In April 1965, when presenting his credentials at the White House the new British Ambassador, Patrick Dean, was not granted the customary exclusive audience. Instead Lyndon Johnson received him alongside the Ambassadors for Chile and Denmark. Johnson spent no time alone with Dean, yet that same day the journalists Scotty Reston and Alistair Cooke secured a three-hour interview with the President. It has been suggested that after this apparent snub the Ambassador made little further impression on the administration. Raj Roy, for example, has argued that Dean had very little ‘cachet’ in the White House, while the British Cabinet minister Tony Benn wrote that the relationship between Dean and the White House was ‘almost nonexistent in the latter part of LBJ’s presidency because Britain was deep in economic difficulties, our attitude to the Vietnam War had made us unpopular there… and generally speaking it was the final phase of the burial of the “special relationship”’. Dean’s role in Washington has been difficult for historians to investigate not least because, as one writer has noted, he ‘wrote no memoirs, gave few interviews and… left no private papers for others to consult. Because he did not have [a] temperamental personality… he did not provoke many recollections from former colleagues’. After looking at Dean’s background and his relationship with Johnson, this chapter focuses on the Ambassador’s involvement in two key areas: the diplomatic crisis in summer 1966 over the partial British dissociation from American policy in Vietnam; and the linked questions of British economic problems and defence cuts in the Middle and Far East (known as ‘East of Suez’).
Dean and Johnson

By most accounts Dean was pleasant and approachable but not especially outgoing or self-confident. Nonetheless, before he became Ambassador to Washington he had been Head of the Foreign Office’s German department, Minister at the embassy in Rome and held senior appointments in the Foreign Office 1952–60, including being Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). He was Britain’s Permanent Representative at the United Nations in 1960–64. When he left that post it was thought he would succeed Harold Caccia as Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office. However, the Wilson government may have been suspicious of Dean’s connections with the security services and his involvement in the Suez debacle of 1956, chose Paul Gore-Booth, who had expressed his disapproval of the operation at the time. Dean’s contribution in the Suez affair consisted, as Scott Lucas has pointed out, of ‘accompany[ying] Donald Logan, the Private Secretary to Selwyn Lloyd, to the second Sèvres meeting with French and Israeli officials on 24 October 1956’. Here, Britain, France and Israel conspired to attack Egypt. More generally, Dean’s role was:

[A]s an essential liaison. Sometimes he fulfilled his nominal duties as Superintending Under-Secretary of the Permanent Under-Secretary’s Department and Chairman of the JIC to link the Foreign Office, the military and MI6; sometimes official channels were bypassed as Dean passed ad hoc communications between Prime Minister Anthony Eden and the intelligence services.

During the crisis Dean was given a ‘double promotion from Assistant Under-Secretary to Deputy Under-Secretary. The meteoric rise owed less to Dean’s merits than it did to his sensitive position between the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office and MI6.’

It has been argued that Gore-Booth was ‘ideally qualified both by temperament and experience’ for the Washington Ambassadorship, whereas Dean, ‘with his quieter disposition’, would have excelled ‘as permanent head of the Foreign Office’. There may be some truth in this assessment, but at least outwardly Dean was suited to the Ambassadorship. While working at the UN he had learned first-hand about American politics and society, and he was certainly a fervent advocate of close Anglo-American relations. In October 1966 he commented that Britain’s connections with the United States were ‘something that neither we nor the Americans have created artificially but something organic arising from the facts of