,” frail but still vigorous in mind. He had gone prematurely bald in his youth and was never to be seen without a rather large but well-groomed mustache, which had whitened in old age. His overall presence had not diminished however. In late 1917, after meeting the marquis for the first time, Colonel Edward House, Woodrow Wilson’s personal advisor and envoy, observed that Lansdowne was “a great gentleman . . . not merely in intellect and character, nor from having for a background an ancient and distinguished lineage, but in manner and in that intangible and indefinable air which comes as a gift from the gods.”⁹

As war approached in the summer of 1914, the marquis—like the rest of Britain—was deeply enmeshed in the Irish Crisis. For over a year the focus of Unionist activity had been “‘Ulster, Ulster’ all the time,” and many talked of possible civil war.¹⁰ In mid-July, Lansdowne attended the four-day Buckingham Palace Conference initiated by the King, but the attempt to define the boundary of an excluded Ulster proved incapable of compromise. Lansdowne took little part in the discussions, never thinking Home Rule inevitable, and according to Charles Hobhouse, he offered “no helping hand towards settlement.”¹¹ The Conference was unsuccessful, but only a few short weeks

⁹ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne* 508; *Colonel House Papers*, Vol. 3, p. 232, entry of November 14, 1917.

¹⁰ R. J. Q. Adams, *Bonar Law* (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 117.

¹¹ Edward David, ed., *Inside Asquith's Cabinet: From the Diaries of Charles Hobhouse* (London: Murray, 1977), pp. 175-176, entries of July 23 and July 24. Hobhouse was Postmaster-General from Feb. 1914 to May 1915. Hereafter cited as *Hobhouse Diaries*.

later on August 1, 1914, Unionist Party leaders were meeting late at Lansdowne House, and talk was not of domestic revolt but of a new European war. It was decided to send a message to the Prime Minister offering to meet with him to discuss what should be done about the crisis in the Balkans. The next morning Lansdowne and Austen Chamberlain drafted a letter urging the Asquith Government to aid France and Russia while promising unequivocal Unionist support. They then both went to see Andrew Bonar Law, who along with Lansdowne had replaced Balfour as Unionist Party co-leaders in 1911. Bonar Law initially was hesitant to proceed further, but having had no reply from the premier to their first message, he agreed to send a further note stating that his party would give the government its full support in the event of war.¹²

The Asquith Government at this time was vacillating and split as to what action it should take. The Prime Minister decided eventually that calculated uncertainty was the best policy, not wishing to commit to France and Russia and thereby destroy Britain's mediating influence with Germany, and fearful as well that such support might even encourage Britain's friends to instigate war.¹³ The Unionist missive he now received read:

Dear Mr. Asquith,--Lord Lansdowne and I feel it our duty to inform you that in our opinion, as well as that of all the colleagues whom we have been able to consult, it would be fatal to the honour and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate in supporting France and Russia at the

¹² Adams, *Bonar Law*, pp. 168-171; Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. II, p. 115. Dugdale corrects Lord Newton's statements that the Unionists sent their note of support to Asquith from Lansdowne House on August 2. Although there is much discrepancy in the location and sequence of events involved in retracing the first days of August 1914, according to Lord Lloyd it was Lansdowne who showed "great decision and clarity" in directing Unionist actions (John Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987], p. 35).

¹³ Roy Jenkins, *Asquith; Portrait of a Man and an Era* (New York: Collins, 1986, c1964), p. 326.

present juncture, and we offer our unhesitating support to the government in any measures they may consider necessary for that object.¹⁴

While Unionist support, most likely, did not constitute the determining influence on the government's final decision for war, it has been argued persuasively by R. J. Q.

Adams—Bonar Law's most recent biographer—that "Perhaps, however, [Unionist support] served in some small way to ease the minds of those in the Cabinet who favoured intervention in Europe, as it did those of the Unionists." On August 3, Grey explained to the House of Commons that Britain was on the brink of war, and Bonar Law followed, committing his fellow Unionists to the role of "patriotic opposition."¹⁵ By the end of the next day Britain was at war, and British Army divisions were dispatched across the Channel a week later.

In a conversation with Lord Haldane on August 4, Lansdowne expressed Unionist opinion that it would have been "desirable, if possible to send out the Expeditionary Force, or a portion of it, to the seat of war at the very outset."¹⁶ Once hostilities had begun, in fact, Lansdowne favored prosecuting it with the utmost vigor, and according to Lloyd George, the marquis was "in favour of waging war on Germany if she attacked France, whether Belgium were invaded or not."¹⁷ The government, however, feared leaving Britain undefended or on the other hand having an insufficiently

¹⁴ Bonar Law to Asquith, August 2, 1914, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 440.

¹⁵ Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 171.

¹⁶ Lansdowne's "Note of conversation with Lord Haldane," printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 440-441.

¹⁷ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. II, pp. 1205-1206.

small force easily surrounded and annihilated.¹⁸ Years later, Lansdowne observed that even before hostilities had begun, “War might have been avoided if Grey had been in a position to make a perfectly explicit statement [to Germany] as to our conduct in certain eventualities,” and he placed blame on the Liberal Cabinet for not giving the Foreign Secretary the support he required.¹⁹ Britain’s diplomatic mistakes notwithstanding, in the first months of the war Lansdowne stated publicly that “but for the sinister influence of German diplomacy,” Austria and Russia might have settled their dispute amicably.²⁰

From the war’s outset both Lansdowne and Bonar Law, although leaders of the Opposition, were provided with copies of some War Office and Foreign Office telegrams enabling them to follow its progress, and they then relayed this information to their senior colleagues. The marquis, in fact, made a daily summary of the more important telegrams he received and was consulted by the government with regard to relations with Allies and neutrals based on his prior Foreign Office experience. The Lansdowne family also did their bit for the war effort. The marchioness headed the Officers’ Families’ Fund, and the marquis served as Chairman of the Council of the British Red Cross Society, while Bowood was given over to a soldiers’ encampment.

¹⁸ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 440; See also Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 131.

¹⁹ Lansdowne to Lord Loreburn, April 29, 1919, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 484-485.

²⁰ Lansdowne’s speech at a recruiting meeting in Nottingham on September 21, 1914, *The Times*, September 22, 1914, p. 3.

Moreover, both sons rejoined their regiments, while a greater part of the Bowood establishment joined the army.²¹

On October 30, 1914, Lansdowne's second son, Lord Charles Mercer Nairne, was killed south of Ypres by a spent shell. In answer to a letter of condolence from Balfour, the marquis wrote: "you knew Charlie I think just enough to have some idea of the place he filled in our lives. . . . His last letters were full of high hopes & confidence—He could not have died better." The blow to Lansdowne was very great indeed, and he could not help but confess that he had "suffered a good deal of pain."²² Newton wrote that it was in fact a blow from which the marquis never entirely recovered, and despite his determination to carry on his public duties Lansdowne's health declined at the end of 1914. By late December he was getting stronger but recognized that he would "have to keep very quiet for a time," so he was forced to delegate some of his duties as leader of the House of Lords to Curzon.²³

Although his ill-health persisted into the early months of 1915 he continued to stay abreast of affairs, and the correspondence he received contained many complaints from Unionist politicians over the conduct of the war. Patriotic opposition did not stop Curzon from complaining privately that while they were "expected to give a mute and almost unquestioning support to everything done by the government: to maintain a

²¹ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 442; Lansdowne to Crewe, October 22, 1914, LP, Further Correspondence, D. 1. Lord Crewe 1906-1926.

²² Lansdowne to Balfour, November 6, 1914, BP, Add 49730, f271; Lord Charles Petty-FitzMaurice had assumed the name Mercer Nairne when he inherited the family's Scottish estates (Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 443 n.1).

²³ *Ibid.*, 443; Lansdowne to Bonar Law, December 20, 1914, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 1. Bonar Law 1912-1917.

patriotic silence about the various blunders that have been committed in connection with the War . . . They tell us nothing or next to nothing of their plans, and yet they pretend our leaders share both their knowledge and their responsibility.” Curzon did not believe that the situation could continue indefinitely, but neither was he in favor of a coalition government, even if the Liberals offered, because “a Coalition would tie our hands and close our lips even more effectively than at present.”²⁴ Lansdowne agreed with the assessment that the party could “scarcely leave matters where they are,” but patriotism prevented them from raising many important points in Parliament. Moreover, as Curzon had pointed out, Lansdowne believed that being brought into the government’s confidence carried with it similar difficulties. As for a possible solution to the Unionist predicament, he was not entirely confident one could be found. Interestingly enough, considering later events, the marquis argued firmly “against making use of the newspapers when Parliament is sitting.”²⁵

Asquith’s government was weakening already, however, and in early March 1915, the two Unionist leaders were invited to attend a meeting of the War Council which turned into its first discussion of British war aims. In a discussion on the eventual disposition after the war of the Kiel Canal and the German Fleet, Lansdowne could still be counted on to take a firm line, and maintained that Russia as much as Britain would

²⁴ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 443; Curzon memorandum, January 15, 1915, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 444-445; See also Selborne to Lansdowne, December 29, 1914, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 8, Private Letters: Correspondence with Salisbury, Cranbourne, Selbourne. Also Correspondence relating to Ordnance Factories.

²⁵ Lansdowne to Bonar Law, January 28, 1915, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 445; Lansdowne to Selborne, January 5, 1915, LP, Papers as Foreign Secretary 1900-1905, File 8, Private Letters: Correspondence with Salisbury, Cranbourne, Selbourne. Also Correspondence relating to Ordnance Factories.

favor the first being removed from German control, with the latter being destroyed completely.²⁶ Overall, however, the general reticence of both Unionist leaders to offer their opinions due to the possible political consequences led Asquith to feel afterward that the two had been unhelpful.²⁷ Churchill, the minister who had prompted the invitation, concluded that the experiment in co-operation had resulted in inviting “a lot of ignorant people to meddle in our business.”²⁸ Lansdowne and Bonar Law both also believed the meeting had been a failure and would have declined any further invitation for fear of angering Unionist backbenchers and involving themselves in the poor progress of the war. Asquith did order that from that point they should receive the War Council’s papers, but they received only four between March 17 and the formation of the coalition two months later.²⁹

Most Liberal Party members failed to perceive the signs of crisis in the government, however, and A.G. Gardiner, editor of the Liberal *Daily News*, went so far as to comment in May that, “the efficiency of the government remains a matter of universal agreement . . . and there is in no quarter any disposition to refuse to the

²⁶ Asquith to Lansdowne, March 8, 1915, LP, Further Correspondence, K. 1. Asquith 1915-1916; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume 3, No. 1, 1914-1916: The Challenge of War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), pp. 439-442.

²⁷ The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, K. G., *Memories and Reflections 1852-1927, Vol. II* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), p. 28; Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911-1915, Vol. 1* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1949), p. 383; John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict, 1915-1918* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 59.

²⁸ Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 178.

²⁹ Turner, *British Politics*, p. 59; Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 402 n.37.

government the main credit for the satisfactory course of the campaign.”³⁰ But things were not proceeding as well as they appeared. The difficulties facing the government were in fact many, including the Munitions Crisis, the failure of the Dardanelles Campaign, and the resignation of Lord Fisher, and all have been cited as precipitating events that led to the formation of the Coalition Government in May 1915.³¹ On May 17, Bonar Law and Lansdowne informed Asquith that unless the Unionists were brought into the government they would be forced to become a vocal Opposition. Wishing to avoid a direct confrontation that might have led to a general election, Asquith and Bonar Law agreed to the quick formation of a coalition government.³²

Lansdowne only reluctantly consented to join the new government as Minister Without Portfolio, the assumption being that he “could not take on much work.”³³ Attempting to excuse himself from membership on the War Committee, he wrote to Asquith in November that he had in fact only entered the government because his absence might have created a poor impression, and for some months he had been in “rather indifferent health” and was dreading the upcoming winter.³⁴ With the

³⁰ Turner, *British Politics*, pp. 60-61.

³¹ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 446.

³² Bonar Law and Lansdowne to Asquith, May 17, 1915, LP, Further Correspondence, K. 1. Asquith 1915-1916; Turner, *British Politics*, p. 61.

³³ *Crawford Papers*, p. 354, editor’s note.

³⁴ Lansdowne’s notes on War Committee proposal, November 9, 1915, LP, Further Correspondence, K. 1. Asquith 1915-1916.

encouragement of his doctor, and some “gentle pressure” from Balfour, however, he agreed to serve but was “quite content without portfolio or emoluments.”³⁵

Now part of the government, the Unionists were determined to end the Dardanelles expedition and force the adoption of military conscription.³⁶ Along with Bonar Law, Balfour and Curzon, Lansdowne was appointed to the War Council, which was soon renamed the Dardanelles Committee, a sign of how concerned the government had become with this uncertain campaign. The Committee’s stated duty was to report on the advisability of winding down the Dardanelles operation, but it never made a formal report and a decision was made on June 7 to approve the sending of more troops. The three-week delay, however, between the request for more troops by the local commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton, and the Committee’s decision was probably fatal for any last hope of success.³⁷ A little less than a month later, Lansdowne, along with Balfour and Curzon, agreed to yet even more reinforcements, and in the view of John Turner, the Unionists had secured their own “complicity in the most public blunder of the war.”³⁸

As the greatest exponent of the Dardanelles Campaign, Churchill had been so forceful in his support, in part, because he disagreed with the wasteful mass assaults the

³⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, May 20, 1915, BP, Add 49730.

³⁶ John Turner, “British Politics and the Great War,” in John Turner, ed., *Britain and the First World War* (London and Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 121.

³⁷ Turner, *British Politics*, p. 63; Churchill, *World Crisis*, Vol. I, p. 479.

³⁸ M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, 1914-1916: The Challenge of War*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 650; Turner, *British Politics*, p. 63.

Army were employing on the Western Front.³⁹ With the campaign's failure, he was forced to resign the Admiralty and joined his regiment in France. No doubt still suffering from the loss of his son, Lansdowne maintained in a letter to Churchill in November that if he had had a regiment to rejoin he would "very likely" have followed Churchill's example, "but having none I suppose I must remain where I am." He was confident, however, that when Churchill returned to political life he would find the marquis "if still in any sense alive—beyond all doubt politically extinct."⁴⁰ Churchill dismissed such self-pitying nonsense, however, and observed that many of those presently in the field would find it regrettable if Lansdowne were to stand aside. Moreover, he reminded him that "The only thing that really matters is to persevere obstinately in the war," and in that cause he maintained that the marquis stood "as the representative of the Conservative party more than any one else."⁴¹

Churchill's assessment was not entirely wrong, as that same month Lansdowne, Selborne and Lord Crewe, led by Curzon, precipitated a potential political crisis by forcing Asquith to postpone for a week any decision on the abandonment of the Dardanelles in the hopes of changing Cabinet opinion. They fought the decision as long as possible, but in mid-December they finally gave up after having lost the support of

³⁹ Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), pp. 289-291.

⁴⁰ Lansdowne to Churchill, November 20, 1915, printed in M. Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill, Companion Volume, Volume III, Part 2, May 1915-December 1916* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 1282.

⁴¹ Churchill to Lansdowne, November 27, 1915, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 2. Winston Churchill 1902-1915. This letter is also printed in M. Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill, Companion Volume, Vol. 3, Part 2*, p. 1291.

every senior military advisor, including Kitchener, and having been told that the weather would no longer permit the evacuation of Salonika to reinforce the Dardanelles.⁴²

The other signal issue weighing on the shoulders of the government in 1915 and into 1916 was the matter of conscription, and in political terms it dwarfed the difficulties over the Dardanelles.⁴³ Most Liberals, with the important exceptions of Lloyd George and Churchill, had been fighting conscription with all their might, and in the past Lansdowne had always stood against it as well.⁴⁴ In January 1915, while still in Opposition, he had seen its inevitability, but knew his party would never take on the government over such a controversial topic.⁴⁵ Shortly after the Coalition was formed, however, the Unionist leadership drafted a letter to the Prime Minister recognizing that it might become necessary to introduce some manner of compulsion, and they promised their party's support.⁴⁶

Lansdowne also now faced the issue squarely and sent Asquith a personal note offering his views on recruitment. He questioned Kitchener's confidence on recruitment, and asked "ought we not to consider betimes the steps which we may have to take if we should be driven to compulsion?" Most importantly, the marquis believed major issues in the war effort were being avoided by the government, and he observed

⁴² M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, 1914-1916: The Challenge of War*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 761-762.

⁴³ Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 202.

⁴⁴ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 447.

⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Long, January 28, 1915, Long MSS, Add 62403; Lansdowne to Bonar Law, January 28, 1915, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 1. Bonar Law 1912-1917.

⁴⁶ Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 182.

that, “We shall never get to close quarters with the subject unless we get away from generalities and come to concrete proposals.”⁴⁷ He believed, however, that the idea for the preparation of a Compulsory Service Bill should in the end come from the Prime Minister, and not from his Conservative colleagues. Unfortunately, according to Lansdowne, Asquith disliked the idea, believing it would be difficult to convince the Cabinet, but did not deny that sooner or later the question might have to be faced.⁴⁸ The Prime Minister, as was his wont, adopted delay as his wisest political course, and as stated in his memoirs, he decided to sit back and await the “general consent” of the nation.⁴⁹

Lansdowne was already convinced, however, that the country was in favor of compulsion, and wrote to Walter Long, the Conservative head of the Local Government Board, “that we shall have great difficulty in Parliament if we are not prepared to make the announcement at once.” The marquis’s familiarity with War Office methods of recruitment due to his work with the National Register had convinced him that their measures were “most unsatisfactory,” with his greatest complaint reserved for the enormous sums in separation allowances being paid because it was impossible to prevent married men from joining up. He declared to Long that Asquith carried his “policy of ‘wait and see’ to a most dangerous extent, and I cannot satisfy myself that we ought to

⁴⁷ Lansdowne to Asquith, August 5, 1915, BP, Add 49730, ff283-284. This letter is also excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 447-448.

⁴⁸ Lansdowne to Balfour, August 5, 1915, BP, Add 49730, f282. Cover letter sent with a copy of his conscription memorandum.

⁴⁹ Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, Vol. II, p. 150.

leave the matter in his hands.” Moreover, he could “answer for it that among our soldiers at the front there is not only a profound desire for Compulsion, but a feeling of amazement that it has not long ago been adopted.”⁵⁰ Asquith continued to delay, however, and in the end several Unionists in the Cabinet, including Lansdowne, were forced to threaten resignation if concrete action was not taken, which it subsequently was, and not with the dire consequences predicted.⁵¹ The National Service Bill became law on January 27, 1916, but was only a partial victory for pro-conscriptionists, as the bill’s focus lay in the enlistment of unmarried men and did not apply to Ireland. It merely guaranteed the inevitability of future struggles over the issue, but to Asquith’s relief the nation accepted the move.⁵²

The war did not improve substantially for the Allies in 1916, and its character as a war of attrition continued. British public opinion was shaken first by the withdrawal from the Dardanelles at the beginning of the year, while in April nearly ten thousand men of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force surrendered at Kut Al Amara. On the home front, inflation and rising food prices contributed to widespread strikes and there were few signs that conditions would soon improve.⁵³ On the Western Front, the French suffered over 300,000 casualties defending Verdun from February through July, while in

⁵⁰ Lansdowne to Long, August 5, 1915, Long MSS, Add 62403.

⁵¹ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 448; Turner, *British Politics*, pp. 70-71; *Hobhouse Diaries*, p. 255, entry of October 14, 1915. Hobhouse cites that Lansdowne, Curzon, Law and A. Chamberlain threatened to leave the Cabinet if conscription were not proposed. Balfour and Long would remain no matter what, with Long supporting and Balfour not supporting conscription.

⁵² R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-1918* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1987), pp. 140-143.

⁵³ Turner, “British Politics and the Great War,” in Turner, ed., *Britain and the First World War*, p. 123.

the five-month Battle of the Somme which ended in November, Britain added another 420,000 men to the casualty lists with little to nothing gained strategically. The Germans lost even more men, however, so the British were victorious.

Although the Battle of the Somme was long portrayed to the British public as a victory, some in the government knew the extent of the failure and the brutality of the war. Lloyd George, the Secretary of State for War, confessed that “the thing is horrible,” and if the people only knew the reality they would demand it be stopped “but of course they don’t—and can’t know,” adding, “The correspondents don’t write and the censorship wouldn’t pass the truth.”⁵⁴ After nearly two and one half years of murderous stalemate, it is not surprising that the question of war aims became increasingly more pronounced. In August 1914, Britain’s primary war aims were the restoration of Belgium and the prevention of German domination of Europe, while officials at the Foreign Office were looking forward to the destruction of German power.⁵⁵ In the midst of the early searches for peace and minimum war aims conducted by Colonel House in early 1915, Sir Arthur Nicolson, now the Permanent Secretary, argued that it was “no use our talking terms of peace until . . . [Germany] will be forced to accept any terms that we may offer, and it will be a long time before we are able to bring her into that position.”⁵⁶ Grey was of the same mind, and at the outset of the war had informed

⁵⁴ Lloyd George quoted in Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 174.

⁵⁵ C. J. Lowe and M. L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power: British Foreign Policy 1914-1922, Vol. II* (London and Boston: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972), p. 234.

⁵⁶ Nicolson to Buchanan, January 8, 1915, quoted in Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power, Vol. II*, p. 235.

Washington that he was not interested in any peace initiatives by the United States unless they proposed a plan “that would bring this war to an end and prevent another such war being forced on Europe.”⁵⁷ Along with the restoration of Belgium, Grey wanted “a peace that would be free from the shadow of Prussian militarism under which Europe had been for so long.”⁵⁸

From the start of the war the British had put little trust in any of the various German peace initiatives, surmising correctly that such moves were designed primarily to create friction between Britain and the United States by making the former appear like recalcitrant warmongers. The Germans encouraged Colonel House to take on peace missions, and at one stage he believed he could convince the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, to renounce militarism. When House returned from his mission to Berlin in March 1915, however, he had come to the conclusion that the Germans did not place “the general good of mankind” into their calculations.⁵⁹ Continued American pressure coupled with less than successful results on the field of battle, however, kept the war aims debate on the British agenda well into 1916. On May 28, 1916, President Wilson gave his famous speech on the need for the creation of a League to Enforce Peace, but Spring-Rice advised Grey that the United States would never live up to the collective security commitment required by such a league.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Grey to Spring-Rice, September 9, 1914, quoted in Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, Vol. II, p. 236.

⁵⁸ Grey to Buchanan, January 29, 1915, quoted in Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, Vol. II, p. 236.

⁵⁹ House quoted in Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, Vol. II, pp. 237-238.

⁶⁰ Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, Vol. II, p. 241.

Moreover, any enthusiasm Grey might have shown had been chilled by the speech itself, in which to his dismay the President had “emphasised the point of indifference to the causes and objects of the war.”⁶¹

In an attempt to forestall any proposal of mediation by the United States, on September 28 Lloyd George gave an interview to an American newspaper and stated that Britain intended to deliver Germany a “knock-out” blow. In his *War Memoirs*, the War Secretary professed truthfully that he “was no friend to war,”—his volte-face in August 1914 was due to Germany’s violation of Belgian neutrality—“But once having entered on the War,” he declared: “I was no less resolute to pursue it until at least the object of our sacrifice had been achieved.”⁶² Two years further into the war he told the reporter that he remained convinced that, “The fight must be to a finish—to a knockout,” and that “The whole world, including neutrals of the highest purposes and humanitarians with the best of motives, must know that there can be no outside interference at this stage.”⁶³ The War Secretary’s interview upset many in the Cabinet, none more so than Grey, who informed Lloyd George by letter that not only was the warning to the American President unnecessary and possibly alienating, but that it had always been his view “that until the Allies were sure of victory the door should be kept open for Wilson’s mediation.” Lloyd George replied that he had done what the Foreign Secretary was

⁶¹ Grey quoted in Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, Vol. II, p. 241

⁶² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 509.

⁶³ Lloyd George’s “knockout” blow interview, *New York Times*, September 29, 1916, p. 3.

unable to do without fear of greater consequences, and if he was sorry it was only so far as his “callous impenitence” allowed him to be.⁶⁴

It was Lloyd George’s call for a “knockout” blow that, in part, moved Lansdowne to express those doubts with regard to the progress of the war that must have been weighing on his mind for some time. Some four months before, in a letter to the radical Liberal peer and ex-Minister, Lord Loreburn, he had argued against the contention that the war was being prolonged so that Russia might gain certain advantages at Constantinople, and insisted that the war was “being carried on in order that the Germans may be beaten” and that this was “common ground to us all.” Moreover, he observed that until Germany was prepared “to make certain concessions which all would agree are reasonable & indispensable could it be said that the war is being prolonged to secure special advantages for any one of the Allies.” So far as Lansdowne was concerned, Germany was “not by any means yet prepared to meet even the minimum requirements upon which every one of us would insist.” In the same letter, however, he expressed some doubt as to whether Germany could actually be beaten, and the memoranda from various government departments that allowed him to gauge Britain’s true circumstances did not leave him sanguine about the future.⁶⁵ To at least

⁶⁴ Grey to Lloyd George, September 29, 1916 and Lloyd George to Grey, October 2, 1916, printed in Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, pp. 511-512.

⁶⁵ Lansdowne to Loreburn, May 26, 1916, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.5, “Papers relating to the ‘Peace Letter’ 1916-1933.” In a letter to the *Economist* on June 10, 1916, Lord Loreburn appealed to Lansdowne as a “moderate realist to lead the movement for peace.” Laurence Martin noted correctly, however, that there is no evidence that the letter influenced Lansdowne (Laurence Martin, *Peace without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the British Liberals* [Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973, c1958], p. 68 n.57).

one of his correspondents in the latter half of October, he noted offhandedly that indeed, “the war drags on.”⁶⁶

When at the end of October 1916 Asquith asked members of the War Committee to submit their views regarding the terms on which peace might be concluded, Lansdowne put his worries to paper in his memorandum of November 13, 1916. Little more than a month later, Lord Crewe was compelled to cite it as “Possibly the veritable *causa causans* of the final breakup” of the Coalition Government.⁶⁷ Lansdowne began his memorandum by questioning the assumptions made in a memorandum produced a month earlier by Balfour, in which the latter dealt “at some length with the problems which might have to be discussed at any peace conference”:

...Mr. Balfour observes truly that these questions cannot be profitably examined except upon an agreed hypothesis as to the military position of the combatants at the end of the war, and he proceeds to assume, though merely for the sake of argument, that the Central Powers, either through defeat or exhaustion, have to accept the terms imposed upon them by the Allies.

I venture to suggest that the attention of the War Committee might with advantage be directed to a somewhat different problem, and that they should be invited to give us their opinion as to our present prospects of being able to “dictate” the kind of terms which we should all like to impose upon our enemies if we were in a position to do so.

We are agreed as to the goal, but we do not know how far we have really travelled towards it, or how much nearer to it we are likely to find ourselves even if the War be prolonged for, say, another year. What will that year have cost us? How much better will our position be at the end of it? Shall we even then be strong enough to “dictate” terms?

⁶⁶ Lansdowne to General Sir Charles Townsend, October 22, 1916, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 4. Charles Townsend 1916-1918. Townsend was a prisoner of war being held by the Turks after he surrendered his expeditionary force at Kut Al Amara in April 1916 during the Mesopotamian campaign.

⁶⁷ Crewe memorandum, December 20, 1916, printed in Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, Vol. II, pp. 153-164.

It seems to me almost impossible to overrate the importance of these considerations, because it is clear that our diplomacy must be governed by an accurate appreciation of them.

We have obtained within the last few days from the different departments of the Government a good deal of information as to the situation, naval, military, and economic. It is far from reassuring.⁶⁸

The departmental reports were quite alarming indeed. From Walter Runciman, the President of the Board of Trade, the Cabinet received a memorandum showing that shipbuilding was not keeping pace with losses, and on the advice of his experts Runciman anticipated “a complete breakdown in shipping . . . much sooner than June, 1917.” The President of the Board of Agriculture’s report on Food Prospects for 1917 stated, *inter alia*, that the price of bread was likely to increase, that there had been “a general failure of the potato crop, that the supply of fish was expected be below the normal, that agricultural land yield’s was likely to decline, and that the number of livestock would be greatly diminished. Moreover, Lansdowne noted that in a subsequent report it was stated that in some parts of the country, due to the recruitment demands of the Army, it was “no longer a question of maintaining a moderate standard of cultivation, but whether cultivation will cease.”

Military resource reports provided an equally dim picture. Lansdowne restated the Admiralty’s concern that the Home Fleets were still insufficient with immediate production having reached its limit, and that the submarine threat was becoming ever more acute. With regard to the latter difficulty, he admitted that “in spite of all our efforts, it seems impossible to provide an effectual rejoinder to it,” while in respect to

⁶⁸ Lansdowne memorandum, November 16, 1916, printed in Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, Vol. II, pp. 165-175.

manpower, he declared that reports “prove that . . . we are nearing the end of our tether.”

Although Lansdowne accepted the criticism that the Central Powers were assuredly suffering to the same or even greater degree than the Allies, he retorted:

...but even if this be so, it is none the less our duty to consider, after a careful review of the facts, what our plight, and the plight of the civilized world, will be after another year, or, as we are sometimes told, two or three more years of a struggle as exhausting as that in which we are engaged. No one for a moment believes that we are going to lose the War; but what is our chance of winning it in such a manner, and within such limits of time, as will enable us to beat our enemy to the ground and impose upon him the kind of terms which we so freely discuss?

I do not suppose for an instant that there is any weakening in the spirit of the people of this country, and I should hope, although I do not feel absolute confidence on the subject, that the same might be said of our Allies; but neither in their interests nor in ours can it be desirable that the War should be prolonged, unless it can be shown that we can bring it to an effectual conclusion within a reasonable space of time.

What does the prolongation of the War mean?

Lansdowne saw only a mass of debt, and mass slaughter. Observing that Britain's casualties already amounted to over a million men with no sign of abatement in the future, he declared: “We are slowly but surely killing off the best of the male population of these islands.” Lacking a concrete number for Allied casualties overall, he noted merely that “The total must be appalling.” As matters stood, he predicted that, “Generations will have to come and go before the country recovers from the loss which it has sustained in human beings, and from the financial ruin and the destruction of the means of production which are taking place.” Moreover, German culpability also had now taken a backseat for Lansdowne, and he solemnly noted that, “the responsibility of those who needlessly prolong such a war is not less than that of those who needlessly provoked it.”

In response to such a sad state of affairs he had so eloquently laid out, Lansdowne called for a more definitive decision on war aims in preparation for possible peace overtures from the Central Powers, and an inquiry as to whether the Allies “might not be prepared to accept less than 20s. [shillings] in the pound in consideration of prompt payment.” He confessed that, “To many of us it seems as if the prospect of a ‘knock out’ was, to say the least of it, remote,” and while he acknowledged the “splendid gallantry” of British and French forces on the Western Front and the advances they had made, he questioned whether any more of the battles, “accompanied by not less cruel losses,” would really end in a break-through. Moreover, he asked: “Can we afford to go on paying the same sort of price for the same sort of gains?” Even if eventually such a “knock out” blow was delivered, he wondered what would then be left of civilization.

In sum, Lansdowne believed Lloyd George’s recent statements to be a “very momentous limitation,” and asked whether the government “ought at any rate not to discourage any movement, no matter where originating, in favour of an interchange of views as to the possibility of a settlement?” He suggested an investigation of, and action taken on, the many peace feelers that constantly filtered in to the Government. What Lansdowne wanted were peace aims that would reach out to the groups within the Central Powers that yearned for peace, noting that it was “unfortunate that . . . it should be possible to represent us and our allies as committed to a policy partly vindictive and partly selfish, and so

irreconcilably committed to that policy that we should regard as unfriendly any attempt, however sincere, to extricate us from the impasse.”⁶⁹

Surprisingly, Lloyd George agreed with much of Lansdowne’s assessment, and even professed admiration for the marquis’s courage in putting his thoughts down on paper, he had just come to opposite conclusions.⁷⁰ His own estimation of Britain’s situation was not much less pessimistic, but he had much different fears than did the marquis. In his *War Memoirs*, the War Secretary wrote that Lansdowne’s memorandum “startled the Cabinet,” but a less than a week before Lloyd George himself had warned Maurice Hankey, secretary to the Cabinet, that unless the Allies altered their conduct of the war, “We are going to lose this war.” Moreover, in a draft speech he wrote for Asquith around the same time, he argued that “As the war drags along its weary and bloodstained path . . . the gloom cast by the appalling losses over the homes of the country will become darker and deeper,” and warned that “Efforts will be made perhaps by powerful neutrals to patch up a peace on what would appear to be specious terms, and there is a real danger that large masses of people, worn out by constant strain, may listen to well intentioned but mistaken pacificators.”⁷¹ His fears must have seemed all of

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *Crawford Papers*, p. 336, entry of November 22, 1916. Crawford’s personal memorandum concerning that day’s Cabinet meeting.

⁷¹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 514; Hankey’s diary entry of November 12, 1916, quoted in David French, *British Strategy and War Aims, 1914-1916* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 233; Lloyd George’s draft speech excerpted in French, *British Strategy*, p. 233.

sudden to have come to fruition, and it was not an outside force tempting the people with peace, but rather a member of the War Committee.⁷²

Asquith invited the Admiralty and General Staff to submit reports as per Lansdowne's suggestions, and in response, General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, issued a report which Paul Guinn has called "the most bellicose and offensive document ever inflicted on a British Cabinet."⁷³ Encouraged by Lloyd George not to hold back in his views, Robertson wrote that the peace the marquis proposed would be an "insult to the fighting services," if it allowed the military to remain dominant in Germany. Moreover, he asserted that, "There are amongst us . . . a certain number of cranks, cowards, and philosophers, some of whom are afraid of their own skins being hurt, whilst others are capable of proving to those sufficiently weakminded to listen to them that we stand to gain more by losing the war than by winning it." He ended his most singular memorandum by stating that they "need pay no attention to those miserable members of society," and that for his part, he was quite

⁷² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 521. Lloyd George observed that "Coming from a statesman of Lord Lansdowne's position and antecedents, this document made a deep impression . . . No one could accuse him of being a mere 'pacifist.'"

⁷³ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 452; Paul Guinn, *British Strategy and Politics, 1914 to 1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 175. Asquith's letter to Lansdowne expressing his "complete concurrence" with what Lansdowne had to say was in reference to the marquis's rejoinder of November 27 to Robertson's memorandum (Asquith to Lansdowne, November 28, 1916, LP, Further Correspondence, K. 1. Asquith 1915-1916).

“satisfied that the knock-out blow can and will be delivered if only we take the necessary measures to give us success.”⁷⁴

That the general’s memorandum was excessively bellicose in nature was confirmed by the letter of apology he felt compelled to send Lansdowne a few days later, but it was sent only after Lansdowne had submitted a subsequent memorandum taking issue with the Sir William’s attack. No doubt with purposeful understatement, he observed first that the general’s memorandum was “surely not a very helpful contribution to the investigation which the Cabinet authorised at its last meeting,” and “I hope he will forgive me for adding that those who ask questions which the Cabinet think worthy of a respectful answer will not consider that they are answered when they are told that such questions are an ‘insult’ to the fighting services.”⁷⁵ Impossibly, Lansdowne had managed, however sarcastically, to apologize before Robertson, and the general’s apology, when it came, managed to appear much less genuine. “I am most anxious,” Robertson wrote, “to disabuse you of any idea that the expression ‘cranks, cowards, and philosophers’ had the least reference to you.” Indeed, he noted, “How could it have, seeing the great contribution you have made to the war, to say nothing of the respect due from me to you personally.” The general asserted that he had considered it his duty “to point out, what is common knowledge, that the Nation is not really at war

⁷⁴ Robertson memorandum, November 24, 1916, quoted in Guinn, *British Strategy and Politics*, p. 175. Guinn noted that Robertson’s reference to “philosophers” was a “hit at Balfour”; Robertson memorandum, November 24, 1916, excerpted in David R. Woodward, ed., *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshall Sir William Robertson* (London: Published by the Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1989), p. 320 no.45. Hereafter cited as *Robertson Correspondence*.

⁷⁵ Lansdowne memorandum, November 27, 1916, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.7, “Lord Lansdowne’s Memorandum to the Cabinet, November 1916.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85.

as yet and that until it is we cannot expect to win.” He was not without hope, however, that the conduct of “business as usual” in Britain would shortly be put to an end.⁷⁶

Grey defended Lansdowne’s memorandum as “a faithful and courageous act,” although he did not agree completely with its conclusions. He did not wish to rule out possible mediation down the line, but was more inclined than Lansdowne to believe the optimistic reports of the military. Furthermore, he deprecated the usefulness of diplomacy in wartime and in his own memorandum argued that, in his “own judgment, for what it is worth,” in view of the current military opinion “peace is premature, and to contemplate it is to betray the interests of this country and of the Allies.”⁷⁷ It is interesting to find that in his *War Memoirs*, Lloyd George had nothing but praise for Lansdowne’s courage, but for Grey he had only scorn. He accused the Foreign Secretary of strategically giving no opinion on Lansdowne’s memorandum, writing that, Grey “neither approved nor disapproved,” and that “In the discussion bearing on the most effective methods of prosecuting the War he had little to say or suggest.”⁷⁸ In a letter to Lansdowne less than a month later, however, Grey claimed that he had intended

⁷⁶ Robertson’s letter of apology, December 1, 1916, *Robertson Correspondence*, pp. 119-120. It is interesting to note that Robertson made no mention of the “weakminded” in his apology, since some seven months earlier, during a lunch with Geoffrey Robinson, the editor of *The Times*, he had referred specifically to Lansdowne as “a good man grown old and weak” (Robinson’s notes on his lunch with Robertson on April 14, 1916, *Robertson Correspondence*, p. 21).

⁷⁷ Grey memorandum, November 27, 1916, printed in G. M. Trevelyan, *Grey of Follodon* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), pp. 322-324. Grey left open the option that in a few months if conditions had turned against the Allies they might have to negotiate peace “at once on the best terms obtainable.”

⁷⁸ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 522.

to ask for a secret session of the House of Lords in order to discuss the memorandum, but the fall of the Government had prevented him acting on his plan.⁷⁹

Few now would assert that Lansdowne's memorandum caused the fall of Asquith's Government, and John Turner has noted that while Lloyd George made much of the memorandum in his memoirs its importance should not be overestimated. Lloyd George's discussion of the memorandum, however, was invaluable to his explanation and justification for the need for more vigorous leadership in order to put Britain on a total war footing.⁸⁰ It also affected significantly the actions of Bonar Law, who now sensed defeatism in some ministers and resolved to act for a change in the direction of the conduct of the War.⁸¹ Indeed, the greatest political effect the memorandum had, according to Bentley Gilbert, was to detach the Unionist leader from Asquith. Bonar Law's command of the Tory organization could have prevented Lloyd George from coming to power, but instead he joined with him to prevent a premature peace.⁸² So while perhaps it was not the primary cause, indirectly Lansdowne's memorandum likely helped drive Bonar Law, Lloyd George, and Edward Carson into concerted action and moved events along faster than they might have done otherwise.⁸³

⁷⁹ Sixth Marquess of Lansdowne, "The 'Peace Letter' of 1917," *The Nineteenth Century* 115 (March 1934): 371.

⁸⁰ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 531.

⁸¹ Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 227.

⁸² Bentley Gilbert, *David Lloyd George: A Political Life, The Organizer of Victory, 1912-1916* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1992), pp. 377-378.

⁸³ Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 224.

It was Lord Robert Cecil's memorandum of November 27 that set the government's new course. Cecil, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Foreign Office, argued that, "Whether we agree with Lord Lansdowne's conclusions or not," it was clear above all that Britain's situation was "grave." He accepted the word of the government's military advisors, however, that "next year we have a prospect of a great military success," and if the country could carry on for another year there was "a reasonable prospect of victory." Therefore, he concluded, "A peace now could only be disastrous." Cecil proposed that Britain engage in total war using every resource the nation could provide. This meant a complete government takeover of the economy and industry, as well as the creation of a cabinet committee, consisting of no more than three members and separate from the War Committee, to direct the domestic war effort.⁸⁴ Such a drastic reorganization of the war effort to improve efficiency, however, brought Lloyd George and Asquith to an impasse at the beginning of December.

While Lloyd George agreed with the idea of a smaller War Committee, he presented a plan for a committee consisting of three members that would conduct and direct the whole war. The proposed membership of this new all-powerful committee included himself, Carson and Bonar Law, a configuration that Crawford labeled derogatorily, "the Triumvirate."⁸⁵ Its significance, of course, was that it meant the

⁸⁴ Cecil memorandum, November 27, 1916, printed in Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, Vol. II, pp. 175-178.

⁸⁵ *Crawford Papers*, p. 369. Crawford's personal memorandum for December 2, 1916.

virtual removal of the Prime Minister from anything to do with the War, and Asquith, understandably, found this unacceptable.⁸⁶

This essay is not directly concerned with the machinations that finished off the Asquith Government in the early days of December 1916. Lansdowne himself believed that the fall of the government would forever “puzzle the historians who have to account for it.”⁸⁷ From his own perspective, the marquis believed he was fortunate to have escaped greater involvement in the “red-hot conspiracy.” He was present at the Unionist meeting on November 30 when Bonar Law revealed his covert actions, but when summoned to a second meeting on December 3 he was shooting with Grey at Bowood, and after making inquiries found to his delight that there were no more trains that would get him to London in time.⁸⁸

Bonar Law’s scheming with Lloyd George left a “nasty taste” in Lansdowne’s mouth, and that of many other Unionists. The marquis thought they “owe[d] it to Asquith to avoid any action which might be regarded by him as a concerted attempt to oust him from his position as leader,” while Austen Chamberlain reputedly accused Bonar Law of “selling his colleagues.”⁸⁹ Judging by other such negative reactions, when

⁸⁶ Turner, *British Politics*, p. 141.

⁸⁷ Lansdowne to Lord Buckmaster, December 16, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 461-462.

⁸⁸ Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 5, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 454-455; Jenkins, *Asquith*, p. 434.

⁸⁹ Lord Curzon to Lansdowne, December 3, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 452-453; Lansdowne to Bonar Law, December 1, 1916, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 1. Bonar Law 1912-1917. This letter is also quoted in Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War, 1914-1916* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 371; A. J. P. Taylor, ed., *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 131, entry of December 4, 1916. Hereafter cited as *Stevenson Diary*. Frances Stevenson served as Lloyd George’s private secretary and mistress. She later married him.

subsequently Unionist Ministers threatened to resign from the Cabinet unless there was a change in the organization of the government, it is questionable as to whether they contemplated this move in favor or to the detriment of Asquith. The Prime Minister resigned eventually in hopes that Lloyd George would be unable to form a government, and that the King would have to ask him to return.⁹⁰ Asquith was mistaken, however, in thinking that the Unionists would refuse to serve under Lloyd George. However much they might have disliked the War Secretary personally, they knew that a change had to be made, for in Crawford's words, Asquith's "somnolence" and "invincible indecision" could no longer be endured.⁹¹ Britain was now in the hands of Lloyd George, a man whose attitude towards the war can be best described in his own words:

The inhumanity and pitilessness of the fighting that must come before a lasting peace is [*sic*] possible is not comparable with the cruelty that would be involved in stopping the War while there remains the possibility of civilisation again being menaced from the same quarter. Peace now or at any time before the final and complete elimination of this menace is unthinkable. No man and no nation with the slightest understanding of the temper of the citizen army of Britons, which took its terrible hammering without a whine, or a grumble, will attempt to call a halt now.⁹²

John Turner has suggested that Lansdowne might have been the one who convinced Asquith that he had the support of the Unionists. From Lord Crawford's papers it can be gleaned that Lansdowne was the only Unionist minister to call on

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 131, entry of December 2, 1916. Cecil's reaction was to rage: "This means that George is practically dictator!"; See also Turner, *British Politics*, pp. 117-151.

⁹¹ Curzon to Lansdowne, December 3, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 452-453. Curzon's letter describing the Unionist meeting of this day that Lansdowne did not attend reveals the anger of most Unionists at Bonar Law and Lloyd George, but contains the recognition of the only realistic construction of any new government; *Crawford Papers*, pp. 365, 370, entries of November 18 and December 3, 1916.

⁹² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, pp. 509-510.

Asquith on December 4 when a power sharing agreement between the latter and Lloyd George was in place, while the following day the Prime Minister made a complete reversal and resigned.⁹³ Turner suggested that “If Lansdowne was the source of Asquith’s information, his own firm prejudices against Lloyd George might well have led him to paint a favourable picture of his colleagues’ intentions.”⁹⁴ Lord Crawford’s papers also show, however, that after meeting with Asquith, the marquis informed the Agriculture Minister that he “rather gathered that he [Asquith] would come to terms with Ll[oyd] G[eorge]”⁹⁵ Moreover, in a letter to his daughter on December 5, Lansdowne mentioned his meeting with Asquith the previous evening, but stated merely that he found the Prime Minister “very friendly, but hurt and anxious,” but his overall impression was that the two would be able to “find a *modus*.”⁹⁶

Lansdowne believed the collapse of the government to be “catastrophic,” for although he believed changes were “inevitable,” he did not expect “this particular *dénouement*.” He believed the government had been “hardly judged by its critics,” and that Asquith had been poorly treated “so far as Lloyd George is concerned.”⁹⁷ The

⁹³ See Turner, *British Politics*, pp. 117-151. Turner's narrative on the “December Crisis” is a most thorough and detailed account of Asquith’s fall.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁹⁵ *Crawford Papers*, p. 373. Crawford’s personal memorandum for December 4, 1916. John Vincent, the editor of the Crawford papers, observed that, “The Asquith who saw Lansdowne at 5 p.m. was evidently still far from the man who wrote to Lloyd George later on that evening completely repudiating the compromise reached on Sunday” (*Ibid.*, p. 373 n.25).

⁹⁶ Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 5, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 454-455.

⁹⁷ Lansdowne to Lord Buckmaster, December 16, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 461; Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 5, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 454.

marquis would not join the new government, and the circumstances surrounding his removal from office are important especially with regard to his possible motivations for writing the 'Peace Letter' a year later. Crawford's judgment in December 1917 that it was "well known that Lansdowne has long been a nerve-wrecked wobbler," and that the "explanation [behind the Peace Letter] must to some extent be sought in the vexation and annoyance he feels at being out of office," has exerted much influence in the historiography.⁹⁸

In the formation of his new cabinet, Lloyd George years later wrote that he was of the opinion that the marquis had become more respected than followed, and that in view of the need for a more "vigorous and effective prosecution of the War," he felt there was much to be said for leaving men like Lansdowne out of the new government.⁹⁹ At the time, however, Lloyd George's mistress observed perhaps more truthfully that "You cannot have a man in a War Cabinet who thinks we ought to make peace."¹⁰⁰ The feeling most likely was mutual, however, with Lansdowne's declining health no doubt playing some part in his own decision not to accept office in the new government. In August 1916, Crawford had described the marquis, who had "recently underwent an

⁹⁸ *Crawford Papers*, p. 381, entry of December 1, 1917. Interestingly, in August 1916, Crawford wrote that Lansdowne's rumored imminent resignation was "Much more serious" than the possible resignation of the Cabinet's Labour representative, Arthur Henderson, for he believed Lansdowne to be "a man of great caution and will be missed in the cabinet" (*Ibid.*, 360, entry of August 9, 1916).

⁹⁹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 622.

¹⁰⁰ *Stevenson Diary*, p. 127, entry of November 22, 1916.

operation on his hand,” as “delicate and frail.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, on December 5, in the midst of the crisis, Lansdowne confessed to his daughter: “I am quite sure I *want* to be combed out and that I *ought* to be combed out.” He was in full agreement that the Cabinet was too big, and that “in a War Cabinet no septuagenarian ought to find a place.” Not thinking that Balfour would remain in the government either, he expressed his long wish to be released, although he regretted that “this is not the kind of last act to which I looked forward for my poor play.”¹⁰²

With his withdrawal from the government, Lansdowne gave way to Lord Curzon as leader of the Unionists in the House of Lords and entered into a sort of semi-retirement. Although he wished also to relinquish the responsibility of any residual leadership role in the party, he informed Bonar Law that he would “like to avoid any action which might give rise to controversy or to newspaper comments.” Hoping to avoid the same, the Unionist leader asked him to hold off on making any definite decision for the time being. Lansdowne continued to attend the Lords regularly and speak out occasionally, but at nearly seventy-three years of age his long and

¹⁰¹ *Crawford Papers*, p. 360, entry of August 9, 1916. In his *War Memoirs*, Lloyd George noted that the marquis’s health was failing, and he had therefore decided himself not to join the new government (Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 641).

¹⁰² Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 5, 1916, printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 454-455. While one newspaper labeled Lansdowne an “idle septuagenarian,” which very much upset Lady Lansdowne, the marquis only took issue with the appellation of “idle,” and then only thought it, “perhaps severe.”

distinguished career in government was over.¹⁰³ This was not to be his last act on the national political stage however.

The Peace Letter

Nearly a whole year passed before Lansdowne published his famous 'Peace Letter' in the *Daily Telegraph*, and the primary reason behind his decision to go to the press also was the most obvious: little had changed with regard to the war, except that much appeared to have gotten worse. The failed Nivelle offensive in the spring of 1917 ended with widespread mutinies in the French Army nearly eliminating its offensive capabilities. To relieve pressure on the French, Field Marshal Douglas Haig continued his mass frontal assaults through Flanders, and the Third Battle of Ypres (better known as Passchendaele), which began on the last day of July, killed or wounded well over 300,000 men in only three and a half months for the purchase of a few miles. The United States entered the war on the side of the Allies in April, but its influence, at least militarily, was not really felt until 1918; meanwhile the Empire of the Romanovs had collapsed into chaos. The Bolsheviks took power in an October coup, began negotiations for a separate peace with Germany, and published the embarrassing secret treaties of the Allies. Initial British success at Cambrai in November, effected by the use of nearly five-hundred tanks, was soon checked and came to nothing in the end. Toward

¹⁰³ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 462; Lansdowne to Bonar Law, March 23, 1917, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 1. Bonar Law 1912-1917; Bonar Law to Lansdowne, March 26, 1917, LP, Further Correspondence, B. 1. Bonar Law 1912-1917.

end of 1917, the mounting costs of the war in men and wealth were becoming increasingly difficult for the Lloyd George government to justify to the British public.¹⁰⁴

Lansdowne initially had contemplated sparking a war aims debate in the House of Lords or the Commons. Following up a previous conversation on the matter he had with Balfour, who had accepted the post of Foreign Secretary under Lloyd George, he sent his proposal and asked for his former chief's views. Balfour responded with a detailed critique of the questions Lansdowne intended to ask the government, but overall he believed that it was not a "very suitable time for discussing peace matters."¹⁰⁵ With his original idea of a debate in the Lords deflated by Balfour, the marquis decided to publish his views in the form of a letter in the press, and according to his own version of events, at his final consultation with the Foreign Secretary on November 26—a hurried affair as Balfour was on his way to Paris for an Allied Conference—the latter "did not dissuade" him from his new project.

Although Lansdowne had wished to have Balfour read the final draft of his letter, "anxious" not to publish anything "misleading" or that which might seem "unfair" to the Foreign Office, the Foreign Secretary was short for time. As a result, the marquis suggested that he might show it to Hardinge, once again the Permanent Secretary, in order that he might catch any "inaccuracies." Balfour apparently did not object, and moreover, according to Lansdowne, remarked: "Hardinge knows my thoughts."

Lansdowne showed the letter to Hardinge, who, again according to the marquis's own

¹⁰⁴ Turner, "British Politics and the Great War," in Turner, ed., *Britain and the First World War*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁵ Balfour to Lansdowne, November 22, 1917, printed in Lansdowne, "The Peace Letter," pp. 378-379. This letter is also printed in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 464-465.

recollection, made “one or two suggestions not touching questions of principle,” and even went so far as to observe that the letter was “statesmanlike” and would “do good.” After being refused at *The Times*, where the editor, Geoffrey Dawson, believed that such a letter written by a man of the marquis’s public stature would imply a weakening in Britain’s war effort, Lansdowne immediately turned to Lord Burnham, owner of the *Daily Telegraph*. The *Telegraph* published Lansdowne’s Peace Letter, but did not endorse it.¹⁰⁶

Lansdowne’s so-called ‘Peace Letter’ was published on November 29, 1917, in the fortieth month of the war. It appeared in the form of a ‘letter to the editor’ entitled “Co-ordination of Allies’ War Aims,” but became widely known as a letter that advocated peace at any price. It was an attempt by the author, however, to prompt a return to sensible statesmanlike diplomacy and its importance to this story warrants a lengthy excerpt:

Sir—We are now in the fourth year of the most dreadful war the world has known; a war in which, as Sir W. Robertson has lately informed us, “the killed alone can be counted by the million, while the total amount of men engaged amounts to nearly twenty-four millions.” Ministers continue to tell us that they scan the horizon in vain for the prospect of a lasting peace. And without a lasting peace we all feel that the task we have set ourselves will remain unaccomplished.

¹⁰⁶ Copy of manuscript note made by Lord Lansdowne after publication of his letter in the ‘Daily Telegraph’ of November 29, 1917, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.3, “Lord Lansdowne’s memorandum to the Cabinet and the ‘Peace Letter’ 1916-1917. This is also printed in Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” p. 379. Additionally, Lord Kerry noted that in the first draft of this account, in place of the line “he did not dissuade me,” referring to Balfour, Lansdowne had written: “he offered no opposition to this plan, which was mine” (Ibid., p. 379 n.16). It is interesting to note also that Burnham told Riddell that he agreed to publish the letter “although he differed with much that Lansdowne had said,” while Lansdowne wrote that Burnham had remarked that it was “‘a good letter’ and that he would give it ‘prominence’” (John M. McEwan, ed., *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923* [London: Athlone Press, 1986], p. 209, entry of December 3. Hereafter cited as *Riddell Diaries*); Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 465-466.

But those who look forward with horror to the prolongation of the war, who believe that its wanton prolongation would be a crime, differing only in degree from that of the criminals who provoked it, may be excused if they too scan the horizon anxiously in the hope of discovering there indications that the outlook may after all not be so hopeless as is supposed.

The obstacles are indeed formidable enough. We are constantly reminded of one of them. It is pointed out with force that, while we have not hesitated to put forward a general description of our war aims, the enemy have, though repeatedly challenged, refused to formulate theirs, and have limited themselves to vague and apparently insincere professions of readiness to negotiate with us.

The force of the argument cannot be gainsaid, but it is directed mainly to show that we are still far from agreement as to the territorial questions which must come up for settlement in connection with the terms of peace. These are, however, by no means the only questions which will arise, and it is worthwhile to consider whether there are not others, also of first-rate importance, with regard to which the prospects of agreement are less remote.

Let me examine one or two of these. What are we fighting for? To beat the Germans? Certainly. But that is not an end in itself. We want to inflict signal defeat upon the Central Powers, not out of mere vindictiveness, but in the hope of saving the world from a recurrence of the calamity which has befallen this generation.

What, then, is it we want when the war is over? I know of no better formula than that more than once made use of, with universal approval, by Mr. Asquith in the speeches which he has from time to time delivered. He has repeatedly told his hearers that we are waging war in order to obtain reparation and security. Both are essential, but of the two security is perhaps the more indispensable. In the way of reparation much can no doubt be accomplished, but the utmost effort to make good all the ravages of this war must fall short of completeness, and will fail to undo the grievous wrong which has been done to humanity. It may, however, be possible to make some amends for the inevitable incompleteness of the reparation if the security afforded is, humanly speaking, complete. To end the war honourably would be a great achievement; to prevent the same curse falling upon our children would be a greater achievement still.

This is our avowed aim, and the magnitude of the issue cannot be exaggerated for, just as this war has been more dreadful than any war in history so we may be sure would the next war be even more dreadful than this. The prostitution of science for the purposes of pure destruction is not likely to stop short. Most of us, however, believe that it should be possible to secure posterity against the repetition of such an outrage as

that of 1914. If the Powers will, under a solemn pact bind themselves to submit future disputes to arbitration; if they will undertake to outlaw, politically and economically, any one of their number which refuses to enter into such a pact, or to use their joint military and naval forces for the purpose of coercing a Power which breaks away from the rest, they will, indeed, have travelled far along the road which leads to security.

We are, at any rate, right to put security in the front line of our peace demands, and it is not unsatisfactory to note that in principle there seems to be complete unanimity upon this point...

...In his dispatch covering the Allied Note of Jan. 10, 1917, Mr. Balfour mentions as one of the three conditions essential to a durable peace the condition that

“behind international law and behind all treaty arrangements for preventing or limiting hostilities some form of international sanction might be devised which would give pause to the hardiest aggressor.”

Such sanction would probably take the form of coercion applied in one of two modes. The “aggressor” would be disciplined either by the pressure of superior naval and military strength, or by the denial of commercial access and facilities.

The proceedings of the Paris Conference show that we should not shrink from such a denial, if we were compelled to use the weapon for purposes of self-defense. But while a commercial “boycott” would be justifiable as a war measure, and while the threat of a “boycott,” in case Germany should show herself utterly unreasonable, would be a legitimate threat no reasonable man would, surely, desire to destroy the trade of the Central Powers, if they will, so to speak, enter into recognisances to keep the peace, and do not force us into a conflict by a hostile combination. Commercial war is less ghastly in its immediate results than the war of armed forces, but it would certainly be deplorable if after three or four years of sanguinary conflict in the field, a conflict which has destroyed a great part of the wealth of the world, and permanently crippled its resources, the Powers were to embark upon commercial hostilities certain to retard the economic recovery of all the nations involved.

That we shall have to secure ourselves against the fiscal hostility of others, that we shall have to prevent the recurrence of the conditions under which, when the war broke out, we found ourselves short of essential commodities, because we had allowed certain industries, and certain sources of supply, to pass entirely under the control of our enemies, no one will doubt, subject however to this reservation, that it will surely be for our interest that the stream of trade should, so far as our own fiscal interests permit, be allowed to flow strong and uninterrupted in its natural channels.

There remains the question of territorial claims...

...Some of our original desiderata have probably become unobtainable. Others would probably now be given a less prominent place than when they were first put forward. Others again, notably the reparation due to Belgium, remain, and must always remain in the front rank, but when it comes to the wholesale rearrangement of the map of South-Eastern Europe we may well ask for a suspension of judgment and for the elucidation which a frank exchange of views between the Allied Powers can alone afford.

For all these questions concern our Allies as well as ourselves, and if we are to have an Allied Council for the purpose of adapting our strategy in the field to the ever-shifting developments of the war it is fair to assume that, in the matter of peace terms, the Allies will make it their business to examine, and if necessary to revise, the territorial requirements.

Let me end by explaining why I attach so much importance to these considerations. We are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilised world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it. Security will be invaluable to a world which has the vitality to profit by it, but what will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch out a hand with which to grasp them?

In my belief, if the war is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe, it will be brought to a close because on both sides the peoples of the countries involved realised that it has already lasted too long.

There can be no question that this feeling prevails extensively in Germany, Austria, and Turkey. We know beyond doubt that the economic pressure in those countries far exceeds any to which we are subject here. Ministers inform us in their speeches of "constant efforts" on the part of the Central Powers "to initiate peace talk." (Sir E. Geddes at the Mansion House, Nov. 9.)

If the peace talk is not more articulate, and has not been so precise as to enable his Majesty's Government to treat it seriously, the explanation is probably to be found in the fact, first, that German despotism does not tolerate independent expression of opinion, and second, that the German Government has contrived, probably with success, to misrepresent the aims of the Allies, which are supposed to include the destruction of Germany, the imposition upon her of a form of government decided by her enemies, her destruction as a great commercial community, and her exclusion from the free use of the seas.

An immense stimulus would probably be given to the peace party in Germany if it were understood:

- (1) That we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a great power;
- (2) That we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice;
- (3) That, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world;
- (4) That we are prepared, when the war is over, to examine in concert with other powers the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are connected with the question of “the freedom of the seas”;
- (5) That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.

I am under the impression that authority could be found for most of these propositions in Ministerial speeches. Since the above lines were written, (1), (2), and (3) have been dealt with by our own Foreign Minister at the public meeting held in honour of M. Venizelos at the Mansion House.

The question of “the freedom of the seas” was amongst those raised at the outset by our American Allies. The formula is an ambiguous one, capable of many inconsistent interpretations, and I doubt whether it will be seriously contended that there is no room for profitable discussion.

That an attempt should be made to bring about the kind of pact suggested in (5) is, I believe, common ground to all the belligerents, and probably to all the neutral Powers.

If it be once established that there are no insurmountable difficulties in the way of agreement upon these points, the political horizon might perhaps be scanned with better hope by those who pray, but can at this moment hardly venture to expect, that the New Year may bring us a lasting and honourable peace.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Lansdowne.¹⁰⁷

Much energy has been expended, both at the time, and in the decades since, attempting to explain fully Lansdowne’s motivation for publishing his ‘Peace Letter.’ As has been shown, his views on the war did not change over night, and therefore the

¹⁰⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1917, pp. 5-6.

letter was not the product of, in Crawford's words, a "nerve-wrecked wobbler" who had taken leave of his senses. Nor does it appear likely that Crawford was correct in asserting that "the explanation must to some extent be sought in the vexation and annoyance" the former Foreign Secretary felt at being out of office.¹⁰⁸ J. S. Sandars, Balfour's private secretary, reported many years later that he met Lansdowne on Bond Street a day or two before the letter's publication, and described the elderly statesman as feeling, in Gladstone's words, "in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility."¹⁰⁹ He certainly had less reason to hold back his views out of loyalty to the government, although he did wait through an entire year of continued military stalemate, and in the end consulted with Balfour prior to publication. Writing to his daughter in early December, fearing her displeasure with what he had written, the marquis asserted simply that he believed it to be "somebody's duty to put this view of the case before the public."¹¹⁰ Moreover, a couple of weeks prior to publication he told Colonel House that in order to avoid what increasingly looked to become a Pyrrhic Allied victory, he hoped to "set out--aims that are moderate and will appeal to moderate minds in all countries."¹¹¹ This noble, if possibly naïve, diplomatic objective ultimately dictated the substance of the letter's final draft.

¹⁰⁸ *Crawford Papers*, p. 381, entry of December 1, 1917. Crawford wrote that it was "well known that Lansdowne has long been a nerve-wrecked wobbler."

¹⁰⁹ J. S. Sandars to Kerry, August 11, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹¹⁰ Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 10, 1917, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 472.

¹¹¹ *Colonel House Papers*, Vol. 3, pp. 232-233, entry of November 14, 1917.

Lansdowne perhaps made his greatest mistake by the negative manner in which he began his letter, citing what he characterized as a “dreadful” unending war, with millions of casualties, and with the government’s ministers clueless as how to put things right. Moreover, he declared that Britain’s war aims were not realistically obtainable, and through both conciliatory and vague proposals, he attempted to mitigate British demands for security from future war and reparations owed for the extant conflict. While arguing that the two sides might go far in determining fair reparations, in particular for Belgium, he warned that the utmost efforts would not fail to fall short of completeness in making good “all the ravages of this war.” The balm for this incompleteness would be complete security, or as complete, he noted, as humanly possible.

Shifting the focus as quickly as possible from victory in the present war, he called on all the powers to work for an even greater achievement, the prevention of future war; and so that they might tackle that superior achievement of future peace all the more quickly, he argued that peace in the present should not have to be preceded by a detailed treaty that had to be immediately accepted “chapter and verse.” There were many issues, he advised, “which must as necessity be left over for discussion and negotiation, for accommodation and adjustment, at a later stage.” Moreover, other expectations, such as territorial gain, he argued, had now “probably become unattainable,” and that plans for the “wholesale rearrangement of the map of South-eastern Europe” might well be suspended.

His lone attempt to deflect any misrepresentation of his ideas and to attest to his patriotism and loyalty came only in the twenty-first paragraph when he asserted, as he had in his November 1916 Cabinet memorandum: “We are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell the ruination of the civilized world.” He hoped, therefore, that his five stipulated war aims would give “immense stimulus” to the peace minded groups in the Central Powers. It was for this carefully crafted collection of sensible vagaries, this ludicrous attempt at diplomatic sleight of hand in the midst of the greatest war the world had ever known, that George Bernard Shaw proclaimed that Lansdowne had given “the order to Cease Firing . . . It was disregarded; and he died, as fools thought, in disgrace.” Shaw was undoubtedly correct, however, in noting that Lansdowne’s “only reward” for such courage “was a howl of execration from his own people.”¹¹²

The Peace Letter dominated the British and worldwide press for days after its publication. It elicited immediate condemnation from the Northcliffe Press. *The Times*, which had refused to print the letter, reported that the marquis would “find himself the most popular man in ‘Central Europe’ next week,” and that he “could not have taken any step better calculated to hearten Germany and prolong the War.”¹¹³ Northcliffe himself was interviewed by the Paris newspaper *Le Matin*, and described the letter as “The stupid and senile demonstration of an old man who has lost control of himself.”¹¹⁴ The

¹¹² *Daily Telegraph*, August 24, 1933.

¹¹³ *The Times*, November 30, 1917, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ Harold Kurtz, “The Lansdowne Letter, November 1917,” *History Today* 18, No. 2 (February 1968): 86.

press lord's assertion that had he been in London he would have printed the letter alongside a direct rejoinder, however, is undermined somewhat by Shaw's claim that his letter to the editor in support of Lansdowne was refused as well.¹¹⁵

Those who reacted against the letter came from all political stripes. Lloyd George reportedly told Lord Riddell, owner of the *News of the World*, that it was "really a pacifist letter," written at an "ill-advised and inopportune time." It was published, perhaps purposely by Lansdowne, to coincide with the meeting of the Allied War Conference in Paris. Despite declaring that there was no "half-way house between victory and defeat," however, Lloyd George agreed that the brutal and personal attack on Lansdowne by *The Times* was in bad taste.¹¹⁶ It appeared to many that President Woodrow Wilson's state of the union address given less than week later, in which the American President appealed to the Austrians by denying that the Allies had any desire, "to impair or to rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire," differed little in substance from Lansdowne's letter and might yet justify its publication.¹¹⁷ The *Manchester Guardian* went so far as to print both statements side by side to show how little they differed. Although Lansdowne welcomed such comparisons, Lloyd George observed to C. P. Scott, proprietor and editor of the *Guardian*, that the difference between the two

¹¹⁵ George Bernard Shaw to Kerry, August 25, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹¹⁶ *Riddell Diaries*, p. 208, entry of December 3, 1917; *The Times*, December 15, 1917.

¹¹⁷ Wilson's Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 4, 1917, printed in Arthur Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 45, November 11, 1917- January 15, 1918* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 194-202. Hereafter cited as *Wilson Papers*.

was that, “Wilson postulated victory and Lansdowne did not.”¹¹⁸ Of course, Lansdowne had stated specifically that Britain would not lose the war, but it was an indefinable “inspiration of leadership” that the Peace Letter lacked, according to Lord Cecil, who was now the Minister for Blockade.¹¹⁹ While Wilson had attempted to assure the peoples of Germany and Austria that the Allies intended “no wrong” against their empires, or interference with their internal affairs, this was preceded in his address by the assertion that the war had to be won first, and the masters of Germany “crushed” and “defeated.”¹²⁰

Most of Lansdowne’s fellow Unionists were shocked and dismayed at the letter. His eldest son, Lieutenant Colonel the Earl of Kerry, a Unionist MP for West Derbyshire, admitted that upon a first reading his father’s views “did not commend themselves to him.” Both he and Cecil, however, believed that the letter had been misconstrued and misinterpreted, and the former called for a “reprobation” of the personal attacks and “scurrilous abuse” that had been heaped upon his father.¹²¹ For his part, Austen Chamberlain was genuinely pained at Lansdowne’s “gaffe,” and could not

¹¹⁸ Lansdowne to H. W. Massingham, December 14, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, “Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85. He wrote to Massingham, editor of *The Nation*: “I am particularly glad you have dealt so fully with the close correspondence between my letter and President Wilson’s address”; Trevor Wilson, ed., *The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott, 1911-1928* (London: Collins, 1970), p. 319, entry of December 16-19, 1917. Hereafter cited as *Scott Diaries*.

¹¹⁹ Cecil quoted in the *Manchester Guardian*, December 10, 1917, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Wilson’s Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 4, 1917, printed in *Wilson Papers*, Vol. 45, pp. 194-202. Wilson also renewed his pledged for “unmolested access” to pathways to the sea for a reconstituted Poland. No doubt a majority of German people would have found it hard to reconcile this with his renewed pledge of “no annexations.”

¹²¹ *Daily Telegraph*, December 17, 1917, p. 8.

understand how his friend had “failed to see what an encouragement his letter would be to the Germans, and Britain’s own pacifists.”¹²²

Perhaps some Unionist Party members were sympathetic to Lansdowne’s views, and might even have given thought to speaking out publicly, but Bonar Law put an end to any such ideas at a Tory Party meeting shortly before the Unionist Party annual convention on November 30. A resolution condemning the letter was passed unanimously, and in his speech that same evening Bonar Law called the letter a “national misfortune,” and said that such a peace as Lansdowne hoped for would be “really a defeat for us and nothing else.”¹²³ Regardless, most of Lansdowne’s political colleagues would have been forced to speak out in opposition to the letter, if for no other reason than its susceptibility to misinterpretation by friends and enemies, both domestic and foreign. Privately, Bonar Law wrote to Lansdowne that it was “a strange thing” and “very distressing” that they “should differ in a matter so vital,” and he hoped that his speech was not taken by the marquis as “less friendly than it might have been.”¹²⁴ The marquis considered himself, however, to have been “officially excommunicated.”¹²⁵

Lansdowne’s letter managed to elicit a negative reaction even from the likes of William Jennings Bryan and Beatrice Webb. Although Bryan admitted to being a pacifist in times past—in 1915 he had resigned as American Secretary of State in

¹²² Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The ‘Peace Movement’ in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff, U.K.: University of Wales Press, 1976), p. 150.

¹²³ Turner, *British Politics*, p. 249; *The Times*, December 1, 1917, p. 9.

¹²⁴ Bonar Law to Lansdowne, November 30, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, “Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85.

¹²⁵ Lansdowne to Bonar Law, November 30, 1917, quoted in Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” p. 370.

response to President Wilson's protests against German submarine warfare—he declared that he preferred a “lasting peace” to a premature one.¹²⁶ Mrs. Webb, a co-founder of the Fabian Society, wished to believe that the war could be a progressive vehicle. More to the point, she considered Lansdowne a “cynical” pacifist, “on account of the injury to property by war.”¹²⁷ Confirming Burke's assertion that such professorial theorists care only for the furtherance of their speculative designs and nothing else, Webb believed that the chaos and upheaval brought on by the war would offer “the greatest opportunity for a big step forward the world has ever seen.”¹²⁸ While Lansdowne may have believed he was attempting to preserve civilization and humanity as he knew it, it is doubtful, however, that he understood himself to be actively holding back a burgeoning utopia.

Some Opposition Liberal leaders, led by ex-Cabinet Minister Reginald McKenna, believed the moment and the issue propitious for reuniting the Liberal Party, but their leader, Asquith, remained unsure.¹²⁹ In his first speech on the matter, the former Prime Minister questioned the viciousness of the attacks upon Lansdowne, extending his sympathies through a personal note, but would go no further in direct support. Asquith believed that much of the criticism that had been showered on the letter arose from reading into it “meanings and intentions” which he did not believe it to

¹²⁶ Bryan quoted in *The Times*, December 1, 1917, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, eds., *The Diary of Beatrice Webb: Vol. 3, 1905-1924, “The Power to Alter Things”* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 302, entry of March 7, 1918. Hereafter cited as *Webb Diary*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291, entry of December 11, 1917.

¹²⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, December 4, 1917, p. 4; Turner, *British Politics*, p. 250. McKenna, along with the left-wing backbenchers Noel Buxton and Josiah Wedgwood, urged Asquith to take this opportunity to come out in favor of Lansdowne's letter and thereby unite their party.

convey, but while he denied as well any desire to see the German nation crushed, he made it clear that peace could only come with the destruction of Prussian militarism.¹³⁰

Lansdowne, who must have expected a certain amount of controversy over his missive, was taken aback somewhat by the level of abuse he did receive, declaring to Hardinge that “the newspaper attacks are past all belief.”¹³¹ He was confident, however, that time and more sober contemplation of the letter would reveal a more “reasonable” response to his views.¹³² One such more reasonable response came from the Liberal newspaper, the *Manchester Guardian*, which took up Lansdowne’s defense by attacking what it considered Bonar Law’s purposeful misrepresentation of the letter, and asserted that “any time” was a “good time for rational action and for the clearing up of error.”¹³³ The marquis’s greatest solace, however, must have come from the many letters he claimed to have received from the front. Lansdowne was surprised, but wondered if he should be, at the numerous letters from officers who had written “to say *they* welcomed

¹³⁰ Asquith to Lansdowne, December 13, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, “Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85. Asquith wrote that he had “rarely known a more scandalous Press Campaign than that which has been recently directed against you”; *Daily Telegraph*, December 12, 1917, pp. 7-8.

¹³¹ Lansdowne to Hardinge, December 3, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, “Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85. Lansdowne wrote Lord Channing in May of 1921 that he was “surprised at the time that my letter of Nov. 1917 should have created so much stir.” The last four words of this sentence had been crossed out by Lansdowne only to be replaced by unintelligible writing, but it is doubtful his meaning was altered greatly (Lansdowne to Channing, May 7, 1921, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88).

¹³² Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 10, 1917, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 472.

¹³³ *Manchester Guardian*, December 1, 1917, p. 6, and November 30, 1917, p. 4.

the letter.”¹³⁴ Victor Cazalet, a twenty-one year old captain serving in France, wrote to his family as well as to family friend Austen Chamberlain to explain how much the Peace Letter was appreciated by the troops. He observed that the letter’s author had said nothing of “peace at once,” and that most of the soldiers he knew considered Lansdowne “a *national hero*.”¹³⁵ In his war memoir published in 1933, Guy Chapman related the reaction of the disillusioned intellectual set, writing that “the army shrugged its shoulders and said: ‘poor old buffer; decent of him, but what did he expect with this gang in charge . . .?’”¹³⁶

The greatest organized support for the letter came from the Union for Democratic Control (the UDC), which advocated, *inter alia*, for democratic control over foreign policy and an end to secret diplomacy as the sure remedies to averting future wars. The meaning behind this unlikely alliance was revealed quickly at the first meeting of the Lansdowne Committee, which was composed largely from members of the UDC. J. Ramsay MacDonald, the future Labour Prime Minister, proposed an interim Lansdowne government, but only to serve long enough to attain peace.¹³⁷ Lansdowne’s personal involvement with the group never amounted to more than a couple of letters addressed to

¹³⁴ Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, December 10, 1917, excerpted in Newton, *Lansdowne*, p. 472.

¹³⁵ Cazalet to Chamberlain, December 31, 1917, Turner, *British Politics*, p. 266; Cazalet to his mother, December 2, 1917, Robert Rhodes James, *Victor Cazalet: A Portrait* (London: Hamilton, 1976), p. 18.

¹³⁶ Guy Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality: Fragments of Autobiography* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1933), p. 207.

¹³⁷ Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union for Democratic Control, 1914-1918* (Hull, U.K.: University of Hull press, 1996), pp. 46, 202.

the Committee. He respectfully refused a request by H. W. Massingham, editor of *The Nation* and Labour sympathizer, that he actively support the group, and, at times, even acted to restrain the Committee's chairman, Lord Beauchamp. In October 1918, he argued that it would be unwise to hold a meeting of the Committee during the current negotiations for an armistice for fear of stepping on the government's toes.¹³⁸ This, however, did not signal that Lansdowne had changed his views in any way. Neither did he appear terribly "bewildered," as A.J.P. Taylor has suggested, by the fact that his letter was "taken up by Radicals." He refused calls for further action suggested by the likes of Arthur Ponsonby, a leader of the UDC, but reassured the latter that he did not regard his support as "embarrassing."¹³⁹

In large measure historians have continued to view the Peace Letter as the product of the old aristocracy desperate to hold on to its privileges. Trevor Wilson has referred to the letter as a "plea for autocracy," and "the most noteworthy attempt to save the young men of the British upper classes."¹⁴⁰ Gerard DeGroot has argued correctly that Lansdowne was "not a pacifist, but an elitist," but a trifle less persuasively that the marquis "feared that, with the best men slaughtered, England would drift rudderless into

¹³⁸ Lansdowne to Lord Beauchamp, October 9, 1918, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88. Lansdowne wrote that, "As for myself, I shall hold my peace until I know more of the attitude of our own government. Harm might, I think, be done if it were to appear that any section of the public was ready to impair the strength of the advantageous position which our successes in the field have won us."

¹³⁹ Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, p. 150; Lansdowne to Ponsonby, December 8, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, "Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85.

¹⁴⁰ Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1986), p. 760.

democracy, republicanism socialism and decline.”¹⁴¹ Arguing along similar lines, David Cannadine linked Lansdowne’s so-called “regrettable aberration” and fear of the “disintegration” of the “traditional social order,” to both his legacy as an “incorrigible” Whig appeaser, and the death of his second son in the third month of the war.¹⁴² It is far from certain, however, that these concerns were foremost in Lansdowne’s mind, or for that matter, whether he was ever blessed with that much political vision. Nevertheless, such conclusions are not unexpected as Lansdowne appeared the most unlikely pacifist, and his pedigree practically impels many to employ him as a proxy for his class.

One of the most generous conclusions in recent historiography comes from John Turner. He contended that the Peace Letter “amounted to high-minded defeatism,” and that the “most likely explanation of his intentions is the most obvious one: that he wished to express a direction in which foreign policy could move.” Beyond this, Turner assessed the marquis’s motivations as “impenetrable, and in the absence of any evidence from his own papers they seem likely to remain so.”¹⁴³ It bears repeating that the purpose of this essay is to make such matters less opaque by searching out motivation in the character and life experiences of the man, especially with regard to foreign policy, but often general sequences of events remain most helpful. The Peace Letter was

¹⁴¹ Gerard DeGroot, *Blighty; British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p. 290.

¹⁴² Cannadine, *Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, pp. 77-78. In drawing this conclusion he cites the work of Paul Kennedy, whose opinion rests on the fact that Lansdowne’s views on social reform and Irish Home Rule were “not very progressive” (Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981], pp. 161-162).

¹⁴³ Turner, *British Politics*, pp. 248-249.

published over a year after Lansdowne's Cabinet memorandum of November 1916, and that memorandum was produced more than two years after the death of his youngest son. Moreover, in the interval, he backed the sending of reinforcements to the Dardanelles, and spoke out in favor of conscription, and a more vigorous prosecution of the war.

The Questions of Formulation and Approval

In 1934, Lansdowne's son, familiarly known as Lord Kerry, wrote an article for the journal *The Nineteenth Century* in an effort to rehabilitate his father's reputation. He wrote that the Peace Letter's "terms are by now almost wholly forgotten, and, perhaps were not very carefully scrutinised at the time, for it is notorious that much was read into it which was not there." After an interval of seventeen years, he believed that "A cooler and perhaps saner judgement of its contents" would now be possible.¹⁴⁴ Kerry scoured the family archives and in the process revealed much with regard to the formulation of the Peace Letter, and reignited the controversy over whether it had been in fact approved by the government.

What is most readily apparent from the draft proposals that Lansdowne presented to Balfour in early November 1916 is that they were in many ways much more specific and detailed compared with the Peace Letter. The proposed war aims contained in the first draft he sent to Balfour, and which he believed might be "publicly affirmed with advantage" in order to engage the peace minded groups of Germany, included the declaration that the Allies did "not desire to crush either of the Central Powers, or to

¹⁴⁴ Lansdowne, "The Peace Letter," p. 373.

dismember them in order that they may be more effectually crushed.”¹⁴⁵ In his follow-up letter to the Foreign Secretary on November 16, this phrase was altered to state that His Majesty’s Government did “not seek to bring about the destruction or dismemberment of either of the Central Powers.”¹⁴⁶ Both earlier versions, however, differed substantively from the Peace Letter in which he suggested that the Allies declare that they did “not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power.”¹⁴⁷ There were two reasons for the adjustments Lansdowne made over the first four weeks of November 1916; the first was that it was a response to the critiques of the letter he received from Balfour, and the second was his desire to craft a letter both concise and vague enough to spark a genuine peace discussion between the belligerents.

Contrary to J. S. MacArthur’s assertion that Balfour “was in general agreement” on most of the points in Lansdowne’s memorandum, the Foreign Secretary’s comments did hold substantial reservations, and they affected the final version of the Peace Letter.¹⁴⁸ In his letter of critique sent to Lansdowne on November 22, Balfour agreed that Britain did not desire “the destruction or dismemberment of Germany, if by ‘Germany’ is meant that part of Central Europe which properly belongs to the German People.” Moreover, he considered “the transference of Alsace-Lorraine to France,” and

¹⁴⁵ Lansdowne’s Peace Letter memorandum, November 1917, printed in Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” pp. 374-377.

¹⁴⁶ Lansdowne to Balfour, November 16, 1917, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.3, “Lord Lansdowne’s memorandum to the Cabinet and the ‘Peace Letter’ 1916-1917.” This letter is also printed in Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” pp. 377-378.

¹⁴⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1917, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ Revd. J. S. MacArthur, “The Lansdowne Peace Letter,” *Contemporary Review* 212, No. 1225 (February 1968): 86.

the re-creation of “historic” Poland not in opposition to his own definition of dismemberment. As a result of Balfour’s objections, and his own wish to promote peaceful dialogue, Lansdowne deemphasized specifics in his letter and moved in the direction of more obscure proposals. The Peace Letter, therefore, declared that the Allies did “not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power,” whatever it was the latter term was supposed to mean. Another instance of Balfour’s direct impact on the letter’s final form was in Lansdowne’s proposal that the Allies assure the German people that they did not intend to employ a commercial boycott against them after the War. The marquis’s addition of the qualification that “the threat of a ‘boycott,’ in case Germany should show herself utterly unreasonable, would be a legitimate threat,” was again in reaction to an objection made by the Foreign Secretary, with the words, “utterly unreasonable,” a direct transcription from the latter’s November 22 comments.¹⁴⁹

One of the more politic changes Lansdowne made was with regard to the territorial issue of Alsace-Lorraine. While his initial draft called for the “restoration to France of the territory taken from her in Alsace and Lorraine in 1871,” he subsequently crossed this line out for which he substituted a call for the, “restoration to France of so much of the territory taken from her in Alsace and Lorraine as she considers indispensable.”¹⁵⁰ The Peace Letter, however, again in a possible reaction to Balfour’s comments, pointedly neglected to mention Alsace-Lorraine at all.

¹⁴⁹ Balfour to Lansdowne, November 22, 1917, printed in Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” pp. 378-379; *Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1917, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Draft of Peace Letter memorandum dated November 6, 1917, BP, Add 49730, ff291-299. A copy of this memorandum can also be found in LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.5, “Papers relating to the ‘Peace Letter’ 1916-1933.”

Unfortunately for Lansdowne, the sensible and diplomatic approach he employed with regard to revisions led easily to the wide interpretations and misinterpretations that greeted the published letter. Far from operating with '*cartes sur table*,' he practiced some pragmatic muddying of the waters. His desire to reach out to the peace-yearning people of Germany was understandable, but in the end his efforts to do so did not help his cause. In the Peace Letter, the marquis suggested that the Allies state publicly that they did not seek to "impose" upon Germany "any form of government other than that of her own choice," and this caused many to consider him soft on the Prussian menace. In his first draft, however, he had written: "We regard the Hohenzollern regime as responsible for this war, and we believe that with its disappearance would disappear the principle obstacle to peace; but this matter must be for the decision of the German people." Moreover, in the Peace Letter Lansdowne called for a "suspension of judgment" on the "wholesale re-arrangement of the map of South-Eastern Europe," while in the first draft he suggested that the "wishes" of the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary would indeed have to be taken into consideration.¹⁵¹ No doubt he decided to place sensible diplomacy above counterproductive condemnation, and penned a letter well suited to achieve its purpose. In truth, in many ways the letter was formulated by design to invite multiple interpretations.

The other major goal of Kerry's filial mission, which actually went public in 1933, was to exonerate his father from the accusation that he had published his letter

¹⁵¹ *Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1917, pp. 5-6; Lansdowne's Peace Letter memorandum of November 1917, printed in Lansdowne, "The Peace Letter," pp. 374-377.

without the knowledge and approval of the Foreign Office.¹⁵² Of all the criticisms leveled at his father, it was this allegation that had “shocked” Kerry the most, even “more than the contents of the letter itself.”¹⁵³ Lansdowne had not discussed his project with friends or family, and at the time of publication his own son described it as a “bolt from the blue.”¹⁵⁴ The government, of course, immediately issued a statement denying any knowledge or responsibility for the letter.¹⁵⁵ While this denial was for the most part truthful, the marquis’s former political colleagues could hardly do more than feign surprise at the views he expressed in light of his November 1916 Cabinet memorandum.

It was the publication of Lord Riddell’s *War Diary* in 1933 that first made it known, according to Kerry, that his father “had not acted, as was generally thought, alone.”¹⁵⁶ Riddell’s diary revealed that at the time of publication, Lord Burnham had fumed at Bonar Law’s condemnation of the letter which he believed necessarily implied a condemnation of the *Daily Telegraph*. Burnham hastened to let it be known that Lansdowne had informed him that Balfour and Hardinge had been consulted, and he intended therefore to publish an article stating that the letter had been approved by the

¹⁵² Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” p. 371.

¹⁵³ Kerry to Hardinge, December 29, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁵⁴ Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” p. 370. Kerry wrote in 1933 that “my father never discussed it with me in any way from the start” (Kerry to Hardinge, December 29, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88).

¹⁵⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, December 1, 1917, p. 7. The government also reaffirmed its war aims which it believed to be “best summed up in the recent utterance of M. Clemenceau; ‘The war aims for which we are fighting are victory.’”

¹⁵⁶ Lansdowne, “The Peace Letter,” p. 371.

Foreign Office. In the end, he kept silent, however, after Bonar Law and Riddell convinced him to subordinate “his own interests to those of the nation.”¹⁵⁷

Stirred to action, and armed now with Riddell’s *War Diary*, his father’s own account of the days leading up to the letter’s publication, and the 1916 memorandum—which had only been revealed in detail in 1928 when printed in Asquith’s memoirs—Kerry himself went to the press. On August 1, 1933, he sent a letter to *The Times* that reignited the whole controversy, and unleashed a series of letters to the editor. It looked to Kerry that Lord Newton had inexplicably overlooked the very documents that exonerated his father. He also was convinced that Balfour had understood and assented to his father’s intentions, but had just “never anticipated that it would raise such a storm.”¹⁵⁸ Blanche Dugdale, Balfour’s niece and biographer, soon joined the fray and claimed that Balfour had not seen the letter before publication, and in fact had not even read it. Moreover, she added that it was well-known in the family that the Foreign Secretary had “greatly deplored” the letter.¹⁵⁹ J. S. Sandars, however, who had been long estranged from his former employer, questioned deridingly whether Balfour’s assessment had come before or after the letter’s publication.¹⁶⁰ In the end, both Kerry and Dugdale accepted the rationale that Balfour did not need to read the letter because he

¹⁵⁷ *Riddell Diaries*, pp. 208-209, entry of December 3, 1917.

¹⁵⁸ Kerry to Hardinge, December 23, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁵⁹ *The Times*, August 2, 1933, p. 11.

¹⁶⁰ J. S. Sandars to Kerry, August 11, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

knew already the substance of what it contained, but this did not solve the question of whether or not it had in fact been officially approved.¹⁶¹

Of all the principals of the controversy still alive in 1933, it was Hardinge who most regretted its recrudescence. He wrote to Kerry privately advising him that reopening the matter would not do anyone or anything any good, including Lansdowne's reputation. He argued that he had taken Lansdowne's word that Balfour had approved the letter's publication, and that when he had raised the advisability of it the marquis had replied that his decision to send it was final. Hardinge claimed that the assistance he provided Lansdowne was simply that of "a technical expert," and maintained that the assertion that approval could be found in Balfour's remark, "Hardinge knows my mind," was "pure assumption." Moreover, he believed that the marquis's own words that the letter was his responsibility alone to be much more significant. Hardinge concluded his note by pleading again with Kerry to change his mind and "not reopen this painful controversy which can do no good to anybody."¹⁶²

Most of Hardinge's claims are born out by his correspondence with Lansdowne immediately after the publication of the letter in 1917, but while the marquis took full responsibility for the substance of the letter, the former Permanent Secretary would never admit that he had remarked that it was "statesmanlike" and would "do good."¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Lansdowne, "The Peace Letter," p. 372; Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. II, p. 252.

¹⁶² Hardinge to Kerry, December 27, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁶³ Hardinge wrote to Lansdowne five days after the letter's publication to argue his case that any criticisms he had made were "chiefly on technical grounds" (Hardinge to Lansdowne, December 3, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, "Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85). In a return letter, Lansdowne calmed Hardinge's fears and

After receiving a complimentary copy of Kerry's article, Hardinge responded one final time expressing his hope that the matter would now "be allowed to sleep."¹⁶⁴

Lord Newton, in some sense the primary object of Kerry's wrath, found Riddell's account "rather perplexing," but informed his lordship that "fresh revelations" would be needed to prove that the Foreign Office officially condoned the letter.¹⁶⁵ After reviewing all the new evidence he informed Kerry that he still believed that Lansdowne had mistakenly assumed the support and assent of that office. Moreover, he concluded that not wanting to be "troubled" with the letter, Balfour simply agreed to pass it on to Hardinge. Newton added that no matter how "badly" Balfour, Hardinge and *The Times*, had treated Kerry's father, he could find "no indication" that the Foreign Office had "officially approved the letter."¹⁶⁶

Lord Newton's assessment appears well-founded. In a memorandum circulated to the War Cabinet in December 1917, Balfour stated that he had agreed to the letter assuming that it would contain only those parts of Lansdowne's proposed question for debate in the House of Lords to which he "had raised no objection, and that it would

affirmed that the latter's responsibility was "strictly limited & infinitesimal" (Lansdowne to Hardinge, December 3, 1917, LP, Working Files: Miscellaneous, Box 2, no.9, "Correspondence regarding the Peace Letter 1917." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 85).

¹⁶⁴ Hardinge to Kerry, March 20, 1934, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁶⁵ Newton to Kerry, August 18, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁶⁶ Newton to Kerry, May 29, 1934, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, "Papers relating the 'Peace Letter' 1915-1933." Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

contain nothing else of moment.”¹⁶⁷ The Foreign Secretary believed, or perhaps chose to assert after the fact, that the letter subsequently published had strayed too far from his friend’s original proposal and his own pointed critiques. As shown above, Lansdowne recognized the sensitive nature of the letter he was writing, and knew well that Balfour thought the project a poor idea. If it had been 1904, with both men at their former ministerial posts, Balfour’s commentary on Lansdowne’s proposal would have been assumed by the latter as putting an end to the whole scheme, and correctly so.

Dugdale also argued that Balfour probably did not know of, or ever read, the “hardly fair” government statement disavowing any knowledge or responsibility for the Peace Letter. She believed that if he “had realised that Lord Lansdowne might be silently suffering some injustice through the *communiqué*, Balfour would have made the complete facts public at once.”¹⁶⁸ This appears, however, an overly generous conclusion. In February 1918, Lansdowne enquired of Balfour:

My Dear Arthur, How long is it since we have met, and are we going to meet again? I hope so, altho [*sic*] I suppose I must be reckoned assuring the infidels.¹⁶⁹

It does not appear, however, that his old chief was sympathetic to his plight, and from the date of the Peace Letter only two letters between them still exist in the papers of either man; both were from Lansdowne to Balfour, and the last was written in February

¹⁶⁷ Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol. II, pp. 250-251.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, February 5, 1918, BP, Add 49730, f300.

1922.¹⁷⁰ Of his former Unionist colleagues, it seems that Austen Chamberlain, Curzon, and Selborne were among the few who remained in personal contact with the marquis, if one were to judge by the post. He did continue for some time to attend sessions of the House of Lords, however, so much is left to speculation.

Lansdowne never revealed publicly his conversations with Balfour and Hardinge, and neither did he reveal the existence of his November 1916 memorandum. The existence of the latter in fact had leaked to the press in vague terms in late 1916, but with the publication of the Peace Letter even the generally friendly *Manchester Guardian* effectively buried this significant information in an out of the way paragraph.¹⁷¹

Lansdowne did his best to diffuse the controversy, and to the reporters who trekked out to Bowood he let it be known “positively” that the letter was “entirely” his own, and that he had “consulted no one about it.” When asked if he had written the letter “on impulse,” Lansdowne replied good-naturedly that a man of his age was not likely to act in such a manner. As for its meaning, he remarked simply: “The letter speaks for itself.”¹⁷² No one in the government ever came to Lansdowne’s defense.

The Peace Letter was not perceived or interpreted by the public or press in the manner the author intended, nor was it universally welcomed for what it meant to achieve. Many years later, Sandars could only wonder at how Lansdowne had “screwed himself up to do it,” but recalled as well how the marquis had reacted with “horror

¹⁷⁰ The last letter between the two men in either man’s papers is from Lansdowne to Balfour, February 16, 1922 (BP, Add 49730, f301).

¹⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian*, December 4, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, December 1, 1917, p. 4.

tinged with apprehension” at the outset of the war.¹⁷³ Perhaps Kerry found some comfort in a letter he received from George Bernard Shaw, who observed that “What people call greatness is nothing but a sense of values; and your father had to pit his sense of values against the whole of his world and against the patriotic mob as well.”¹⁷⁴

Last Years

Lansdowne followed the Peace Letter with two subsequent missives which both received much public attention. In the second letter, published in early 1918, he nearly begged the new German Chancellor, Count Hertling, to make Germany’s designs on Belgium, or lack thereof, clear. The next time Hertling spoke publicly, however, he did not mention Belgium at all. Even Prince Max of Baden, also an advocate of a negotiated peace and who became Germany’s Chancellor in October 1918, was hesitant initially to support an open declaration on the complete restoration of Belgian independence, believing the devastated nation to be the only pawn that Germany had to trade.¹⁷⁵ Lansdowne’s third letter, an address to the Lansdowne Committee and published in July of the same year, castigated all the belligerents, somewhat hypocritically, for being “content with dialectic success,” instead of “searching for points of agreement.”¹⁷⁶ Not

¹⁷³ Sandars to Lady Newton, 1928-1929, Sandars Papers MSS. Eng. hist. c. 771, ff71-72.

¹⁷⁴ George Bernard Shaw to Kerry, August 25, 1933, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁷⁵ Prince Max of Baden to Prince Alexander Hohenlohe I, December 1917, in Maximilian, Prince of Baden, *The Memoirs of Prince Max of Baden*, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928), p. 200.

¹⁷⁶ Lansdowne to the Chairman of the Lansdowne Committee, July 31, 1918, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 475-476.

even the approval by Germany's Social Democrats of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March 1918 could convince Lansdowne that his efforts for peace had been futile, or perhaps even dangerously naïve.

Lansdowne never regretted publishing the letter. In February 1918, he wrote to his daughter that he was, "quite unrepentant," and in May while defending the freedom of speech of pro-peace groups in the House of Lords, he asserted again that he had "nothing to withdraw," and "nothing to apologize for so far as the letters" were concerned.¹⁷⁷ His lone expression of regret was that if he "had had more of the wisdom of the serpent," he would have "added a good deal of padding" to show his "abhorrence of anything which could be called a German Peace."¹⁷⁸ As it stood, however, his Peace Letter was perceived as, and thus represented, a true threat to the efficient conduct of a bloody, but necessary, war. With his new found feeling of "greater freedom and less responsibility," he published a letter of calculated moderation in order to appeal to the peace-minded groups in Germany. Lansdowne's proposals did not appeal, however, to the man who actually held in his hands the ultimate responsibility for the security of Britain and its empire. Lloyd George observed in his *War Memoirs* that "the only result" of a compromise peace in 1916 or 1917 "would have been a bigger Germany, better armed, [and] confident that her armies were unbeatable in the field even by

¹⁷⁷ Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, February 1918, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 472-473; Parliamentary Debates, Lords, Fifth Series, May 8, 1918. As late as February of 1919, Lord Crawford reportedly found the marquis still "infected with the ideas of the Lansdowne letter" (*Crawford Papers*, pp. 400-401, entry of February 3, 1919).

¹⁷⁸ Lansdowne to his daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, February 1918, excerpted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 473.

overwhelming numbers.” Moreover, he wondered what would have happened if a peace conference had been held in 1916 yet failed to deliver all that the Allied governments would have found necessary; would the Allies have been able to rouse their populations once again as in 1914? He thought not.¹⁷⁹ There is, in many instances, no “half-way house between victory and defeat,” and on occasion sensible diplomacy is only a rationalization in the reckless crusade for peace. Lansdowne’s most sensible and rational ‘policy of the entente’ did not make a friend of Germany, his abhorrence of war did not prevent it, and the majority of the people of Great Britain were most certainly not “right-thinking” gentlemen.

In early October 1918, with an Allied victory looking more promising every day, Lansdowne began to show greater regard for not stepping on the government’s toes, and he counseled Lord Beauchamp against scheduling a meeting of the Lansdowne Committee which was intended to coincide with the parliamentary debate on the most recent peace offer from Germany. “Harm might, I think, be done,” he warned, “if it were to appear that any section of the public was ready to impair the strength of the advantageous position which our successes in the field have won for us.”¹⁸⁰ He continued to argue against unneeded revenge and further death, but if Prince Max had been expecting the “Marquis of Hands Up” to jump at the chance to speak out for any new German proposal, he had misunderstood Lansdowne all along. In a letter to F. W. Hirst following the armistice, the marquis observed:

¹⁷⁹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 533.

¹⁸⁰ Lansdowne to Lord Beauchamp, October 9, 1918, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

It may be that, as time goes on, people will come to see that an honourable but less dramatic peace, made a year or two years ago, would have been better for this country and for the civilised world than the catastrophic denouement which we are witnessing, but for the moment articulate public opinion is unanimously in favour of the dramatic conclusion which has been reached now, but could not have been reached then, and it is of no use to urge the contrary view. The tide of passion is running too strongly.¹⁸¹

In May 1919, Lansdowne was stricken with an acute attack of rheumatic fever and it was feared by his family and friends that his death was near. Spending most of his recovery at Bowood, he was prevented from taking part in public life for two years. Newton believed it an “international misfortune” that the marquis was not a British representative at the Paris peace negotiations. Lansdowne returned to the Lords in March 1921 and although he remained intellectually intact, his posture was now bent and his nimble stride had been subsumed by, in Newton’s words, an “appearance of extreme frailty.”¹⁸² His physical wreckage, however, paled in comparison to that with which he had always been concerned. “My country will, I fear, have to [pass] through many anxious years,” he wrote to Lord Channing in May 1921, “before the wreckage of which you speak is cleared away.”¹⁸³ That same year Lansdowne traveled to France to visit his son’s grave for the first time.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Lansdowne to Hirst, November 24, 1918, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.5, “Papers relating to the ‘Peace Letter’ 1916-1933.” Hirst was a former editor of the *Economist*.

¹⁸² Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 485, 487.

¹⁸³ Lansdowne to Lord Channing, May 7, 1921, LP, Working Files: Peace Proposals, no.4, “Papers relating the ‘Peace Letter’ 1915-1933.” Formerly in Lansdowne MSS, Box (5) 88.

¹⁸⁴ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 488.

It would appear that Lansdowne, in fact, did spend much of his remaining days “excommunicated,” as he had feared. He expressed himself as very “grateful” for a letter he received in late 1924 from Selborne, observing sadly: “I see scarcely any one now, and few of my (not numerous) friends have time to write to me.” For himself, he confessed, writing letters had “become a penance,” as he was “becoming more & more crippled.” His political mind remained active, however, and commenting on the Conservative Party’s most recent victory over Labour he noted that he did not foresee “a Sedan in 1929—by which time I shall be beyond the reach of such catastrophes—but I do feel as you do, that unless our party shows courage as well as wisdom, our power will crumble, and we may find ourselves at the mercy of voters who are ignorant or hysterical, and who have no real convictions about anything.” He had found the first Labour premier, J. Ramsay MacDonald, to be “not only an incompetent Prime Minister, but a ‘shabby fellow.’”¹⁸⁵

The marquis turned Lansdowne House over to Kerry in 1921, and it was immediately thereafter leased to H. Gordon Selfridge, the American born owner of the famous Oxford Street department store. A few years after his father’s death, Kerry sold his great Berkeley Square mansion and its valuable grounds reportedly for upwards of £750,000. Some years later the famed Lansdowne House was converted into flats, and eventually the aging structure was torn down. In 1922, Derreen was burned down by Irish nationalists but was rebuilt in time for Lansdowne to enjoy it again during his last

¹⁸⁵ Lansdowne to Selborne, November 2, 1924, MS Selborne 87, ff92-93.

years.¹⁸⁶ The aged marquis was able only to traverse its grounds in a bath chair, however, and although he continued on occasion to engage in his passion for fishing, he wrote to Lord Inchcape: “I always feel that it may lead me to end my days in the river.”¹⁸⁷ While journeying to Derreen in early June 1927, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, the fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, died at the home of his youngest daughter at the age of eighty-two.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, pp. 488-489; *The Times*, February 18, 1921, p. 10; *Ibid.*, November 14, 1931, p. 12.

¹⁸⁷ Lansdowne to Inchcape, quoted in Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 489.

¹⁸⁸ Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, p. 490.

CHAPTER IX
A BRIEF CONCLUSION

Lord Lansdowne was not the greatest of Britain's foreign secretaries, but Ian Nish was not wholly mistaken when he argued that the marquis had a "special genius for foreign policy."¹ This was only in the sense, however, that he had some talent for diplomacy and had become a seasoned professional diplomatist. If Lansdowne did indeed have some innate talent for diplomacy, he aspired not to be the next Talleyrand, of whom he was reputedly a descendant, but to become an appropriately detached liberal-minded arbiter. He was the true gentleman-diplomat who, as enlightened reason dictated, always wished to play *cartes sur table*. Operating on a long-held coherent body of principles, Lansdowne throughout his political life pressed for the renewal of an enlightened—if informal—"Concert of Europe" which he hoped could be implemented worldwide. His 'policy of the entente,' which reflected his belief in the efficacy of reasonable and 'gentlemanly' diplomacy to settle outstanding disputes, left him ill-suited, however, to manage Britain's position as a world power during this period of perceived relative decline.

In these waning years of the supremacy of British power, the marquis believed in an empire forged no longer through fire and sword, but through the example of free institutions, just administration, and the influence of English culture. He certainly believed that foremost it was these aspects of Western civilization that brought Pax Britannica to the Khyber Pass. In pursuing his 'policy of the entente,' Lansdowne

¹ Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, p. 335.

presumed initially at least that his fellow European gentlemen would aid him in the higher mission of preserving civilization, and consequently, although secondarily to the Foreign Secretary, the status quo. This, however, proved not to be the case.

Although Lansdowne played a most significant role in charting Britain's new course out of isolation, he did not intend for this to be the precursor to the formation of the Triple Entente Alliance that fought the First World War. He did not believe the Anglo-French Entente excluded a closer relationship with Germany, and even through the most trying of provocations he was quick to condemn the anti-German feeling of his own people. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the only true alliance he forcefully pushed through the Cabinet, was concluded only because he recognized that the Japanese would accept nothing less, and he justified it on the presumed knowledge that the Japanese were not looking to go to war with Russia. His supposed "equipoise" in the months leading up to the Russo-Japanese War, was merely the product of the conflicting loyalties he felt toward an ally, his devotion to promoting peace in the world, and his desire to settle finally all outstanding disputes with Russia. The 'policy of the entente' proved beneficial to Anglo-American relations only in the sense that the Foreign Secretary was capable of gracefully relinquishing Britain's place as the world's preeminent Anglo-Saxon power with honor intact and through what he believed was reasonable, gentlemanly dealing.

George Monger concluded that Lansdowne was not a great Foreign Secretary, but added that "all things considered, Britain was fortunate in having him in charge of her foreign policy during five years of rapid changes and extreme danger." Monger

based his conclusion, however, upon Lansdowne's famed ability to remain cool in a crisis and "aloof from the emotions of those around him." This essay, if nothing else, has sought to discredit the notion of such presumed Whiggish detachment as a universally good trait for a diplomat.² In the extant historiography, as with Monger, Lansdowne has invariably been criticized and praised for the wrong reasons. Nowhere is this more evident than with the Peace Letter. At the time of the letter's publication he was praised by those whose real aim was the democratization of foreign policy, which would have been anathema to Lansdowne, and condemned as an aged and infirm appeaser who was little better than a pacifist. He had, in fact, never shied away from engaging an adversary when it needed to be confronted, and had always believed in displaying a firm front. Nevertheless, in the many decades since such contemporary judgments were rendered, historians have for the most part simply echoed them. If the Peace Letter tells us anything it is that the marquis was a man who, in Hume's words, always sought higher things. He did not believe the new millennium was around the corner, but he did have a reasonable expectation for its eventual arrival. Although as we have seen, he held a decidedly nineteenth-century traditional Whig-Liberal view of what that superior civilization might look like.

Lansdowne was perhaps the right man to administer the empire, in much the same manner that he dutifully tried to look after and maintain his great estates and care for his many tenants and servants. He was, however, not the right man to charge with its preservation and defense. Fortunately, his policy proved impossible to carry out fully.

² Monger, *End of Isolation*, p. 235.

He received little cooperation from the leadership of other great powers, and in the end the path of British foreign policy was impossible to guide or engineer in the direction he wished.

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