The statesmen in the first Theodore Roosevelt administration all wished for American hemispheric dominance, but they did not always agree upon the particulars. President Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge wished to treat other world powers like Germany, Russia, and England with an even cordiality. Secretary of State John Hay and naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan, however, wished to see an active understanding and friendship with England above all other nations as America expanded its global reach. This project uses case studies to conclude that there was an important tension between the “general” imperialists and the “Anglophilic” ones.

Much has been written on Teddy Roosevelt, and much has been written on the inauguration of America’s contemporary diplomacy in 1898. The general foreign policy of Roosevelt and Lodge is thoroughly documented and interpreted, and the Anglophilic tendencies of John Hay and Alfred Thayer Mahan are well known. Yet the tension between the Roosevelt-Lodge camp and the Hay-Mahan camp, and how it played out during the American navigation of world politics and within the American government, has not been treated as a subject of its own. Because this tension expressed itself in multiple diplomatic incidents, it was arguably the central disagreement among the Republican imperialists at the turn of the century.
This project’s argument is built through three main case studies. The first case is the U.S. debate of the Philippine acquisition, where Mahan attempted to influence Lodge in a direction that would have been a boon to English naval power in the Pacific. The second case is the 1903 Alaska-Canada boundary dispute, where Roosevelt wished to raise troops against British Canada but John Hay subversively raised an arbitrative counsel to resolve the issue. The third case is the Roosevelt administration’s approach to Asia, where Roosevelt and Lodge remained largely disengaged and Hay and Mahan attempted to fuse American and British policies.

Ample secondary literature exists on the relevant subjects for this project, but the novelty of the argument required a reappraisal of primary sources. John Hay’s papers at the Library of Congress, the letters of Theodore Roosevelt (18 vols.), the correspondence between Lodge and Roosevelt (2 vols.), and Mahan’s books and articles were all consulted.