

The Impact of the American Invasion of Grenada on Anglo-American Relations and the Deployment of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces in Britain

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Abstract:

This paper studies the impact the American invasion of Grenada in 1983 had on Anglo-American relations and the deployment of cruise missiles in Britain. Anglo-American nuclear relations were dependent on a strong level of trust between the two governments. The deception employed by President Reagan's government in concealing American intentions concerning Grenada from the British government broke that trust. Ultimately, the Grenada affair provides an opportunity to study Britain's ability to maintain an independent foreign policy in the superpower era as well as Margaret Thatcher's reliance on internationalism and alliance-building in achieving her foreign policy objectives.

No matter how effectively Britain managed its defence effort it was on the unity, strength and credibility of NATO that our security ultimately depended.

- Margaret Thatcher¹

The British government responded to America's invasion of Grenada in 1983 with incredulity and outrage. In addition to Prime Minister Thatcher's personal sting at being deceived and misinformed by her close ally President Reagan, her government faced ridicule in Parliament and the press for a complete misunderstanding of the American position on Grenada. With growing public doubt within Britain surrounding the trustworthiness of the United States, Margaret Thatcher faced an obstacle to the lynchpin of her defense policy: the stationing of American cruise missiles in the United Kingdom.

As political scientist Paul Sharp argues, the foundation of the Anglo-American alliance in the post-war era was nuclear collaboration.² Historian John Dumbrell agrees, describing Britain's nuclear cooperation and intelligence sharing with the United States as "the essence and beating heart of the Cold War 'special relationship.'"³ The United States shared intelligence and close communication with other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, but the only country the United States helped establish and maintain an independent nuclear deterrent of its own was the United Kingdom. Nuclear policy provided the special aspect of Anglo-American relations. The Grenada conflict highlighted the danger posed "by the policies of Britain's great nuclear benefactor" to the continuation of Britain's nuclear defense policy, and to Britain's ability to maintain an independent foreign policy separate from that of the United States.⁴ For the British, Grenada represented a culmination of years of American international

¹ Margaret Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 251.

² Paul Sharp, *Thatcher's Diplomacy: The Revival of British Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 123.

³ John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 160.

⁴ Sharp, *Thatcher's Diplomacy*, 127.

faux pas. The American invasion revealed Reagan's commitment to defeating the Soviet Union at all costs despite the international turmoil his actions might cause. Britain's ability to successfully deploy American cruise missiles following the Grenada crisis in turn revealed Thatcher's seasoned statesmanship and her commitment to accomplish her foreign policy objectives through internationalism. As was so often the case, American action in Grenada quickly became enmeshed in the wider East-West conflict and geopolitical posturing, while Grenada itself diminished rapidly into the background.

In 1979, the British government faced a dilemma in its defense policy. Throughout the late 1970s, the Soviets had deployed their new SS-20 mobile ballistic missiles, an intermediate-range nuclear weapon, in Eastern Europe. NATO had a long-range nuclear deterrent in Western Europe via American Polaris missiles, but lacked a corresponding weapon system to the Soviets' SS-20 missiles. American cruise missiles appeared to offer a solution to this disparity. While some argued that cruise missiles offered no greater deterrent than already possessed in long-range missiles, aircraft equipped with nuclear missiles, and nuclear submarines, Thatcher thought otherwise. According to the Prime Minister, "NATO's strategy was based on having a range of conventional and nuclear weapons so that the USSR could never be confident of overcoming NATO at one level of weaponry without triggering a response at a higher level leading ultimately to full-scale nuclear war."⁵ Cruise missiles thus bridged the gap, in her view, between "the conventional and the strategic nuclear response."⁶ Cruise missiles represented half of the dual-track method of addressing the Soviet deployment of SS-20 missiles adopted in December 1979. Negotiations would proceed alongside the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) to ensure that NATO negotiated from a position of strength on the issue of INF.

⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 332.

⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 332.

Thatcher believed “that NATO would have to go ahead with the decision to deploy theatre nuclear weapons or else the alliance would lose its credibility and its purpose.”⁷ Thus, for Margaret Thatcher’s government, the proposed INF deployment by NATO in Western Europe represented a crucial part of Britain’s defense policy and its role as trans-Atlantic mediator.

The British government fully supported the United States’ leadership on the issue of modernizing NATO’s nuclear force in Europe to include INF. In turn, the United States wanted Britain to help convince hesitant countries such as the Netherlands and West Germany to place new American-operated cruise missiles in their countries as a part of INF. Throughout 1979 the British worked on this objective. As Margaret Thatcher explained in a letter to President Carter, “I myself have talked about the plans at length recently with Prime Minister Cossiga and Chancellor Schmidt; Francis Pym has had special discussions with his German, Dutch, and Italian counterparts in the last fortnight; and Peter Carrington has raised the matter recently with Van der Klaauw and Frydenlund.”⁸

Margaret Thatcher placed great importance on the modernization of NATO’s INF in Europe for both strategic and political reasons, which was apparent during the difficult days following the Grenada invasion. In the same letter to President Carter, Thatcher explained that “the December decisions are...of crucial importance. A set back could seriously damage the Alliance’s credibility and effectiveness.”⁹ Despite the Prime Minister’s apprehension, the decision to deploy 572 American cruise missiles in Western Europe received approval from NATO foreign ministers on 12 December 1979. The scheduled deployment year for NATO’s INF was 1983. The United States government immediately offered its thanks to Margaret Thatcher and

⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 243.

⁸ Letter from Margaret Thatcher to Jimmy Carter, 9 November 1979. *Margaret Thatcher Foundation* (MTF hereafter), docid=119035. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/119035>. (Accessed 2 November 2013).

⁹ Letter from Margaret Thatcher to Jimmy Carter, 9 November 1979. MTF, docid=119035. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/119035>. (Accessed 2 November 2013).

the British government for their role in accomplishing the modernization agreement. In a meeting between the Prime Minister and members of the United States' Congress on 17 December, Senator Frank Church (D-ID), the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, acknowledged that the United States had been preoccupied by the Iranian hostage crisis and had leaned heavily on Britain for support in securing European agreement for nuclear modernization.¹⁰ Other congressmen thanked the Prime Minister for her efforts to secure the release of the American hostages in Iran. The United States' government clearly recognized the important role Britain played in supporting the United States' objectives in Europe. Margaret Thatcher hoped this recognition would lead to a corresponding effort on the United States' part to provide Britain with a strong position from which to negotiate with its European counterparts. Grenada caused the Prime Minister enormous dissatisfaction in this regard.

In the immediate run-up to the Grenada crisis, Britain's government faced the daunting task of successfully deploying NATO's INF in the United Kingdom and also ensuring that its European counterparts followed through with the 1979 agreement. The British recognized the benefits that successfully deploying INF would bring Britain as well as the potential problems that would arise if the 1979 agreement were abandoned. Thatcher stated that "if it [INF deployment] went ahead as planned, the Soviet Union would suffer a real defeat; if it was abandoned in response to the Soviet sponsored 'peace offensive,' there was a real danger of a decoupling of Europe and America."¹¹ The government understood that public opinion had to be carefully cultivated in order to ensure an orderly placement of United States' cruise missiles at Greenham Common in the United Kingdom. Defense Secretary John Nott outlined the problems and opportunities that the government faced in deploying cruise missiles in a document prepared

¹⁰ Record of a meeting between Margaret Thatcher and members of the US Congress, 17 December 1979. MTF, docid=112139. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/112139>. (Accessed 3 November 2013).

¹¹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 173.

on 20 October 1982. He stated that “there is...an unease about NATO’s nuclear strategy generally and a feeling that the Alliance places too much reliance on nuclear weapons, is unwilling to contemplate anything other than a growing nuclear stockpile, and attaches too little importance to disarmament.”¹² He believed that the positions and statements made by the Reagan administration reinforced this attitude. Nott also highlighted the more negative opinions the British public felt towards cruise missiles as opposed to American aircraft. Many Britons worried that United States’ missiles were more uncontrollable than United States’ aircraft, and were therefore a greater threat to the United Kingdom.

Nott offered several suggestions to alleviate public fears and quell potential opposition. While cost prohibited the purchase of the cruise system from the United States, efforts could be made to highlight British participation in guarding and transporting the missiles, or the British government could reconsider the dual-key option for INF deployment, which would require two separate launch codes from the British and the Americans in order to launch a missile. Overall, Nott encouraged the government to take more initiative on NATO’s arms control discussions with the Soviets, and make efforts to avoid being perceived as “the creature of the Americans.”¹³ The ultimate danger of losing the public’s support on cruise, Nott argued, was the potential loss of Britain’s independent nuclear deterrent due to public mistrust of both nuclear weapons and the American government, which provided the systems necessary to deliver nuclear weapons. Additionally, to the British, the lack of “an independent nuclear deterrent, even if it was only an off-the-shelf version, meant accepting second-class status.”¹⁴ No elected British government was prepared to accept “second-class” status.

¹² John Nott minute to Margaret Thatcher, 20 October 1982, p. 1: PREM 19/979. The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA hereafter).

¹³ John Nott minute to Margaret Thatcher, 20 October 1982, p. 3: PREM 19/979. TNA.

¹⁴ Howard Temperley, *Britain and America since Independence* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 186.

The nuclear deterrent represented an important aspect of Britain's relationship with Europe as well, as evidenced by Britain's efforts in December 1979 to ensure European approval of INF deployment. The widespread placement of nuclear weapons in countries such as the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands revealed a united front against any potential Soviet encroachment, and also lessened the risk of a potential first strike against the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom also viewed its potential leadership role in Europe as a sustaining factor in the Anglo-American relationship, despite the government's difficulty in achieving any leadership role in Europe during the early 1980s. The United States believed that Britain could encourage the rest of Europe to follow the United States' leadership in NATO. In a letter to Margaret Thatcher on 3 November 1982, Foreign Secretary Francis Pym highlighted this understanding between the United States and Britain as it pertained to INF. Pym feared that public outcry and domestic political pressure in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands would complicate the INF deployment the following year. He contended that "the Americans look to us for the lead that will encourage the others to overcome their own political difficulties."¹⁵ Thatcher also contended that it was "Britain's task to put the American case [for INF] in Europe since we shared their analysis but tended to put it in less ideological language."¹⁶ In addition to "exaggerated American rhetoric," Thatcher believed that "the perennial nervousness of European opinion threatened to undermine the good transatlantic relationship."¹⁷ Thus, Margaret Thatcher clearly viewed her role as an intermediary between European timidity and American bellicosity, despite the doubts held by other European governments concerning Britain's commitment to Europe.

¹⁵ Francis Pym letter to Margaret Thatcher, 3 November 1982, p. 2: PREM 19/979. TNA.

¹⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 171.

¹⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 171.

The British government's ability to ensure the British and European deployments of the nuclear deterrent in 1983 relied in turn on America maintaining a positive reputation in international affairs. As Thatcher stated, the deployment of cruise missiles "depended to a large degree on demonstrating that the United States could indeed be relied upon as a trustworthy ally."¹⁸ The pipeline embargo set a tone of anti-American opinion that only increased following the invasion of Grenada in October 1983. President Reagan's decision to halt the sale of all American-made pipeline materials to the Soviet Union in December 1981 had worried his European allies, who hoped to gain an affordable fuel source via the proposed Soviet natural gas pipeline. When Reagan extended his embargo to American companies' foreign subsidiaries in Europe, he exasperated his allies, including Margaret Thatcher. Not only had the United States interfered in its allies' independent economic decision making, it also had neglected to understand the financial and diplomatic impact its actions would have on its closest allies. While the United States viewed economic cooperation between NATO countries and the USSR as detrimental in times of intense East-West confrontation, the British viewed non-military trade as "a way of easing international tension."¹⁹ Additionally, the British "felt that the US, so comparatively self-sufficient and nondependent on trade, did not appreciate Britain's needs."²⁰

Thatcher recognized that Reagan was focused completely on defeating the Soviet Union, despite the cost that victory might impose on his allies. While Thatcher supported the effort to vanquish the Soviet Union, she realized that continued unilateral action on the part of the Americans could break up the Western Alliance as its member states grew fearful of aggressive United States' leadership. Margaret Thatcher's internationalist perspective and her greater understanding of European alliance building (due to both failures and successes in this regard)

¹⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 326.

¹⁹ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 68.

²⁰ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 68.

allowed her to better gauge the effects unilateral American action would have on the Western Alliance. Thatcher knew that if the United States lost its allies' trust, the planned deployment of NATO's INF would fail. No European country would base United States' operated cruise missiles within its borders if that country doubted the stability of the 'finger on the trigger.'

As a result, the issue that caused the most apprehension in the British government in the run-up to the INF's deployment concerned the public perception of Britain's control of the cruise missiles. The foundation of the Anglo-American nuclear understanding was the Murphy-Dean Agreement of 1958, which established the guidelines of consultation between the United States' President and the British Prime Minister "to respond to a Soviet attack by committing nuclear retaliatory forces to the attack from the United Kingdom."²¹ The Murphy-Dean Agreement determined that the decision to use nuclear weapons operated by the United States and based in the United Kingdom would "be a matter for joint decision by the two governments in light of the circumstances at the time."²² More specifically, "the 'joint decision' required by the basic understanding between both governments would be taken by the President and the Prime Minister, who would speak personally with each other."²³ However, as Secretary of the Cabinet Robert Armstrong reminded the Prime Minister in a letter on 11 November 1982, in a crisis situation the United Kingdom had "no physical control" of the American-operated missiles.²⁴ Therefore, an extraordinary level of trust had to exist between the two governments in order to maintain the Murphy-Dean Agreement, and to convince the British public that consultation would be made prior to a United Kingdom-based nuclear strike.

²¹ Stephen Twigge and Len Scott, *Planning Armageddon: Britain, the United States and the Command of Western Nuclear Forces 1945-1964* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 326.

²² Twigge and Scott, *Planning Armageddon*, 326.

²³ Twigge and Scott, *Planning Armageddon*, 327.

²⁴ Robert Armstrong letter to Margaret Thatcher, 11 November 1982, p. 3: PREM 19/979. TNA

In order to assuage public fears that consultation alone was not strong enough to ensure America's respect for British nuclear sovereignty, the Cabinet considered several ideas to strengthen the government's control over the decision to launch a nuclear strike. The concept of a dual-key system had long provided an attractive solution to the problem of consultation. Previously, at the Bermuda talks of 1957 between President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, the United States had agreed to station Thor missiles in the United Kingdom with a dual-control launch mechanism. In his address to the Commons on 1 April 1957, MacMillan addressed the issue of sovereignty and emphasized Britain's final say on any decision to launch Thor missiles from British territory. He stated that:

They [Thor missiles] will be provided under an agreement the full details of which have still to be negotiated, but they will be the property of Her Majesty's Government, manned by British troops who will receive their prior training from American experts. The rockets cannot be fired by any except the British personnel, but the warhead will be in the control of the United States—which is the law of the United States—and to that extent the Americans have a negative control; but it is absolutely untrue to say that the President and not the British Government will decide when these missiles will be launched and at whom.²⁵

MacMillan understood that many in Britain doubted the reliability of consultation alone in ensuring British sovereignty over missiles based in the United Kingdom. MacMillan's use of dual-control thus provided a precedent for both Members of Parliament (MPs) and the public at large who believed that cruise missiles should also be subject to a dual-control system so as not to compromise British sovereignty.

The issue of dual control for cruise missiles received full attention in a paper prepared for Margaret Thatcher by Robert Armstrong. He judged that in order “to gain an absolute physical veto on the release of weapons, it would be necessary to re-engineer and reprogramme the launch control system so that release of the weapon could only be effected once two separate ‘codes’

²⁵ Harold MacMillan, HC Deb 01 April 1957 vol 568 cc37-170, *Hansard*.

(one authorized by the US President, one by the Prime Minister) had been entered.”²⁶ However, this solution would incur a huge financial cost to the nation. Armstrong doubted the United States would fully fund and build the cruise missile systems and then allow the United Kingdom’s government to man the system alongside them. Armstrong believed the United States’ government would require the British government to fully man and fund the system if Britain demanded a physical dual-key mechanism. Armstrong estimated the cost over ten years at one billion pounds sterling.²⁷

In addition to the financial cost, demanding a dual-key control mechanism for the cruise missiles could potentially alienate the United States’ government, and put the deployment of INF in Europe at risk. The new Defense Secretary Michael Heseltine described the implications that calling for dual key would have on the Anglo-American relationship. He said that “any change now would be interpreted as reflecting a lack of trust on our part in the Americans with implications for Alliance credibility as a whole.”²⁸ Francis Pym reiterated that “reopening the control issue...could only be interpreted publicly as a lack of confidence in the good faith and judgement of the US administration in time of crisis.”²⁹ Pym believed that if the British government, as America’s principal nuclear ally, called for greater control over United States-owned and operated weapons, the deployment of NATO’s INF would be greatly complicated, arousing the ire of the United States’ government and endangering Britain’s foreign policy objectives. In order to achieve its goals of countering the build-up of Soviet INF with a matched deployment of NATO’s INF, the British government had to support the United States fully, despite private misgivings.

²⁶ Michael Heseltine note attached to minute to Margaret Thatcher, 25 January 1983, p. 4: PREM 19/979. TNA

²⁷ Michael Heseltine note attached to minute to Margaret Thatcher, 25 January 1983, p. 5: PREM 19/979. TNA.

²⁸ Michael Heseltine minute to Margaret Thatcher, 25 January 1983, p. 2: PREM 19/979. TNA.

²⁹ Francis Pym letter to Margaret Thatcher, 26 January 1983: PREM 19/979. TNA.

The danger dual control posed to European deployment originated in the Federal Republic of Germany, which had foresworn ever owning or operating nuclear weapons. Additionally, polls showed that stationing nuclear weapons operated by the Americans in West Germany was already unpopular. In 1981, public opinion surveys revealed that “40 percent of West Germans unconditionally opposed the stationing of United States missiles on their soil.”³⁰ With a spring election looming in West Germany, any hint of dual control over NATO’s INF in Europe could cause the West German government to delay the deployment of American cruise missiles, or lead to a complete rethinking of West German deployment.³¹ As the British Ambassador to the USSR Iain Sutherland pointed out, failure to carry through NATO’s planned deployment of INF, or even rumors of such an occurrence, could encourage the Soviet Union to halt the ongoing arms control talks in Geneva. He believed that the Soviets “may well still hope that, at some stage between now and December, Western public opinion will do their work for them and deliver into their hands decisions to cancel or at least restrict Western deployment of cruise and Pershing [missiles] which they would be unable to win at the negotiating table except” by placing their own nuclear deterrent on the table.³²

In fact, the Soviets did take a wait-and-see approach to the arms control negotiations as potential disagreements between Western European nations became apparent. As the United States’ Secretary of State George Shultz explained, the Soviet aim in deploying their SS-20s “was to undermine Western Europe’s confidence in us.”³³ Shultz believed that the Soviets sought to create an imbalance, seemingly saying that “we can hit the capitals of Europe from our soil, and we dare the United States to say that it would respond with a strategic nuclear strike, a

³⁰ Peter Schweizer, *Reagan’s War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 221.

³¹ Michael Heseltine minute to Margaret Thatcher, 25 January 1983, p. 4: PREM 19/979. TNA.

³² Ambassador Sutherland telegram to Foreign Office, 5 April 1983: PREM 19/979. TNA.

³³ George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner’s, 1993), 346.

nuclear exchange risking demolition of the United States itself.”³⁴ Thus, the Americans also recognized the danger to NATO and the Western Alliance if NATO failed to deploy INF. Shultz feared that the Europeans might decide that “if they could not look to America to ensure their security, perhaps they should accommodate the Soviet Union’s wishes.”³⁵ Clearly, the Soviets’ interests would be served by halting the deployment of INF.

The question of INF deployment became a central issue in both the British and West German elections in 1983. The Soviet Union funneled money into West German peace groups that supported the Social Democrat candidate Hans-Jochen Vogel, who promised to cancel INF deployment. The Soviet government continued to make grave pronouncements for the prospects of peace if the planned placement of INF occurred.³⁶ As a result of the political pressure in Western Europe and the United Kingdom, the British government refused to discuss the possibility of dual control outside of closed Cabinet sessions. Eventually the government decided that the costs and risks posed by adopting dual control far outweighed the benefits, and implemented the deployment of INF as previously planned.

The British government worked hard throughout 1982 and 1983 to ensure that the public’s opinion towards the Americans, and in particular President Reagan, remained high enough to ensure an orderly stationing of American cruise missiles in Britain and Western Europe. The issue of the Siberian pipeline had finally been negotiated satisfactorily, and the scheduled deployment of cruise missiles was just weeks away when the United States invaded Grenada.³⁷ The invasion shocked the British government. While the lack of consultation taken before invading a Commonwealth member rankled many Tory and Labour MPs, the political

³⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 346-347.

³⁵ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 347.

³⁶ Peter Schweizer, *Reagan’s War*, 224.

³⁷ The compromise reached on the Soviet pipeline allowed for a single pipeline instead of the planned double pipeline. Instead of contracts being cancelled, they were merely decreased.

timing of the invasion could not have been worse. Margaret Thatcher's party had just won an astounding victory in the 1983 General Election, but America's seemingly rash action in Grenada threatened to severely deplete Thatcher's political capital just months after the election. As the Parliamentary debates and Cabinet sessions following the Grenada crisis reveal, the issue of American credibility and cruise placement quickly became the focal point of the entire Grenada episode.

On 25 October, the day following the invasion, Denis Healey, Labour's newly christened shadow foreign secretary, responded to Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe's explanation of America's invasion with particular vitriol. He described the Americans as deceivers who had committed an "unpardonable humiliation of an ally."³⁸ He demanded that the British government publically condemn the United States' action. Other Labour MPs questioned the supposed closeness of the Anglo-American alliance and took lines similar to Healey's. Many Tories, on the other hand, questioned the government on its unwillingness to join the Americans in freeing the Grenadian people from their oppressors. Tory MP Peter Tapsell described the American action as "inevitable and desirable," and questioned why those "who are for ever blathering on about the dangers posed by Soviet imperialism" opposed American intervention in Grenada.³⁹ Tory MP Julian Amery brought the Commonwealth into the equation, asking why the British government had failed to support the nations of the Caribbean Commonwealth that had asked for assistance in removing the threat posed by an unstable Marxist Grenada. He believed the government would have shown true leadership and responsibility by inviting the Americans to lead the invasion of Grenada on behalf of the Caribbean Commonwealth.⁴⁰

³⁸ Denis Healey, HC Deb 25 October 1983, vol 47 cc143-53, *Hansard*.

³⁹ Peter Tapsell, HC Deb 25 October 1983, vol 47 cc143-53, *Hansard*.

⁴⁰ Julian Amery, HC Deb 25 October 1983, vol 47 cc143-53, *Hansard*.

As the week wore on, the government's reasoning for taking a middle position in response to the American invasion of Grenada became apparent. A denunciation of the United States by the British government would have strengthened the anti-cruise movement, while supporting the United States' action would have given tacit approval to the low level of consultation taken prior to the invasion, and open the government to condemnation from the British public and other European governments. Denis Healey quickly jumped to the attack on 26 October by questioning what the government knew about America's plans and when they knew those plans. He summed up his position by saying, "Either Her Majesty's Government were deceived by their major ally, or Her Majesty's Government were deceiving the House."⁴¹ Healey's criticisms quickly shifted from the government to the Prime Minister herself by stating that "the Prime Minister has made something of a cult of her special relationship with the American President at the expense of British interests" in the Commonwealth and Europe, and in so doing, Thatcher represented no more than "an obedient poodle to the American President."⁴² While such personal attacks were common and lacked the power to persuade, Healey's next line of attack presented a potential threat. Healey ended his speech with a direct call for action:

If events continue as now foreseen, the British Government must, at the very minimum, refuse to accept the deployment of American missiles on British soil unless Britain has the physical power to prevent the use of those missiles against her will. What has happened in Grenada must be a warning to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in that regard. We on this side of the House—and I believe many on the other side of the House—believe that America's action against Grenada was a catastrophic blunder and that the failure of Her Majesty's Government to prevent it was an unforgivable dereliction of duty. However, something at least may be gained from the experience of the past few days. This experience should warn America's allies of the danger of servility to a leadership from Washington which could be disastrous to the interests of the Western world. It should remind all of America's allies of the need to unite to shift American policy to the ways of co-operation and common sense.⁴³

⁴¹ Denis Healey, HC Deb 26 October 1983, vol 47 cc291-335, *Hansard*.

⁴² Denis Healey, HC Deb 26 October 1983, vol 47 cc291-335, *Hansard*.

⁴³ Denis Healey, HC Deb 26 October 1983, vol 47 cc291-335, *Hansard*.

On their own, Healey's remarks represented the same arguments used by Labour in their disastrous 1983 election campaign. However, his remarks this time mirrored public opinion as well. The impact of American action in Grenada on British public opinion was seen in poll changes throughout 1983. In January, the government faced an uphill struggle as a Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) poll reported that only thirty-six percent of the population supported stationing cruise missiles compared to fifty-four percent who opposed cruise deployment. The government successfully moved public opinion during the election campaign so that at the beginning of September 1983, forty-five percent of the population supported cruise deployment while forty-four percent of the population still opposed cruise placement. This hard-earned public relations victory quickly vanished following America's invasion of Grenada. On 1 November, a week after the invasion, the majority of the public once again opposed the deployment of American cruise missiles, with fifty percent of the population opposing and thirty-eight percent supporting the decision.⁴⁴

Healey's warning about "servility to a leadership from Washington" thus demonstrated the shifting perception of many European politicians who had begun "to see the United States as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution."⁴⁵ The Anglo-American alliance had long been the solution to Britain's foreign policy strategies and objectives, but Reagan's actions in Grenada and other Third World countries posed severe problems for the continuation of Anglo-American cooperation. While Reagan viewed his intervention in Grenadian politics as a victory in the East-West struggle and a defense of American interests, many in Thatcher's government

⁴⁴ "cruise missiles – trend," published November 1983. *Ipsos MORI*, <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3243/cruise-missiles-trend.aspx> (accessed 8 October 2013).

⁴⁵ Richard H. Ullman, *America, Britain, and the Soviet Threat in Historical and Present Perspective, The 'Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations Since 1945*, eds. William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 109.

worried his active foreign policy would “sour the possibilities for an accord with Moscow and exacerbate tensions that might otherwise be reduced.”⁴⁶

The British government viewed American action as rash and shortsighted. Shortly before the conflict began, Britain repeatedly warned the American government against intervening in Grenada’s affairs. While the government hedged its public criticism of America’s action, Cabinet sessions were filled with disappointment and incredulity at the low level of consultation the United States took prior to their decision. Most discussions focused on damage control. In a session on 27 October 1983, the Cabinet recognized that Grenada’s independent status precluded the need for the United States “to seek British advice, or to accept it if sought.”⁴⁷ Additionally, the Cabinet decided that public condemnation was inappropriate due to the close relationship between Britain and the United States. Thatcher insisted that “Britain’s friendship with the United States must on no account be jeopardized.”⁴⁸ The United States’ government had put the British government in a bind. The United States represented the lynchpin of Britain’s foreign policy and therefore could not be criticized publically, but a failure to adequately defend Britain’s position opened the government to further accusations of being “Reagan’s poodle.” Ultimately, as Thatcher noted in her memoirs, the British government was forced “to defend the United States’ reputation in the face of widespread condemnation.”⁴⁹

In a Cabinet meeting on 3 November, attention remained focused on why the United States failed to consult Britain on the invasion, and how Britain’s failure to support the United States’ action in Grenada was perceived by the United States’ administration. Foreign Secretary Howe explained that “the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Shultz, had expressed regret to

⁴⁶ Ullman, *America, Britain, and the Soviet Threat*, p. 114.

⁴⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, 27 October 1983, CAB 128/76/31. TNA.

⁴⁸ Cabinet Conclusions, 27 October 1983, CAB 128/76/31. TNA.

⁴⁹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 332.

him at the United States government's failure to consult the British government earlier about American plans to intervene in Grenada. The failure had been due largely to [the administration's] preoccupation with the terrorist attack on the United States force in Lebanon on 23 October."⁵⁰ James Prior, the Secretary for Northern Ireland, travelled to the United States following the invasion. He expressed his opinion that "the close relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom did not appear to have been seriously damaged by the difference of view between the two Governments over Grenada."⁵¹ However, some in the United States administration questioned Britain's unwillingness to support the United States' action in Grenada after the United States had supported Britain's action in the Falklands the previous year.

John Dumbrell argues that American and British perceptions of the Grenada affair were "deeply affected by the Falkland's conflict."⁵² The Americans believed that they were acting in their own self-interest by invading Grenada, preventing both the rise of a new Soviet-backed enemy in the Western hemisphere and a potential large-scale hostage crisis, and thus expected that "Britain was unlikely to protest any American activism in the Western hemisphere."⁵³ United States Secretary of State Shultz was annoyed by Thatcher's sense of outrage. He stated that "we had turned ourselves into pretzels for Mrs. Thatcher over the Falkland's crisis."⁵⁴ However, the two events were vastly different and were perceived as such by the Thatcher government. Argentina invaded sovereign British territory in the Falklands, while in Grenada, a Marxist coup overthrew a government founded by an earlier Marxist coup. The British, not

⁵⁰ Cabinet Conclusions, 3 November 1983, CAB 128/76/32. TNA. President Reagan actually decided to invade Grenada on 22 October, a day prior to the bombing of the United States Marines barrack in Lebanon. Consultation was limited due to fears regarding leaks on either the British or American side, not a preoccupation with events in Lebanon.

⁵¹ Cabinet Conclusions, 3 November 1983, CAB 128/76/32. TNA.

⁵² Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 117.

⁵³ Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 117.

⁵⁴ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 336.

overjoyed at the extent of the United States' cooperation during the Falklands War, continued to face diplomatic difficulties over America's relationship with Argentina.

In the aftermath of Grenada, the British government continued to support the United States' administration, but the United States seemed poised to offend British sentiments once again through its foreign policy with Argentina. Thatcher had instructed the British ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.) to abstain from voting on a resolution tabled by Guyana, which condemned the United States' action in Grenada. The government hoped that abstaining would encourage the United States' government "to abstain on the Argentine-sponsored resolution about the Falkland Islands, for which they were likely to vote in favor."⁵⁵ Also, the United States' government planned to resume arms sales to Argentina "despite the further adverse consequences this was bound to have for the U.S./U.K. relationship in the aftermath of Grenada."⁵⁶ The Cabinet concluded on 10 November that "an American decision to resume arms sales to Argentina would have a damaging effect on British opinion in the context of cruise missile deployment."⁵⁷ As hard as the British government was working to convince the British public that America could still be trusted, the United States seemed to ignore continuously the impact that its decisions were having on the British government.

The British government's exasperation with the United States' government was displayed during a meeting between Margaret Thatcher and Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam on 7 November. The Prime Minister pointed to Britain's decision to abstain from voting on the U.N. resolution condemning the United States' action in Grenada, and asked why the United States planned on voting with Argentina instead of with the United Kingdom in the U. N. General Assembly. Additionally, Thatcher predicted that the United States' armament of Argentina

⁵⁵ Cabinet Conclusions, 27 October 1983, CAB 128/76/31. TNA.

⁵⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, 3 November 1983, CAB 128/76/32. TNA.

⁵⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, 10 November 1983, CAB 128/76/33. TNA.

“would be seen as having one purpose—to build up the Argentine potential to fight the United Kingdom.”⁵⁸ If the United States armed the Argentines, Thatcher “would have to be vigorously critical—and the decision could have other repercussions on public opinion.” Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Howe reiterated that both the disagreements over Grenada and the United States’ Argentinean policy “tended to have implications for co-operation on defence and INF.”

Despite these grave pronouncements from Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Howe, Dam insisted that the United States’ government would support an Argentinean resolution in the General Assembly. The resolution expressed regret over Britain’s refusal to negotiate the issue of the Falkland’s sovereignty with the Argentine government and requested that negotiations be renewed.⁵⁹ Thatcher, recognizing her inability to change the United States’ policy concerning the resolution, attempted to win her second point by saying that of the two policy decisions, “the US supply of arms to Argentina would be infinitely more serious.”⁶⁰ Dam dismissed Thatcher’s fears by pointing out that the United States only planned on recertifying the Argentinean government to receive the United States’ arms. Additionally, Dam believed “that some relationship between the United States and the Argentine military was in the long term desirable for democracy in Argentina.”⁶¹ Howe, again understanding the inability of the British to dissuade American foreign policy, asked the Deputy Secretary of State to at least consider “that

⁵⁸ Record of conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Kenneth Dam, 7 November 1983, p. 12: PREM 19/1151. TNA.

⁵⁹ U.N. Resolution 38/12, 16 November 1983. *South Atlantic Council*.
<http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/SAC/UN/UN-LIST.HTM> (Accessed 3 April 2014).

⁶⁰ Record of conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Kenneth Dam, 7 November 1983, p. 13: PREM 19/1151. TNA.

⁶¹ Record of conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Kenneth Dam, 7 November 1983, p. 13: PREM 19/1151. TNA.

the further certification could be distanced from the Grenada events the better.”⁶² He realized that additional public disagreements between the United States and United Kingdom coming so quickly after the invasion would increase doubts about the British government’s close relationship with the United States, and the United States’ willingness to honor its pledge to consult the British government prior to a nuclear strike launched from the United Kingdom.

Thatcher also asked for consultation over what types of weapons the Americans proposed to sell to the Argentinean government. While Dam avoided agreeing to consultation over the arms negotiations, he reminded the Prime Minister that only the Presidential administration could approve an arms sale. This vague assurance failed to comfort Margaret Thatcher, who said “that following recent events we would have to be very sure that no administration decision had been taken.”⁶³ The meeting concluded without the British government significantly shifting the United States administration’s foreign policy direction to better match Britain’s desired foreign policy objectives.

During the British government’s deliberations on how to ensure a situation like Grenada would not rise again between Britain and the United States, pressure continued to mount within Parliament and the public to halt the deployment of cruise missiles. Prior to the Grenada crisis, several groups already opposed the placement of American missiles in the United Kingdom. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) worked with the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp movement to shift public opinion against the INF deployment. On 1 April 1983, the two groups joined together to form a 40,000-person strong human chain stretching from Greenham Common in Berkshire (the proposed cruise missile site) to the Royal Ordnance

⁶² Record of conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Kenneth Dam, 7 November 1983, p. 13: PREM 19/1151. TNA.

⁶³ Record of conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Kenneth Dam, 7 November 1983, p. 14: PREM 19/1151. TNA.

Factory in Burghfield. This demonstration represented the largest protest the CND ever held outside of London.⁶⁴ Following the American invasion of Grenada, the CND and Greenham women protestors increased their efforts to sway public opinion, ultimately to no avail.

Reporter Denis Hackett observed that many protestors worried about further unilateral American action. While Reagan had claimed that neither Britain nor the United States would act independently of the other on nuclear issues, the American invasion of Grenada cast doubt on his assertion.⁶⁵ Speaking in support of the protestors, Labour MP Anthony Wedgwood Benn stated “that Reagan will not consult Mrs. Thatcher before the cruise missiles are used.”⁶⁶ He believed that “there was now a genuine fear that Britain could be destroyed ‘as a by-product of an adventurous American policy which we oppose.’” Britain would be targeted by the Soviets “even if we opposed US policy” due to the presence of the United States’ cruise missiles.⁶⁷ On the weekend following America’s invasion of Grenada, hundreds of women protestors cut through the fence surrounding Greenham Common and dashed paint on the runway in an effort to keep American planes carrying cruise missiles from landing. Security increased at the air base following the incursions, and 187 women were arrested for cutting through the fence over the weekend of the 29-30 October. In London on the 31 October, several hundred protestors gathered in Trafalgar Square and “vented their anger at the imminent arrival of cruise missiles.”⁶⁸ This protest formed part of a last minute effort to dissuade Parliament from reaffirming the 1979 NATO decision to deploy the cruise missiles at Greenham Common.

On 31 October, the final debate on the stationing of cruise missiles was held in Parliament. The Secretary of State for Defence Michael Heseltine defended the government’s

⁶⁴ Nicholas Timmins, “Thousands of hands link in CND rally,” *The Times*, 2 Apr 1983, pg. 1.

⁶⁵ Denis Hackett, “Cruising into controversy,” *The Times*, 28 Oct 1983, pg. 7.

⁶⁶ “More Greenham arrests after second attack,” *The Times*, 31 Oct 1983, pg. 24.

⁶⁷ “More Greenham arrests after second attack,” *The Times*, 31 Oct 1983, pg. 24.

⁶⁸ Alan Hamilton and David Cross, “Greenham security is stepped up,” *The Times*, 1 Nov 1983, pg. 2.

position against opposition from both the Liberal and Labour party leaders. David Steel, leader of the Liberal party, introduced an amendment calling for dual control of the cruise missiles. After debate, the amendment gained little support, going down in defeat 360 to 22. The Labour party opposed the deployment of any cruise missiles in the United Kingdom, dual key or otherwise. Michael Heseltine argued that while the current government had approved the decision in 1979 to deploy American cruise missiles in the United Kingdom, “the evidence is overwhelming that the last Labour government was deeply involved in the discussions and accepted the need for that decision when six months after the 1979 general election we took it.”⁶⁹

Denis Healey responded that “after Grenada Britain could no longer be satisfied with the present arrangements.” Healey believed the danger posed by United States’ cruise missiles based in the United Kingdom had been seen “last week [as] the United States brushed the United Kingdom aside when the threat was vague and distant.” How could “the Prime Minister really believe the United States administration, certainly under this President, would take any notice when the threat was to thousands of American soldiers in Europe?” After all, the core of Reagan’s argument that the Grenada invasion had been legal was the danger posed to approximately 1,000 American medical students. Healey, for one, believed the United States would not hesitate to defend its troops from any perceived threat despite British objections. Ultimately, Healey’s objections failed to influence enough Conservative MPs to vote against their own leadership, and the reaffirmation of the 1979 NATO agreement passed 362 to 218.⁷⁰

On 2 November, Secretary of State for Defence Michael Heseltine warned potential demonstrators that any infiltrators who approached the missile bunkers within Greenham Common could be shot. Heseltine argued that the danger posed by terrorists using the

⁶⁹ “Dual key rejected: US trusts us so we should trust them,” *The Times*, 1 Nov 1983, pg. 4.

⁷⁰ “Dual key rejected: US trusts us so we should trust them,” *The Times*, 1 Nov 1983, pg. 4.

demonstrators as a cover could not be ignored, but this proclamation further heightened the intense rhetoric involved in the cruise deployment. The chairman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Joan Ruddock, said Heseltine's statement illustrated "the extreme lengths to which this Government is prepared to go to implement a policy which is clearly unpopular with the British people."⁷¹ The first cruise missiles began arriving in the United Kingdom on 14 November 1983. In response, Labour leader Neil Kinnock warned "the Prime Minister that the British people will not forgive her for allowing first-use nuclear weapons to be deployed in Britain, especially when the American Government which owns and controls those weapons has so recently and so obviously shown its contempt for the views of the British Government."⁷²

The British government successfully deployed American cruise missiles in November 1983 despite the difficulties posed by American action in Grenada. Thatcher's intense disagreement with Reagan over Grenada largely dealt with the invasion's timing. The Americans failed to consider the problems their action would cause for NATO's planned INF deployment, which was to take place within a month of their assault on Grenada. Thatcher's support of American military action in El Salvador and Nicaragua, examples of the United States' military intervention in independent countries facing internal strife, leads one to believe that her anger at America's invasion of Grenada would have been less severe if it had occurred at another time.

While any unilateral military action taken by the United States so close to INF's deployment would have caused problems for Thatcher's government, the invasion of a Commonwealth nation exacerbated the problem. The British government consistently reminded Parliament of Grenada's complete independence from the United Kingdom, but many MPs

⁷¹ Phillip Webster and Rodney Cowton, "cruise intruders could be shot, says Heseltine," *The Times*, 2 Nov 1983, pg. 1.

⁷² Julian Haviland and Rodney Cowton, "cruise arrives at Greenham," *The Times*, 15 Nov 1983, pg. 1.

believed that Britain still maintained some level of responsibility for upholding Grenada's independence and well being. Additionally, as the Parliamentary debates reveal, many MPs equated American action in Grenada with the proposed cruise deployment in the United Kingdom. These MPs and others thought that if the United States would not adequately consult the British government over its proposed plans for a Commonwealth country, how could it be trusted to consult the British government on cruise issues, especially if American interests varied with British interests? While making the correlation between Grenada and cruise was a stretch, it played well in the press and confirmed the reservations held by many British citizens concerning the placement of American-operated cruise missiles in the United Kingdom. The episode reveals that the British government's ability to shift America's foreign policy to match its own only existed on a situational basis, despite the British government's best efforts. If Britain's foreign policy strategy failed to match up to the United States' strategy, the British experienced a much more difficult time achieving their goals. The Grenada crisis thus represents an opportunity to study both Britain's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy separate from the United States, as well as the two countries' understanding of the Anglo-American alliance.

Political scientist Paul Sharp praised Margaret Thatcher for maintaining an independent foreign policy during her time as Prime Minister. He attributes this ability to Thatcher's "political nationalism and economic liberalism."⁷³ While some Labour MPs in Parliament believed that Thatcher represented no more than "Reagan's poodle," Sharp believes that "she identified the United States as the primary upholder of an international order which was good, from which Britain benefited greatly and which, hence, it had an obligation to help maintain."⁷⁴

⁷³ Sharp, *Thatcher's Diplomacy*, xvii.

⁷⁴ Sharp, *Thatcher's Diplomacy*, 78.

Through this framework, Thatcher's acceptance of repeated American slights did not reveal Britain's weakness or servitude, but a strategic understanding that Britain could only remain great if the United States remained great.

Thatcher's belief that a successful British foreign policy depended on a strong and active United States presence in foreign affairs is evident in her memoirs. She described the United States in 1979 as continuing to suffer from the 'Vietnam syndrome,' a "conviction that the United States was fortunately incapable of intervention abroad since such intervention would almost certainly be inimical to morality, the world's poor, or the revolutionary tides of history."⁷⁵ In Thatcher's view, this debilitating psychology produced a weak foreign policy and limited international presence that allowed the Soviets to invade Afghanistan, deploy new nuclear missiles in Eastern Europe, and build "its conventional forces to levels far in excess of NATO equivalents" without a strong American response other than the boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games.⁷⁶ Britain needed a strong American government to counter the Soviets in Europe, and to keep Western Europe united in NATO.

Thatcher believed that "nations must co-operate in defense of agreed international rules if they are either to resist great evils or to achieve great benefits." This internationalism must be based on strong individual nation-states "which are able to call upon the loyalty of their citizens to defend and enforce civilized rules of international conduct." Any international organization that tried to diminish the importance of the nation state would fail, as "very few people [would be] prepared to make genuine sacrifices for it."⁷⁷ The United States, unlike the Soviet Union,

⁷⁵ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 9. Thatcher's description of the Vietnam syndrome differed from the traditional American understanding of the syndrome. While Americans focused on American military weakness, Europeans like Thatcher understood the Vietnam syndrome in a moral framework, describing it as an inability to intervene in world affairs without causing more harm than good.

⁷⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 9.

⁷⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 11.

enabled the states of Western Europe to maintain distinct identities and foreign policies while still playing the part of their primary defender and benefactor.

However, the United States' foreign policy throughout 1982 and 1983 was a policy of dictation rather than real consultation and negotiations with its Western European allies, Britain in particular. Thatcher believed that American interference in European economies during the pipeline embargo and its invasion of Grenada in 1983 caused many in Europe and the United Kingdom to believe fully in her version of the 'Vietnam syndrome,' viewing any American diplomatic interference as unhelpful. Thatcher recognized the danger Reagan's actions posed to NATO's unity and continued existence. The United States risked looking overbearing and aggressive, usually traits assigned to the Soviet Union, on the world stage. Reagan, focused on defeating Communism around the world, could not pass up an opportunity to quickly end a Marxist regime in the Caribbean. For the American government, the long-term benefits to both the Grenadian people and the United States outweighed the offended sensibilities of the British. As one of two superpowers in the world, the United States could afford to offend its allies at times. Thatcher's experience as the leader of a "middle-ranking power" caused her to understand alliance diplomacy in a completely different context.

Secretary of State Shultz demonstrated the difference in British and American views of international diplomacy through his failure to understand why Thatcher opposed the United States' action in Grenada. He speculated that her rough session in the Commons, being labeled "Reagan's poodle," and her government's misstatements on the likelihood of an American invasion of Grenada had highly embarrassed her. Additionally, "she may also have had a special sensitivity about a former British colony 'going bad' and the Yanks having to go in there and

clean up the mess.”⁷⁸ While the British may have underestimated the impact the memory of the Iranian hostage crisis had on Reagan’s decision to invade Grenada, the Americans also misunderstood the impact their invasion of Grenada would have on British and European efforts to deploy INF. In his memoirs, Shultz later admits that “there was a real chance that demonstrations could break the will of allied governments and prevent deployment—or at least pressure NATO so severely as to undermine our resolve to stand up to the Soviets in the future.”⁷⁹ His inability to understand the increased likelihood of protests and efforts to stop the British government’s deployment of INF following America’s unilateral decision to invade Grenada further demonstrates the difference between how a superpower and a “middle-ranking power” understood alliance diplomacy during the Cold War.

United States Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick, certainly not an Anglophile, acknowledged America’s shortcomings in international diplomacy, specifically at the U.N., in a speech to the Heritage Foundation on 7 June 1982. She believed America’s failure to accomplish its policy goals at the U.N. was “a direct reflection of what has been a persisting United States ineptitude in international relations that has dogged us all our national life,” and “is especially manifest in our multilateral politics.”⁸⁰ While the United States often acted unilaterally or resorted to arm twisting in its foreign policy, the British constantly relied on the support of the United States’ government and Britain’s other allies in order to accomplish its goals. The British thrived in a multilateral diplomatic arena such as the U.N. or NATO, as noted by Ambassador Kirkpatrick’s description of their efforts during the Falkland’s crisis: “They have made the organization [U.N.] function in ways that are responsive to their interests and their

⁷⁸ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 340.

⁷⁹ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 373.

⁸⁰ Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, “The United States Role in the United Nations,” in *The Reagan Phenomenon: And Other Speeches on Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1983), 103.

policy goals, and the fact that they were able to do it means it can be done.”⁸¹ The United States, on the other hand, struggled to achieve its goals in such an environment.

The Grenada conflict thus reveals both Thatcher’s belief in the importance of a strong internationalism to accomplish Britain’s foreign policy goals, and the reason for this belief—Britain’s inability to accomplish its foreign policy objectives without international assistance. While the Americans and Soviets could act unilaterally on the world’s stage and remain largely unaffected by the resulting diplomatic backlash, the British relied on American assistance to provide its nuclear deterrent and European cooperation in deploying this deterrent. Unfortunately for the British, the conflict in Grenada caused both the Europeans and the British public to doubt America’s ability to act within the bounds of international law and to adequately consult with its allies on important issues. Any country unafraid to act boldly and unilaterally posed a threat to international stability.⁸²

American action in Grenada also represented an affront to Margaret Thatcher’s core understanding of how foreign relations and the Anglo-American alliance should function. Instead of the United States facilitating the deployment of INF in Europe, the Americans continued to hinder the deployment process through their unilateral and unpredictable decision making. Despite the headaches caused by American action in Grenada and elsewhere, the British successfully deployed American cruise missiles in the United Kingdom, and also encouraged its European allies to maintain their prior commitment to deploy cruise missiles. However, the situation could have been much different without the steady hand of a devout

⁸¹ Kirkpatrick, “The United States Role in the United Nations,” 103.

⁸² While many pointed to Reagan’s actions in Grenada as a sign of warmongering and saber rattling, the President also demonstrated a high level of restraint and control during the international uproar following the Soviet Union’s decision to shoot down a Korean passenger jet on 1 September 1983. One of the 269 passengers on board happened to be U.S. congressman Lawrence P. McDonald of Georgia. While some in the Reagan administration and the American public called for extreme action, such as the abandonment of INF negotiations in Geneva, Reagan refused to resort to drastic action.

internationalist like Thatcher bridging the gap between American belligerency and European doubt.

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