

Background

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Preserving the Special Relationship: A Conservative Agenda for President Obama's State Visit to Great Britain

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Abstract: *The summit meeting in May between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron comes at an important moment in the Special Relationship between the United States and Great Britain. The two powers lead NATO, which has again proved that it is the only European and Atlantic institution capable of creating consensus and responding in a crisis. However, the political tensions and military failings exposed by the Libyan intervention reflect broader weaknesses in the Anglo-American alliance and in NATO as a whole. The President and the Prime Minister need to address these weaknesses forthrightly and not allow rhetoric about the Special Relationship to substitute for serious action to preserve it now and strengthen it for the future.*

During his state visit to the United Kingdom on May 24–26, President Barack Obama needs to reaffirm the vital importance of the Special Relationship. This affirmation should go beyond words and address the tensions in the Anglo-American alliance that have built up during the President's first two years in office. These tensions are the result of the fact that the United States has undervalued its key allies—including Britain—while Britain has done too little to ensure that it remains a sovereign and capable partner within NATO and to the United States.

The President, with Prime Minister David Cameron, should build on the ratification of the U.S.–U.K. Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty and the ongoing battlefield leadership of Britain and the United States in Afghanistan to place the Anglo-American alliance

Talking Points

- The Anglo-American Special Relationship rests not on sentiment, but on shared interests and values and a shared commitment to worldwide leadership.
- If the U.S. and Britain retreat from leadership, they will endanger those interests and values, and the Special Relationship will inevitably suffer.
- While the desire to lead matters most, the U.S. and Britain also need to restore order to their national finances so they will have the means to lead.
- As NATO's intervention in Libya, the war in Afghanistan, and Iran's nuclear program demonstrate, both countries face security challenges that they need to confront together with armed forces that are funded properly and sustainably.
- The Special Relationship is also bedeviled by a series of disagreements that ultimately reflect differing and incompatible priorities. These disagreements can be resolved if both sides place them in the context of the importance of the Anglo-American alliance.

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on an even closer footing by acknowledging the mistakes made by both partners. The President should take the opportunity to emphasize the importance the U.S. attaches to the NATO alliance, particularly to Britain's maintenance of effective armed forces. He should also recognize that, to be true to this alliance, the U.S. must side with the alliance's members and against the claims of authoritarians and tyrants around the world.

For his part, Prime Minister Cameron should remember that the Anglo-American alliance cannot survive unless its European members, Britain in particular, bear a proportionate share of the burden of providing for their own defense. It also depends on the willingness of British leaders to provide clear public leadership and to reject, calmly and clearly, politicized attacks on the United States, whether these attacks originate at home or through multilateral negotiations.

While the Special Relationship could not exist without a shared sense that Britain and the U.S. are similar kinds of polities at home, it is concerned most directly with foreign policy.

Together, the President and the Prime Minister should recommit their nations to victory in Afghanistan, to confronting the menace of Iran's illicit nuclear program, and to closer and more effective cooperation in the Middle East, particularly in Libya. They should also recognize that the foremost material danger to American and British leadership in the coming years and decades is the debt crisis, which threatens to deprive both nations of the means to play a preeminent role in the world. While congratulating the Prime Minister on his budgetary achievements to date, President Obama should recognize that Britain and especially the U.S. must do more to ensure their financial stability.

The Special Relationship

The Special Relationship is not based on sentiment or close personal relations between the American President and the British Prime Minister. The ties of sentiment do exist, and personal friendships, such as the one between Ronald Reagan and Mar-

garet Thatcher, are undeniably valuable; but the Anglo-American relationship exists fundamentally because the United States began as a British colony. The United States eventually rebelled against British rule, but it rebelled on the basis of principles that reflected the ideals of English Whigs and the Scottish Enlightenment—ideals that would not have spread widely in America if not for America's British beginning.

As these ideals rose to prominence in Britain in the 19th century and as the United States became a major power and moved on from the reflexive Anglophobia born of the Revolution, both nations found that they shared ideals and interests in the broader world. Thus, while the Special Relationship could not exist without a shared sense that Britain and the U.S. are similar kinds of polities at home, it is concerned most directly with foreign policy.

The Special Relationship dawned in the late 19th century, but it assumed its modern form during and immediately after the Second World War. It has had highs, exemplified by Winston Churchill's stout defense of Britain's kinship with America, and lows, such as the turmoil over Britain's operations against Egyptian dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser in the Suez Canal in 1956, but the persistent reality is that American and British governments find it both easier and more important to talk with each other than with anyone else.

The Special Relationship is not exclusive. The U.S. has other vital alliance commitments, such as its ties with Japan, that are largely separate from the Anglo-American relationship. Yet as important as the broader pattern of U.S. alliances is, Britain has a special place within it.

It is a mistake to believe that this special place rests fundamentally on the fact that Britain has long had the most capable of Europe's armed forces. Arguments that premise the Special Relationship on this fact are destructive and dangerous because they lead to the conclusion—naturally unpopular in Britain—that Britain's job is to fight wars on America's behalf. Britain has had capable armed forces for generations not because America wanted them to exist, but because Britain has worldwide interests and a wider sense of mission, which continental European states lack. The U.S. shares these world-

wide interests and has a similar idealistic impulse in its foreign policy because it was founded on universal values espoused by Britons—values that were adopted in their purest form in America.

The Special Relationship thus rests on three pillars.

- The U.S. and Britain must each desire and seek to play a leading role in the world;
- Both must retain the classically liberal values on which the U.S. was founded and which, while never completely dominant in Britain, have strongly influenced its politics, culture, and view of its role in the world; and
- The relations that both Britain and the U.S. have with other nations must be compatible with the continued existence of the Special Relationship.¹

Regrettably, all three pillars are under strain, and in some cases, the strain is serious. The U.S. should not forsake its leading positions internationally, if only because no other liberal capitalist power can take its place. Yet the recent U.S. emphasis on “soft power” and multilateralism betokens a retreat from leadership. In Britain, the ongoing reductions in defense spending have almost reached the point of no return and provide compelling evidence that the British system no longer prioritizes maintaining the ability to play a worldwide role, although it still evinces the rhetorical desire to do so.

Both countries have long since left the path of classical liberalism. In Britain, the government spends more than half of the national income, and entitlement spending threatens to devour the American budget. While the U.S. remains strongly committed to the rights enshrined in the Constitution, it has also run roughshod over the principles of federalism and limited government. In both countries, particularly in Britain, the left has largely abandoned the concept of national sovereignty, which is central to the liberal vision of the rule of the people. As a result, while the U.S. and Britain have played a central role in creating the international state sys-

The EU's goal is not simply to erode the sovereignty of its member states, but to deprive them of the ability and desire to play an independent and assertive role in the world.

tem, they increasingly fail to understand that the system rests on a foundation of sovereign nation-states and thus depends on a willingness to defend and advance the principle of sovereignty.

Finally, both the U.S. and Britain have other international commitments that are eating away at the foundations of the Special Relationship. The U.S. is increasingly prioritizing other parts of the world, particularly the Middle East and Far East, over Europe. This leads it to care less about the part of the world where Britain matters the most.

For Britain, the problem is more serious and can be stated in three words: the European Union. The EU's goal is not simply to erode the sovereignty of its member states, but to deprive them of the ability and desire to play an independent and assertive role in the world. That goal and the anti-Americanism that it breeds among Britain's liberal elite strike at the heart of the Anglo-American Special Relationship, which rests on the continued willingness of both nations to work together in a shared liberal tradition toward common ends in the world abroad.

The Foreign Policy of the Obama Administration

The foreign policy of the Obama Administration feeds into and exemplifies these disheartening trends because it has been dominated by three considerations.

First, unlike every other U.S. Administration since 1945, the Obama Administration does not regard Europe as the most important region in the world or Britain, the leading power in Europe, as America's most important ally. The continuing relative economic decline of Europe has diminished its

1. Ted R. Bromund, “The Past, Present, and Possible Futures of the Anglo-American Alliance,” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 1116, March 31, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/The-Past-Present-and-Possible-Futures-of-the-Anglo-American-Alliance>. See also Nile Gardiner, “A Conservative Vision for British Foreign Policy,” Heritage Foundation *Commentary*, January 8, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Commentary/2010/01/A-Conservative-Vision-for-British-Foreign-Policy>. First appeared in *The Wall Street Journal Europe*.

importance in the eyes of America and the rest of the world, a tendency that was encouraged over the past two decades by the tranquility of Europe—the Balkan wars aside—and the lack of open conflict in its vicinity. This quiet period, during which NATO devoted much debate to the prospect of out-of-area operations, is over. Virtually every one of Europe's neighbors is moving toward autocracy, increasingly dominated by political Islam, or in a state of submerged or open rebellion.

The serial slaps at Britain and its interests reflect the Administration's belief that America's commitment to its traditional allies—Britain foremost among them—is an obstacle to improving relations with the world's most troublesome and dangerous regimes.

Ironically, even as traditional security concerns return to Europe, the current Administration views Europe as—at best—no more than the first among equals in the range of American concerns. Its delegation of the Libyan crisis to NATO—in reality to Britain and France—demonstrates that it is not interested in taking a leading role in NATO operations

on the European periphery. This decision reflects the Administration's conclusion that Europe can and should look after itself and that a lack of American leadership on the continent will not seriously damage America's security or economic interests. This is a strategic calculation that no previous postwar Administration would have made, and it signals the Administration's retreat from leadership and its lack of interest in Europe, as well as its desire to downplay the importance of American military strength.²

Second, the Administration has emphasized its desire to win better relations with regimes as widely scattered as Iran,³ Russia,⁴ Syria,⁵ Sudan,⁶ Argentina,⁷ and Cuba.⁸ Because these regimes are undemocratic at best and totalitarian at worst, and because none of them are friendly to the United States and its allies, this policy has led the Administration to downplay its traditional alliance relationships.

Precisely because of the long and close ties between Britain and the U.S., Britain is the U.S. ally that has suffered most regularly from this approach: The Administration has backed Argentine claims to the Falkland Islands,⁹ dismissed Britain as “nothing special,”¹⁰ ignored the U.S.–U.K. Mutual Defense Agreement when negotiating the

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2. Nile Gardiner, “Will David Cameron Clash with Barack Obama over Europe?” *Heritage Foundation Commentary*, April 1, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Commentary/2009/04/Will-David-Cameron-clash-with-Barack-Obama-over-Europe>. First published in *The Telegraph* (London).
 3. Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address,” The White House, January 21, 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/01/21/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address> (May 5, 2011).
 4. Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, “Press Conference by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia,” The White House, July 6, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Press-Conference-by-President-Obama-and-President-Medvedev-of-Russia (May 6, 2011).
 5. Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Interview with Bob Schieffer of CBS's Face the Nation,” U.S. Department of State, March 27, 2011, at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/03/159210.htm> (May 5, 2011).
 6. Stephanie McCrummen, “U.S. Envoy's Outreach to Sudan Is Criticized as Naive,” *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2009, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/28/AR2009092802336.html> (May 5, 2011).
 7. Nile Gardiner, “Hillary Clinton Slaps Britain in the Face over the Falklands,” *The Telegraph*, March 2, 2010, at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/nilegardiner/100028048/hillary-clinton-slaps-britain-in-the-face-over-the-falklands> (May 5, 2011).
 8. Mary Beth Sheridan, “Obama Loosens Travel Restrictions to Cuba,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2011, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/14/AR2011011406748.html> (May 5, 2011).
 9. Nile Gardiner, “Don't Cry for Argentina, Hillary. Clinton Is a Hypocrite over the Falklands,” *The Telegraph*, March 3, 2010, at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/nilegardiner/100028347/don%E2%80%99t-cry-for-argentina-hillary-clinton-is-a-hypocrite-over-the-falklands> (May 5, 2011).
 10. Tim Shipman, “Barack Obama ‘Too Tired’ to Give Proper Welcome to Gordon Brown,” *The Telegraph*, March 7, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/4953523/Barack-Obama-too-tired-to-give-proper-welcome-to-Gordon-Brown.html> (May 5, 2011).

New START Treaty,¹¹ and even described France as America's best ally.¹² Other allies, including Poland and Israel, have also been treated badly.¹³ The serial slaps at Britain and its interests reflect the Administration's belief that America's commitment to its traditional allies—Britain foremost among them—is an obstacle to improving relations with the world's most troublesome and dangerous regimes.

Parallel with this policy has been the Administration's desire to apologize for what it perceives as past American failings, to emphasize humility and "soft power," to ratify more treaties and place greater trust in international institutions, to downplay sovereignty, to play a more restrained role in the world, and to reject American exceptionalism.¹⁴ These policies are intended to make America more likeable, create a supposedly world-wide consensus, build a framework of law not backed by power, and thus—it is argued—isolate the bad actors and quiet world tensions, thereby reducing the need for American leadership.

This policy is based on a series of fallacies, the most dangerous of which is the solipsistic belief that the misbehavior of others stems from their righteous anger at the misdeeds of the United States. As one White House aide recently put it, the Administration's strategy is "leadership from behind."¹⁵ This is an oxymoron.

This policy of "leadership from behind" has no direct bearing on Anglo-American relations, but it

has a powerful indirect importance. Although the Special Relationship rests on common values and a shared history, it is fundamentally about foreign policy and the shared Anglo-American commitment to leadership in the world. If the United States retreats from that leadership, it devalues all of its alliance relationships, especially its relationship with the United Kingdom.

- As international institutions rise in the eyes of U.S. policymakers, bilateral and multilateral alliances decline.
- As foreign policy becomes more concerned with likeability, it loses sight of the dangers posed by the enemies of America's values and interests and ignores the importance of having and defending allies against these enemies.
- As sovereignty loses ground to unenforceable treaties, unaccountable nongovernmental organizations, and supranational institutions such as the EU, the nation-state and the institutions of diplomacy are devalued.

In the long run, nothing—not even America's and Britain's debt burdens—poses a greater threat to the Anglo-American relationship than the Administration's belief that the world of foreign affairs can be transformed in a way that allows both nations to retreat from leadership. Lurking behind all of these policies is the White House's sense that the U.S. is in permanent decline and that the President's job is to manage this decline so that the post-American

11. Ted R. Bromund, "Is New START Compatible with the U.S.–U.K. Mutual Defence Agreement?" *Heritage Foundation The Foundry*, February 9, 2011, at <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/02/09/is-new-start-compatible-with-the-u-s-%E2%80%93u-k-mutual-defence-agreement>.
12. Nile Gardiner, "Barack Obama Calls France America's Strongest Ally. The President Gives Britain the Boot Again," *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2011, at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/nilegardiner/100071241/barack-obama-france-is-americas-strongest-ally-the-president-gives-britain-the-boot-again> (May 5, 2011).
13. Editorial, "Obama's Missile Offense," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2009, p. A22, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204518504574418563346840666.html> (May 5, 2011), and Nile Gardiner, "Barack Obama's Top Ten Insults Against Israel," *The Telegraph*, April 26, 2010, at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/nilegardiner/100036389/barack-obama%E2%80%99s-top-ten-insults-against-israel> (May 5, 2011).
14. Barack Obama, "Obama's Press Conference in Strasbourg," *Real Clear Politics*, April 4, 2009, at http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/04/obamas_press_conference_in_str.html (May 5, 2011), and Kim R. Holmes and James Jay Carafano, "Defining the Obama Doctrine, Its Pitfalls, and How to Avoid Them," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* No. 2547, September 1, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/08/Defining-the-Obama-Doctrine-Its-Pitfalls-and-How-to-Avoid-Them>.
15. Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist," *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2011, at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza (May 5, 2011).

world and the transition to it are as agreeable for the United States as possible.¹⁶

Third, the Administration has demonstrated little sustained or serious interest in foreign affairs and apparently regards them as distractions—potentially politically dangerous distractions—from the more serious business of domestic affairs, in which it has large plans. The major exception to this rule has been the Administration's nuclear diplomacy, centered on the New START Treaty, which provided the Administration with an opportunity to emphasize its belief that, if the world is to enter the utopia of complete nuclear disarmament, the U.S. must make the first move.¹⁷ In Afghanistan, it has fought the war as assertively as the Bush Administration, using drones and demonstrating its willingness to operate inside Pakistani territory, but consistently—with the wonderful exception of the attack on Osama bin Laden's compound—in ways aimed at reducing the conflict's visibility.

Apart from its nuclear diplomacy and as evidenced by its approach in Afghanistan, the Obama Administration's guiding rule in foreign policy has been to respond to crises and do what it believes will remove the issue from the front pages as rapidly as possible. It has talked about taking international institutions seriously but has done nothing to pro-

mote U.N. reform, an essential part of any serious policy.¹⁸ President Obama has stated that “violations [of arms control and nonproliferation agreements] must be punished,” but the U.S. has continued to pursue the path of least resistance in confronting Iran's nuclear program.¹⁹ The Administration was so eager to side up to the Iranian regime that it almost fired a State Department staffer who sought to keep Twitter available to Iranian protesters after the stolen June 2009 election.²⁰

The Obama Administration's guiding rule in foreign policy has been to respond to crises and do what it believes will remove the issue from the front pages as rapidly as possible.

In Sudan, the Administration has papered over the genocide in Darfur to focus U.S. attention on southern Sudan.²¹ In Russia and Turkey, the Administration prefers banal generalities about the importance of engagement to speaking honestly about the increasing repression in both countries.²² In Egypt, it first stood by the Mubarak regime and then rapidly abandoned it, much as the Administration first stood on the sideline in Libya, then intervened only when the domestic costs of inaction seemed intoler-

16. *Ibid.*

17. Sally McNamara and Baker Spring, “President Obama Must Not Remove Nuclear Weapons from Europe,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2824, March 4, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/03/President-Obama-Must-Not-Remove-Nuclear-Weapons-from-Europe>.

18. Brett D. Schaefer, “A Short United Nations To-Do List for the New Congress,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3064, November 18, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/11/A-Short-United-Nations-To-Do-List-for-the-New-Congress>.

19. Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize,” The White House, December 10, 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize> (May 5, 2011), and Holmes and Carafano, “Defining the Obama Doctrine.”

20. Rick Richman, “Leading from Behind 2.0,” *Commentary*, April 27, 2011, at <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2011/04/27/leading-from-behind-2-0/> (May 5, 2011).

21. Nicholas Kristoff, “Obama Backs Down on Sudan,” *The New York Times*, April 21, 2010, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/22/opinion/22kristof.html> (May 13, 2011); Morgan Roach, “President Obama's Approach to Sudan: Gambling on Carrots, Not Sticks,” Heritage Foundation *The Foundry*, January 7, 2011, at <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/01/07/president-obama%E2%80%99s-approach-to-sudan-gambling-on-carrots-not-sticks/>; and BBC News, “Obama Offers Sudan ‘Incentives,’” October 19, 2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8314817.stm> (May 5, 2011).

22. Philip H. Gordon, “U.S.–Russia Relations Under the Obama Administration,” U.S. Department of State, June 16, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2010/143275.htm> (May 12, 2011), and Barack Obama, “Remarks of President Obama at Student Roundtable,” The White House, April 7, 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-student-roundtable-istanbul> (May 5, 2011).

able, and just as rapidly stepped aside in pursuit of “leadership from behind.” In Syria, it has opted to urge the Assad regime to reform instead of advocating its overthrow.²³

These policies demonstrate a desire not to be seen spending much time or attention on foreign policy and a parallel desire to do nothing that would upset any foreign applegarts and impose any costs on the U.S. or that would force the Administration to focus publicly on the world abroad. Because the Anglo–American alliance centers on foreign policy, the Administration’s focus on domestic affairs diminishes the value of all of America’s alliances, particularly the value of the Special Relationship.

There have been some encouraging developments in Anglo–American relations over the past two years. First, the U.S. has finally ratified the U.S.–U.K. Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty.²⁴ While this was an important step, the Administration’s support for ratification was more about its pursuit of export control reform—a worthy cause—than about the American alliance with Britain.

Second, after much hesitation and many mixed messages, the U.S. has committed to remaining in Afghanistan beyond the Administration’s nominal deadline of July 2011.²⁵ The Cameron government had taken a similar position earlier, and it would have been disastrous for Anglo–American relations—as well as for the region and the cause of defeating the Taliban and al-Qaeda—if the U.S. had left Britain out on a limb by beginning a precipitate retreat. Yet again, this decision owes more to strategic necessity and the potential domestic fallout of

abandoning the fight than to a U.S. sense that Britain and America are fighting this battle together.

Finally, in the midst of denigrating Britain, the Obama Administration secured for former Prime Minister Gordon Brown the honor of being the first foreign leader serving in office to address Congress. In the context of the President’s visit, the White House now speaks glowingly about the “special relationship.”²⁶ What has not happened is any sustained effort to make the realities of U.S. policy match this rhetoric.

In short, while both sides have been at fault, over the past two years, the U.S. has devoted less attention and paid less respect to its traditional alliance partners in general and to Britain in particular. This failing should end. It is not enough for the President and the Prime Minister to speak well of the Special Relationship. Vague rhetoric is too frequently offered as a substitute for achievement. Both leaders need to take specific actions to improve Anglo–American relations, both to address difficult issues and to anticipate problems that are likely to arise in the coming years.

The Foreign Policy of the Cameron Government

While in opposition, Cameron focused on “detoxifying” the Conservative “brand.”²⁷ Most of his efforts concentrated on domestic policy, although in a nation as heavily reliant on deficit spending as Britain was by 2010, the politics and realities of the budget inevitably impinge on foreign, defense, and security policy. In particular, for fundamentally

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23. Barack Obama, “A Statement by President Obama on Syria,” The White House, April 22, 2011, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/04/22/statement-president-obama-syria> (May 5, 2011).
24. Ted R. Bromund, “Senate Action on U.S.–U.K. Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty Represents Important Progress,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3029, September 28, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/09/Senate-Action-on-US-UK-Defense-Trade-Cooperation-Treaty-Represents-Important-Progress>.
25. Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of [the] Union Address,” The White House, January 25, 2011, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address> (May 5, 2011), and Sally McNamara, “NATO Summit 2010: Time to Turn Words into Action,” Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2498, December 10, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/12/NATO-Summit-2010-Time-to-Turn-Words-Into-Action>.
26. Embassy of the United States London, “President Obama to Visit UK,” February 17, 2011, at <http://london.usembassy.gov/obama164.html> (May 5, 2011).
27. Robin Harris, “Britain’s Coalition Government: A Preliminary Verdict,” Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 87, January 10, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/01/Britains-Coalition-Government-A-Preliminary-Verdict>.

electoral reasons, Cameron committed to increasing spending on foreign aid and to finding additional funding for the National Health Service, an unwise set of priorities that led ineluctably to defense cuts.

In other realms, Cameron's policy priorities were similarly dictated by domestic considerations, which led him to take centrist positions on immigration, human rights, and European issues. His overriding priority was to prevent his party from being labeled as extremist in any way, to isolate the Conservative right, and, if necessary, to pave the way for a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. When he could speak without offending these priorities, as in the case of Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008, Cameron was forthright in defending Western interests and universal values.

However, when an issue threatened to associate him with President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, or "neo-conservatism," he backed off. To his credit, he did commit a future Conservative government to continuing the war in Afghanistan, but he coupled this with crowd-pleasing but damaging and inaccurate swipes at the Special Relationship, including a much-quoted address on September 11, 2006, in which he said that he favored "solid and not slavish" relations with the U.S. and described U.S. policy as consisting of "easy soundbites" that were "unrealistic and simplistic" and lacking in "humility and patience."²⁸ The resulting impression was of a leader who described himself as a "liberal conservative," but who was primarily interested in foreign policy because, like President Obama, he recognized that it could be politically dangerous.

In office, Prime Minister Cameron, due in part to the necessities of coalition government, has largely stuck to the centrist positions he took while in opposition. Realizing that Blair's government came to grief over foreign policy, in particular over Iraq, his primary aim has been to defuse these issues in a

way that does not provoke either the Liberal Democrats or the Tory right to rebellion. This approach has not been entirely successful. Since May 2010, the Tories have rebelled 15 times on the European issue alone, and many of the rebellions have been quite large. Altogether, 60 Conservative members of Parliament have voted against the party line on Europe.²⁹

On the other hand, the government's signature initiative, the intervention in Libya, has provoked almost no opposition in Parliament. This venture bears similarities to the Blair government's action in Kosovo in the late 1990s. Here too, Cameron occupies the center, but in this case a center that is both broad and fragile in that it rests on the shared assumptions that the British cause is moral and—much more dubiously—that success will be easy.

The Cameron government has tried hard to avoid taking offense at the Obama Administration's slaps at Britain, an approach made easier by the fact that Cameron's instincts in politics and foreign affairs have much in common with those of his American counterpart. However, the evident lack of American leadership in Libya and the strains this will place on the British forces and British policy may compel Cameron to recognize that the modest disengagement from the U.S. that he promoted while in opposition has undesirable consequences in the real world of British foreign policy.

The Specter of Debt

The single greatest danger to the Special Relationship is any belief that neither nation needs to lead in the world and, thus, that neither needs allies. Second only to this danger is the material risk posed by the government debt burdens in both Britain and the United States. These burdens matter for many reasons, but in the realm of foreign policy, four are salient.

28. Nile Gardiner, "David Cameron Strikes the Right Note on Afghanistan," *The Telegraph*, October 9, 2009, at <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/nilegardiner/100013047/david-cameron-strikes-the-right-note-on-afghanistan/> (May 12, 2011); George Jones, "Cameron Distances Tories from Bush," *The Telegraph*, September 12, 2006, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1528613/Cameron-distances-Tories-from-Bush.html> (May 12, 2011); and Tim Shipman, "Cameron Declares Himself a Liberal and a Tory," *Daily Mail*, May 17, 2010, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1278956/David-Cameron-claims-hes-Liberal-Conservative—adds-Labour-pair-team.html> (May 5, 2011).

29. Revolts.co.uk, "15, 15, 15," March 24, 2011, at <http://www.revolts.co.uk/> (May 5, 2011).

1. The rising cost of domestic entitlements and interest payments will quickly crowd out defense spending, and without an effective military, the U.S. cannot hope to protect itself and its allies or to play a leading diplomatic role in the world.
2. The size and number of entitlement programs reflects the preoccupation of all Western societies with domestic affairs and their lack of serious focus on foreign policy.
3. Relying on lenders to finance budget deficits runs the risk that lenders sooner or later will stop lending. The U.S. is not immune to the problems that have swamped Greece and Portugal.
4. Many on the left welcome the debt burden precisely because it provides a political and policy lever to encourage the U.S. to abandon its leadership role, a role that they blame for causing many of the world's problems. In other words, while budgetary problems are nominally separate from a reliance on soft power and leadership from behind, they are closely tied to American decline both ideologically and practically.

In 2010–2011, Great Britain's financial position was among the worst in the developed world. Public-sector net borrowing was 10.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and the debt ratio was set to rise to nearly 75 percent by 2014–2015.³⁰ The spending cuts introduced by the coalition government based on its Comprehensive Spending Review are intended to eliminate Britain's structural deficit by 2015. External authorities, such as the International Monetary Fund, have reacted largely favorably to this plan,³¹ but risks remain.

First, while higher inflation will help Britain pay down its debt, it will also increase its annual borrowing requirement.³²

Second, while Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne has taken some measures to promote growth, he has prioritized bringing the budget into cyclical balance. This policy promises to achieve balance, but at the cost of lower output.³³

Third, Britain's long-run outlook is still unfavorable. Like the U.S. and many European countries, its entitlement programs are barely affordable now. In 2010, the Bank for International Settlements projected that Britain's official public debt in 2050 would be 550 percent of GDP.³⁴

In Europe, politicians and citizens are beginning to acknowledge that the cost of cradle-to-grave security for one generation is penury for the next.

In summary, while the coalition government has made serious efforts to confront the short-term challenges, the long-term problem remains that the government has made too many promises to too many people.

In a sense, the U.S. is even less well-off because it has not even started to confront its short-term problems in a serious manner. By 2050, total U.S. public debt on the federal level will rise to 344 percent of GDP on current policies, and by 2049, entitlement spending will consume all tax revenue at its average historical level.³⁵ In Europe, politicians and citizens are beginning to acknowledge that the cost of cradle-to-grave security for one generation is penury

30. U.K. Office for Budget Responsibility, "Pre-Budget Forecast," June 2010, at http://budgetresponsibility.independent.gov.uk/wordpress/docs/pre_budget_forecast_140610.pdf (May 5, 2011).

31. International Monetary Fund, "United Kingdom: 2010 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report," *Country Report* No. 10/338, November 2010, at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr10338.pdf> (May 5, 2011).

32. Gemma Tetlow, "Public Finances: Weaker Outlook Reduces Room for Manoeuvre," Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2011, at http://www.ifs.org.uk/budgets/budget2011/budget2011_gt.pdf (May 12, 2011).

33. Helen Miller, "Business Taxes and 'The Plan for Growth,'" Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2011, at http://www.ifs.org.uk/budgets/budget2011/budget2011_hm.pdf (May 12, 2011).

34. Stephen G. Cecchetti, M. S. Mohanty, and Fabrizio Zampolli, "The Future of Public Debt: Prospects and Implications," Bank for International Settlements *Working Paper* No. 300, March 2010, at <http://www.bis.org/publ/work300.pdf?noframes=1> (May 5, 2011).

35. The Heritage Foundation, *2011 Budget Chart Book*, at <http://www.heritage.org/budgetchartbook>.

for the next.³⁶ America's leaders, by contrast, have not even made this modest beginning. Thus, while he has much more to do, Prime Minister Cameron is entitled to make the case to President Obama that both nations, especially the United States, must manifest financial discipline if they are to continue to play leading roles in the world.

The Sources of Anglo–American Tension

The broadest problem in the Special Relationship is that neither country has a confident sense of its role in the world and the importance of its leadership or a clear strategy for advancing that role and defending its interests. Without this sense of purpose, the Anglo–American alliance will persist, but only by relying on the slowly fading momentum of the past. However, both countries also bear a measure of responsibility for allowing particular issues and annoyances to build in the relationship, and both need to cooperate in addressing them.

Defense. In the fall of 2010, Britain concluded the Strategic Defense and Security Review (SDSR) in parallel with the Comprehensive Spending Review that was intended to restore order to its unbalanced public finances. These reviews have resulted in significant cuts in British defense spending, from 2.7 percent of GDP in 2010 to 2.0 percent in 2015. All of the services will feel these reductions, but the Army, which will lose 7,000 men and many of its tanks and artillery, will take the most damage.³⁷

Before the SDSR results were announced, U.S. officials expressed concern about the anticipated

While Britain has taken a leading role in the NATO operation, it has deployed only 12 ground attack aircraft, in part because it eliminated its aircraft carrier capability in March.

scale of the cuts.³⁸ Events in Libya make it clear that this concern was warranted. While Britain has taken a leading role in the NATO operation, it has deployed only 12 ground attack aircraft, in part because it eliminated its aircraft carrier capability in March.³⁹ Equally distressing is the state of British military doctrine, on which the SDSR was nominally based. This doctrine argues that all future wars will look like Afghanistan; therefore, many of Britain's conventional assets are no longer necessary. The war in Libya has exposed this doctrine as the excuse for cuts that it always was.⁴⁰

The government has also made a series of administrative changes to show that it is still taking national security seriously. In addition to the SDSR, it has published *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, Britain's third National Security Strategy (NSS).⁴¹ It has also set up a U.S.-style National Security Council and has pledged to place future defense reviews on a regular schedule instead of allowing them to be held at the convenience of the government. These measures mean only as much as the government cares to make of them. The British cabinet system did not need to be supplemented with an NSC to be

36. Edward Cody, "Europeans Shift Long-Held View That Social Benefits Are Untouchable," *The Washington Post*, April 24, 2011, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europeans-shift-long-held-view-that-social-benefits-are-untouchable/2011/02/09/AFLdYzdE_story.html (May 5, 2011).

37. Ted R. Bromund and Nile Gardiner, "Libya Mission Demonstrates That British Defense Cuts Must Be Reversed," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3231, April 19, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/04/Libya-Mission-Demonstrates-That-British-Defense-Cuts-Must-Be-Reversed>.

38. Ted R. Bromund, "Spending Cuts in British Defense Review: Less Than Expected, but Still Damaging," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3039, October 22, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/10/Spending-Cuts-in-British-Defense-Review-Less-Than-Expected-but-Still-Damaging>.

39. Alex Barker and James Blitz, "Cuts Questioned as More Jets Sent to Libya," *The Financial Times*, April 4, 2011, at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/85597d0a-5ee0-11e0-a2d7-00144feab49a,s01=1.html#axzz1KAMIqV2L> (May 5, 2011).

40. Bromund and Gardiner, "Libya Mission Demonstrates That British Defense Cuts Must Be Reversed."

41. *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, October 2010, at http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_191639.pdf (May 5, 2011).

effective, and regular defense reviews, like the U.S. Quadrennial Defense Reviews, may generate more bureaucratic heat than policy light.

Finally, while the new NSS is less incoherent than the previous two, it was conducted in parallel with the SDSR, which in turn was held “alongside the Spending Review with strong involvement of the Treasury,” as required by the coalition agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.⁴² In other words, the NSS and the SDSR were about funding, not strategy. For instance, it is notable that the SDSR defines Britain’s highest security priorities as counterterrorism, cybersecurity, natural hazards, and the need to prevent military crises. In other words, it emphasizes everything except actual military conflict, the most expensive of the possible contingencies.⁴³

Defense cuts all-round cannot produce collective security, especially when the U.S. is in serious danger of losing the core competencies in high-intensity conflict that Britain’s doctrine relies on the U.S. to provide.

Regrettably, the U.S. is in a poor position to express concerns about inadequate British defense spending because the Administration is also seeking major defense cuts.⁴⁴ The NATO allies are traveling a perilous road. While each member is cutting

defense spending, they together proclaim that they value the security the alliance provides. Yet defense cuts all-round cannot produce collective security, especially when the U.S. is in serious danger of losing the core competencies in high-intensity conflict that Britain’s doctrine relies on the U.S. to provide.⁴⁵

The President should make it clear to the Prime Minister that the inability of the European members of NATO to field adequate forces in Libya is an embarrassment and a strategic failure of the first order. The President should call on him to reverse the recent cuts. For his part, the Prime Minister should reiterate Britain’s commitment to NATO as the keystone of Britain’s security and remind the President that NATO cannot succeed without a militarily strong and politically committed United States.

While defense cuts would be extremely unwise, both countries have recently expressed serious interest in reforming their procurement systems to achieve efficiencies. The Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty between Britain and the U.S. is part of this effort.⁴⁶ Both leaders should welcome this achievement and commit to implementing the reforms contemplated by the treaty so that small and large businesses in both countries can compete in the procurement process.

Security Challenges. To address particular security challenges successfully, the U.S. and Brit-

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42. Amy Wilson, “Coalition Government: Defence Industry Warns Against Budget Cuts,” *The Daily Telegraph* (London), May 13, 2010, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/7716437/Coalition-Government-Defence-industry-warns-against-budget-cuts.html> (May 5, 2011).
43. *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, October 2010, at http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_191634.pdf (May 5, 2011).
44. Baker Spring, “The FY 2012 Defense Budget Proposal: Looking for Cuts in All the Wrong Places,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2541, April 5, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/04/The-FY-2012-Defense-Budget-Proposal-Looking-for-Cuts-in-All-the-Wrong-Places>.
45. Thomas J. Weiss, “Mostly Dead: Continuing the Discussion on the Reported Death of the Armor Corps,” *Small Wars Journal*, August 26, 2010, at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/511-Weiss.pdf> (May 5, 2011). See also Ted R. Bromund, “Ten Recommendations for the Next British Secretary of State for Defense,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2893, May 10, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/05/Ten-Recommendations-for-the-Next-British-Secretary-of-State-for-Defense>.
46. Bromund, “Senate Action on U.S.–U.K. Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty Represents Important Progress.” See also Baker Spring, “The Obama Administration’s Ambitious Export Control Reform Plan,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3019, September 20, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/09/The-Obama-Administrations-Ambitious-Export-Control-Reform-Plan>.

ain must share an underlying understanding of their fundamental foreign policy goal. That goal should be to promote and assist, through all the means at their disposal, the creation and the advance of a world order composed of sovereign and democratic nation-states that govern themselves effectively and are willing and able to cooperate internationally for mutual and general benefit. Both nations have pursued this goal since the end of the Second World War, and it remains the only goal that is compatible with both their security needs and their democratic ideals. The particular challenges that face the U.S. and Britain today need to be understood as challenges to the world order that they are seeking to build.

Libya. In Libya, Britain has taken the lead in a NATO operation to protect the Libyan people from the rogue regime of Muammar Qadhafi. In addition to exposing the failure of the British SDSR and the U.S.'s lack of leadership, this has revealed in both governments a disturbing focus on the short term and a failure to think strategically. Both governments have consistently been behind the pace of events in the Middle East and have focused narrowly on reacting to particular rebellions or crises instead of on setting a broad political and economic strategy for the region.⁴⁷

They have defined victory as removing Muammar Qadhafi from power, and failure to achieve this aim would be a devastating blow to the credibility of Britain, the U.S., and NATO.

In Libya, they entered into a U.N. process to gain legitimacy, only to find themselves entangled by their own misjudgment of Qadhafi's staying power and by the U.N.'s demand that they protect Libya's civilians without overthrowing Qadhafi, creating an army of "occupation," or arming the rebels. Now that they have committed to a war in Libya, they are obliged to win it. They have defined victory as

removing Muammar Qadhafi from power, and failure to achieve this aim would be a devastating blow to the credibility of Britain, the U.S., and NATO. Therefore, Cameron and Obama need to exercise the diplomatic and military leadership to achieve this. If the U.N. process impedes this, they must break out of that process.

Afghanistan. The U.S. and Britain need to show the same commitment in Afghanistan, where the U.S.-led surge and counterinsurgency strategy are beginning to show results in the ground campaign.⁴⁸ Here too, the U.S. and Britain are seeking to build effective state institutions while protecting themselves and their allies from the Islamist terrorists who seek to rebuild the Afghan bases where the attacks of September 11 were planned. Above all, the U.S. and Britain need time for their strategy to work in Afghanistan, and that can come only if political leaders in both countries make the case for the war to the public and treat the war as the serious conflict that it is in private.

Committing the armed forces to a conflict is the gravest action that the President or the Prime Minister can take. The Libyan intervention shows what can happen if war is not treated seriously. In Afghanistan, where failure would put nuclear-armed Pakistan at great risk, a lack of seriousness would be catastrophic. The glorious success of the U.S. operation that killed Osama bin Laden in May demonstrates the importance of a sustained national strategy that includes detainee and interrogation policy, effective intelligence gathering, and capable and widely based armed forces.

Iran. The third security challenge facing the U.S. and Britain is the looming threat of Iran. This threat cuts across all of the others because Iran is trying to use the Middle Eastern revolutions to win influence for its terrorist surrogates while building relationships inside Afghanistan and continuing its illicit nuclear program. President Obama's strategy of engaging with the Iranian regime has failed completely, as it was bound to do. The founding ideology

47. James Jay Carafano and James Phillips, "Aiding Libya More Than Arming Rebels," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3209, March 31, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/03/Aiding-Libya-More-Than-Arming-Rebels>.

48. Lisa Curtis and James Phillips, "Maintain Momentum in Afghanistan," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 3124, January 27, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/01/Maintain-Momentum-in-Afghanistan>.

of the Iranian regime is vehemently anti-American. The U.S. and its allies cannot rely on containment to deal with Iran if it continues its nuclear program, as it shows every intention of doing.⁴⁹

The U.S. needs to make it clear that all options—including the use of armed force—remain on the table. Britain and the U.S. need to work in Europe and globally to impose even tougher sanctions on Iran, and both countries should emphasize that Iran's record on human rights is no better than Qadhafi's. If Britain and NATO fail in Libya, Iran will conclude that it has nothing to fear from the West. The Middle East crises are linked in many ways, and the sooner the U.S. and Britain recognize this and act accordingly, the better it will be for both countries.

NATO. Finally, the U.S. and Britain need to address the issues embodied in the new NATO Strategic Concept that was adopted in November 2010.⁵⁰ President Obama was disappointed that NATO's Lisbon Summit failed to express enthusiasm for the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia, a failure that reflects broader European concerns that any reset of U.S.–Russia relations will come at the expense of Europe's security. New START was particularly damaging to Anglo–American relations because the U.S. agreed to reveal additional details about the British nuclear arsenal. Nor is it clear whether Britain has signed off on this agreement, as it must do, under the terms of the U.S.–U.K. Mutual Defense Agreement.⁵¹

Furthermore, the New START negotiations demonstrated that Russia still wishes to split NATO and, central to that goal, to weaken Anglo–American nuclear ties.⁵² The U.S.–U.K. Mutual Defense Agree-

ment will expire in 2014, and both countries need to make its renewal a priority. They have renewed it regularly since it was signed in 1958. Similarly, a fundamental U.S. policy must be to reject any treaty with Russia—or any other power—that would weaken the conventional or strategic ability of the U.S. to defend the European members of NATO.⁵³

New START was particularly damaging to Anglo–American relations because the U.S. agreed to reveal additional details about the British nuclear arsenal.

Europe. The Obama Administration has followed the practice of most U.S. Administrations by proclaiming its support for European integration, but this policy is not in the interests of the United States and should be abandoned. The U.S. has long hoped that a united Europe would produce peace and prosperity and would become a security pillar that would stand alongside the U.S. in European and world affairs. Not one of these hopes has been fulfilled. Europe is peaceful, but not thanks to the EU, which is a result of that peace, not its cause. Instead of promoting prosperity, European integration beyond the single market—especially the euro—has caused financial instability, as the collapse of Greece and Portugal has shown. Far from being a pillar of security, the EU is incapable of formulating a common foreign policy that departs from the lowest common denominator. Its public institutions are a source of anti-American agitation, and its foreign policy and security institutions aspire to become counterweights to the United States.⁵⁴

49. Ted R. Bromund and James Phillips, "Containing a Nuclear Iran: Difficult, Costly, and Dangerous," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2517, February 14, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/02/Containing-a-Nuclear-Iran-Difficult-Costly-and-Dangerous>.

50. Sally McNamara, "NATO Summit 2010: Time to Turn Words into Action," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2498, December 10, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/12/NATO-Summit-2010-Time-to-Turn-Words-Into-Action>.

51. Bromund, "Is New START Compatible with the U.S.–U.K. Mutual Defence Agreement?"

52. Ted R. Bromund, "New START and the Special Relationship: A Case to Answer," Heritage Foundation *The Foundry*, February 8, 2011, at <http://blog.heritage.org/?p=51868>.

53. Daniel Halper, "No Red Button for the Russkies," *The Weekly Standard*, April 15, 2011, at http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/no-red-button-ruskies_557466.html (May 5, 2011).

Most fundamentally, the EU is based on the belief that national sovereignty is a problem that must be reduced or eliminated. This assertion is fundamentally opposed to the American belief that sovereignty, founded in the democratic will of the people, is an essential feature of the international order. The EU's opposition to sovereignty goes hand in hand with its disdain for democracy. The fact that the Lisbon Treaty—the EU Constitution in disguise—was adopted by a process that denied the peoples of Europe almost any voice is proof enough that the EU is fundamentally undemocratic.

Britain cannot be a bridge between Europe and the U.S. if sentiment on the European end of the bridge is steadily drifting away from the U.S.

The EU Constitution, like the rest of the EU's institutions, is particularly unpopular in Britain. To the extent that the U.S. supports European integration, it interferes in domestic British politics in a way that fundamentally strains the Anglo-American alliance. Britain is an EU member, and as the EU advances, British participation in all other organizations and alliances must steadily become less meaningful. Britain cannot be a bridge between Europe and the U.S. if sentiment on the European end of the bridge is steadily drifting away from the U.S. The U.S. does itself, Britain, and the Atlantic alliance no service when it encourages that drift.

Extradition. The U.S.–U.K. Extradition Treaty is controversial in Britain because it is allegedly biased against Britain. While extradition from Britain is

too easy, this is not the treaty's fault, but the fault of the underlying British law, which the past Labour government adopted with the express intention of making extradition from Britain easier. The treaty is compatible with higher standards for extradition if Britain decides to adopt them. The treaty is unpopular in Britain in part because former Labour ministers have regularly badmouthed it. This is an irresponsible disservice to Anglo-American relations.⁵⁵

The treaty is currently under review in Britain by Sir Scott Baker, a senior judge. Prime Minister Cameron cannot comment publicly on the treaty before the review is concluded. Assuming the review finds that the treaty is not at fault, Obama should urge him to make a calm, clear statement of this fact. Both nations should then implement the treaty conscientiously while conducting bilateral discussions to review the handling of complex crimes committed over the Internet and to monitor best practices in extradition.⁵⁶

Immigration. The U.K. is engaged in a comprehensive reform of its immigration system. The main goals of this reform are to restore public confidence in a system that was out of control under the previous government, reduce net migration, make Britain more attractive to entrepreneurs and investors, and reduce the number of student visas given to bogus students.⁵⁷

However, because Britain cannot limit the free movement of EU citizens, the reductions will fall on those from outside the EU, including American students and businessmen. Net migration could remain stable at its current rate or even rise as EU migrants remain uncontrolled while immigration

54. Sally McNamara, "How President Obama's EU Policy Undercuts U.S. Interests," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2521, February 16, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/02/How-President-Obamas-EU-Policy-Undercuts-US-Interests>.

55. Ted R. Bromund, "The U.S.–U.K. Extradition Treaty: In the Interest of Both Nations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2546, August 30, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/08/The-US-UK-Extradition-Treaty-In-the-Interest-of-Both-Nations>.

56. Ted R. Bromund, "Tensions Ahead over U.S.–U.K. Extradition Treaty," Heritage Foundation *The Foundry*, April 11, 2011, at <http://blog.heritage.org/?p=56809>.

57. U.K. Border Agency, "Government 'Rolls Out the Red Carpet' for Entrepreneurs and Investors," March 16, 2011, at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2011/march/39-entrepreneurs-investors> (May 5, 2011). See also Christopher F. Schuetze, "Britain to Tighten Rules Governing Student Visas," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2011, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/28/world/europe/28iht-educBriefs28.html> (May 5, 2011).

from outside the EU falls. According to Britain's National Audit Office, the new system also appears to restrict the recruitment of skilled foreign workers, which will likely reduce Britain's economic competitiveness, particularly the competitiveness of the City of London's financial institutions.⁵⁸

In the long run, Britain's immigration reforms threaten to reduce the professional and personal ties between Britain and the United States.

These reforms are fundamentally a matter for British judgment, but the movement of Americans and Britons between their two nations for all reasons—including tourism, family visits, marriage, and employment—is a source of the strength in the Special Relationship. The current system will likely lead British firms to hire European workers, who are not controlled, at the expense of Americans and other foreigners who are controlled. This will also reduce the number of young Americans who can take internships in Britain. In the long run, Britain's immigration reforms threaten to reduce the professional and personal ties between Britain and the United States.

The President should remind the Prime Minister that, while the U.S. fully accepts Britain's right to take these measures, economics is not a zero-sum game. One additional American working in Britain does not necessarily mean unemployment for one more Briton. Furthermore, permitting legal and controlled migration between the U.S. and Britain is in the broader interests of both countries, not the

least because it tends to limit the extent to which Britain is pulled ever deeper into the EU.

Conventional Arms Treaties. The United Kingdom has been the leader in efforts to negotiate a treaty regulating international trade in conventional arms. This effort is profoundly misguided and will end up empowering dictator states while weakening democracies. British policy has done a disservice to the cause of serious arms control and the defense of Britain's allies.⁵⁹

In late 2009, the U.S. unwisely decided to join these treaty negotiations on the basis of consensus.⁶⁰ In other words, the U.S. insists that no treaty text can be adopted without the approval of all nations participating in the negotiations. The U.S. needs to insist that any resulting treaty must reflect the U.S.'s existing high standards on arms exports, and it must be the clear policy of the U.S. to abandon the negotiations rather than retreat from any of its red lines.

Furthermore, the U.S. should resist any effort to encourage it or other states to break away from the formal process to negotiate a treaty that is not based on consensus. Such breakaways have already produced extremely unsatisfactory conventions on land mines and cluster munitions.⁶¹ The U.S. needs to make it clear to Britain that the U.S. will not join any breakaway and will not sign or ratify any treaty that results from a breakaway. Finally, the U.S. should emphasize to Britain that it is incumbent on Britain to stick with the process that it has championed and that Britain should therefore not lead or join any breakaway itself.

58. U.K. National Audit Office, *Immigration: the Points Based System—Work Routes*, March 15, 2011, at http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1011/points_based_immigration.aspx (May 5, 2011).

59. Ted R. Bromund and Steven Groves, "The U.N.'s Arms Trade Treaty: A Dangerous Multilateral Mistake in the Making," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2309, August 21, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2009/08/The-UNs-Arms-Trade-Treaty-A-Dangerous-Multilateral-Mistake-in-the-Making>.

60. Ted R. Bromund, "The Obama Administration Makes the Wrong Call on the U.N.'s Arms Trade Treaty," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* 2653, October 15, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2009/10/The-Obama-Administration-Makes-the-Wrong-Call-on-the-UNs-Arms-Trade-Treaty>.

61. Steven Groves and Ted R. Bromund, "The Ottawa Mine Ban Convention: Unacceptable on Substance and Process," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2496, December 13, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/12/The-Ottawa-Mine-Ban-Convention-Unacceptable-on-Substance-and-Process>, and "The United States Should Not Join the Convention on Cluster Munitions," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2550, April 28, 2011, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/04/The-United-States-Should-Not-Join-the-Convention-on-Cluster-Munitions>.

What the U.S. and Britain Should Do

The state of Anglo–American relations is not good. The goal of both President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron should be to improve them. Repairing the Special Relationship will require recognizing the sources of Anglo–American friction and taking serious steps to address them. Making high-flown declarations of common purpose will not suffice. To the extent that the President’s state visit emphasizes public activity over private achievement, it will be a failure.

International Leadership. The first necessity for both leaders is to commit their nations to a policy of international leadership, conducted together in concert with their allies. Apologies are no substitute for the proud, reasoned declaration of faith in America’s principles or Britain’s history. The Administration should not attempt to build better relations with dictators at the expense of friends. Multilateral institutions are no better than their worst member, and a desire to downplay foreign affairs is incompatible with leadership.

- Accordingly, President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron should commit their nations to negotiating a timely renewal of the U.S.–U.K. Mutual Defense Agreement that is substantially in its current form.

Financial and Military Strength. The second necessity is for each nation to take measures to realize this policy of international leadership. Neither the U.S. nor Britain can play a leading international role if they are bankrupt or if they pay their bills by cutting their armed forces. Both nations need to recognize that their alliance relationships, economic future, and roles in the world rest on their financial and military strength. In both countries, entitlement spending is threatening this strength. They need to address and control this threat in a way that allows their economies to grow and thus fund affordable and reliable military forces.

- While Britain correctly recognizes the dangers of deficit spending, it needs to adopt a pro-growth economic strategy that emphasizes deregulation, lowers taxes, and reforms its pension system to place its finances on a sustainable footing.
- The U.S. still has the opportunity to avoid the worst of the problems that Britain must confront.

U.S. deficits are too large, but the government’s share of the economy is smaller than Britain’s. It should act now by following the same program of deregulation, lower taxes, and entitlement reform.

- Britain should commit to restoring defense spending to its 1996 level of 2.9 percent of GDP by the end of the next Parliament. It should couple this increase with a reexamination of its security and defense strategies that is not driven by budgetary concerns.
- The U.S. should correct the underfunding of its core military budget, ensure that funding for overseas contingencies is sufficient, and find savings in the defense budget that can be redirected to procurement.

Causes of Anglo–American Friction. The third necessity is for both leaders to address the particular causes of Anglo–American friction. Many of these causes, such as U.S. support for European integration, are long-standing, while others, such as the U.S.–U.K. Extradition Treaty, are less enduring. Most reflect a disturbing dynamic in Anglo–American relations.

The British left distrusts the United States because the U.S. fails to reflect so-called European values, while the U.S. left advances causes that irritate and annoy British conservatives, who profoundly distrust the European Union. Breaking this dynamic will not be easy because it reflects deep-seated misconceptions on both sides of the Atlantic. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon the President and the Prime Minister to do so. The alternative is to continue the current drift to the detriment of the Special Relationship and to British and American values and interests.

- The U.S. and Britain should express their exclusive commitment to NATO as the security alliance for Europe and declare their resolve to continue operations in Afghanistan, to isolate and pressure Iran, and to ensure that the Qadhafi regime is removed from power.
- The U.S. should stop supporting European integration and instead seek to deal with European states, particularly with Britain, on a bilateral basis.

- The U.S. and Britain should cooperate to implement the Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty and to ensure the smooth operation and promote public understanding of the U.S.–U.K. Extradition Treaty.
- While respecting Britain’s right to make its own laws, President Obama should express concern about the long-term and unintended damage that Britain’s immigration policies could cause to the Special Relationship.
- The President should press Prime Minister Cameron to state publicly that future conventional arms treaties need to be adopted on the basis of consensus on high and verifiable standards and that Britain will neither join nor lead a breakaway.

Conclusion

The Special Relationship between Britain and the United States is the oldest and strongest of America’s many alliances. It reflects their shared political history and language, their cultural and economic ties, and above all the fact that they have historically shared both an interest in world leadership and an understanding of the interests and values that they seek to advance through that leadership. The fact that the Special Relationship is now well into its second century of life testifies to the enduring belief on both sides of the Atlantic that the U.S. and Britain can have no better allies than each other.

While the U.S. values all of its alliance partners, it needs to place special weight on Britain for the simple reason that exceptionally close alliances are

exceptionally valuable and difficult to replace. The same is true of Britain, which ceded the role of the world’s leading democratic power to the United States in the middle of the 20th century and would certainly have suffered catastrophically if the U.S. had not stepped in to defend the democratic world order of nation-states in Britain’s stead.

However, just because the Special Relationship is deep and important does not mean it is immune from disruption. If the alliance between Britain and the U.S. is to remain special, its partners must treat each other specially and better than they do other states. Regrettably, the current pattern is the reverse. The U.S. takes Britain for granted and encourages other states and institutions to intrude on its interests and reduce its sovereignty, while Britain maintains a steady stream of criticism that fundamentally reflects the rise in Britain of a European worldview.

These trends are troubling. The U.S. cannot lead by giving greater priority to the concerns of its enemies than it does to its friends, while the criticism from Britain encourages the belief that the U.S. and Britain have nothing in common. The President and the Prime Minister have a vital obligation not simply to speak against these trends, but more importantly to pursue policies that clearly demonstrate the value that they place on the Special Relationship.

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