

LECTURE

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Britain and the U.S.: Two Peoples United by an Attachment to Self-Determination

The Honorable Jim DeMint

Abstract

The United Kingdom and the United States are a force for good in the world. Both countries are liberal democracies that believe in the rule of law and economic freedom. Sadly, however, many aspects of the Anglo-American Special Relationship have been thrown into question under the Obama Administration. This is especially the case over the issue of the Falkland Islands, where the Administration has repeatedly called for negotiations between the U.K. and Argentina over the status of the islands. The U.S. needs to demonstrate that it values its relationship with the U.K. and pursue policies that strengthen, not hinder, the Special Relationship. On both sides of the Atlantic, the U.S. and the U.K. are facing similar challenges. Both are stronger when they face these challenges together.

I would like to thank the Henry Jackson Society, not just for this event today, but for the very important work you do on transatlantic relations and security concerns. You stand up for freedom around the world, and I salute you for that.

I would like to say one word about the man after whom you're named. Scoop Jackson was the kind of Democrat I wish we had more of today. While I don't agree with every policy he supported, he understood the threat of Communism, the need for a strong NATO, and America's commitment to freedom.

When I was in the Senate, some of my critics used to call me Senator Tea Party. I know that may bring up some bad memories from the unpleasantness our two countries experienced 227 years ago, but we're well past that little misunderstanding. Let me

KEY POINTS

- The U.S. historically has had no closer friend than Great Britain. Both nations are liberal democracies that continue to share a fundamental interest in economic freedom and a belief in personal liberty.
- The United States, as a country founded on the principle of self-determination, should support the will of the Falkland Islanders to remain a British Overseas Territory.
- The U.S. has been far too supportive of integration measures implemented by the EU bureaucracy. U.S. policymakers should see Europe for what it is: a conglomeration of sovereign states, not as a United States of Europe with a single federal government.
- As the U.K. prepares to go to the polls to determine its future relationship with the EU, the Obama Administration should refrain from interfering in the domestic political debate.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/hl1232>

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reassure you: Most of what you've read in the press about the Tea Party isn't true, and the values of the modern Tea Party are applicable to both sides of the Atlantic. Most of you would probably be members if you lived in the U.S.

I've come here to talk about what unites our two societies. In addition to our common language that is mutually unintelligible, as you are experiencing today, we are united by our love for self-determination. We got this from you, actually. The desire to make our own decisions and determine our future unites our countries and all people who yearn for freedom around the world. Our sense of freedom in America comes from what you call "the Rights of Englishmen." They come from the Magna Carta and run through your Glorious Revolution and our Revolutionary War.

Here, with your permission, I am going to disagree, at least in part, with one of your greatest statesmen. Lord Palmerston said that nations don't have permanent friends, just permanent interests. I think we have both. Our two nations have a permanent friendship because we have a permanent attachment to self-determination and freedom.

It is from this perspective that I will speak to you today. I am here as a private citizen, no longer a member of the U.S. government, but as the president of a public policy organization—the most influential public policy organization in America, we like to think. I am here, above all, as a friend of Britain.

I will speak of three important areas where self-determination must be defended. The first is our Special Relationship between our two peoples, the second is the Falkland Islands, and the third is within Europe.

The Special Relationship

The Anglo-American Special Relationship must be at the heart of U.S. foreign policy—period, or full stop as you say here. The U.S. historically has had no closer friend than Great Britain.

It is good to know we have a friend in you, as it must comfort many of you to know you have a friend in us. We share our understanding of law and rights, and though your constitution is not written, our own version of common law derives many of its features from yours.

Both our nations are liberal democracies that have been willing to use force when necessary to protect their interest in a free and open economic

and political order. Today, the U.S. and Britain continue to cooperate closely in the realms of defense and intelligence. We continue to share a fundamental interest in economic freedom and a belief in personal liberty.

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We should never allow our governments to be far from one another on important matters. We have benefitted in the past century from important alliances that ignored party and ideology—Churchill and FDR, Thatcher and Reagan, Blair and Clinton, and then Blair and Bush. We have noticed, just as you have, that this close personal relationship is absent at the moment. We think both sides suffer when there's frost in the air between our governments.

Rest assured that The Heritage Foundation will always do everything within our power to advocate for this Special Relationship, for an understanding among our diplomats that Britain is an ally like no other.

For this very purpose, we at Heritage established in 2005 the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom. It is the only public policy center in the world entrusted with advancing the vision and ideals of Lady Thatcher and is dedicated to strengthening the Anglo-American Special Relationship. Lady Thatcher was a frequent visitor to Heritage, serving as our patron for several years. She firmly believed that her center, established through the support of the Thatcher Foundation, should be based in Washington. She saw American leadership as essential to the defense of the West and as the vital protector of liberty on the world stage.

The Falkland Islands

This brings me to my second point. Our Special Relationship and our support for self-determination make it imperative that we support the expressed desire of the Falkland Islanders to remain a British Overseas Territory.

The Islanders who live there and have a personal stake in the matter have spoken plainly and simply. In a referendum this year, over 99 percent voted to retain their British status. That's enough for me and ought to be enough for Washington.

It follows, therefore, that we cannot support Argentina's calls for negotiations and, even less, a U.N.-brokered settlement for the islands. The U.N. has no business in this. In fact, no one else does. The 3,000 Falkland Islanders have spoken. Nobody can negotiate their rights away. As a country founded on the idea of self-determination, the United States must support the Islanders.

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The Heritage Foundation has been the leading voice in Washington on this issue. We have done a great deal to raise awareness of this matter to policymakers on the Hill and media commentators inside and outside the Beltway. We will continue to forcefully advocate this policy, rest assured.

We have no quarrel with the Argentine people themselves. We like Argentines, and that's why my advice to their president would be to turn away from her tyrannical behavior and her failed socialist economic policies so her people can experience economic growth and greater freedom. In foreign policy, she has behaved like a bully towards the people of the Falklands, and history has shown that bullies never succeed. She is looking for a distraction from her failed domestic policies by agitating about the Falklands. This has not worked out well in the past. Better to solve problems at home.

The European Union

This brings me to my third and last point, the European Union.

Let me start by saying that it is not the job of any U.S. leader to lecture the British people on which way to vote if Prime Minister Cameron wins re-election and holds a national referendum on membership.

In fact, that's my entire message: It is indeed a good thing for Britons to express themselves on the matter and their government to listen to them. How tiresome it must be for you to hear time and again from our side of the Atlantic that the best thing for the U.K. to do is stay in the EU. Only the British people know what is best for them.

There are aspects of the EU that make an American who believes in states' rights and small government scratch his head. This idea of concentrating power in Brussels and into the hands of the unelected EU Commission is not a good one and runs counter to the principle of self-determination we love.

A people cannot cede governance to a foreign body and expect to retain their economic, political, and moral identity. Peace and prosperity are admirable goals, but they cannot be achieved with the shackles of a regulatory monoculture.

We believe that the United States should support sovereignty for individual European nations. Economically, the European Union is barely hanging on. Politically, it suffers from a democratic deficit. Nation-states are where politicians are held accountable, which is why they are self-contained democracies. In fact, in America, we support pushing more power down to the individual states and even towns and cities, localities—even to schools, fire departments, and police forces.

Freedom is a ground-up concept. The idea of sending more and more power to Brussels may sound good to the current U.S. Administration, but it strikes many Americans as odd. The American people are themselves growing tired of being told what to do by bureaucrats sitting in a capital hundreds of miles away.

This is why it's inexplicable that the U.S., under Administrations of both parties, has been far too supportive of integration measures implemented by the EU bureaucracy, measures which also go against America's national interest. U.S. policymakers should see Europe for what it is: a collection of sovereign states, which are the best vehicle for accountability and self-determination, not as a United States of Europe with a single federal government where power is unaccountable. As Margaret Thatcher concluded in her final book, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World*: "That such an unnecessary and irrational project as building a European superstate was ever embarked upon will seem in future years to be perhaps the greatest folly of the modern era."

For Americans who believe in the idea of direct elections and accountable politicians, along with the diffusion of power, the transparent and efficient use of taxpayer money, and states' rights, this idea of ceding sovereignty and concentrating it in a foreign capital comes as a shock. Particularly, some of the recent developments regarding the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy are worrisome for the U.S. and the future of NATO.

CSDP: Undermining Transatlantic Security Cooperation

Developments within the CSDP threaten to undermine transatlantic security cooperation between the U.S. and its European partners. Far from improving the military capabilities of European countries, the CSDP decouples the U.S. from European security and will ultimately weaken the NATO alliance. If this happens, the consequences will be serious: The U.S. will be pushed out of Europe on security matters, and NATO will become a second-tier priority for most European countries.

A Europe of independent nation-states would best advance U.S. interests in Europe, support a robust and enduring transatlantic alliance, and preserve democracy throughout Europe.

The EU as an institution can never be a serious defense actor, if for no other reason than the fact that its membership includes five neutral countries claiming legal or historical reasons for refusing to join military alliances. And with defense spending across Europe at an all-time low, each euro spent on the CSDP is one less that can be spent on NATO. This is why NATO, as the security alliance that has been the cornerstone of our security for the last 64 years, should continue to be the number one defense priority in Europe and the U.S.

Many of America's closest and oldest allies are in Europe, so I speak also to them. A politically centralized Europe is not in the interest of the United States or theirs. The American executive branch and Congress should not back "ever closer union" within the European Union, especially in the critical areas of foreign policy and defense integration.

A multinational Europe will be stronger, more prosperous, and more peaceful than a centralized European conglomerate.

A Europe of independent nation-states would best advance U.S. interests in Europe, support a robust and enduring transatlantic alliance, and preserve democracy throughout Europe. Washington should actively promote strong bilateral and multinational relationships with individual European capitals. This must include supporting the development of a comprehensive missile defense program in Europe and backing the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.

Conservatives in the United States support economic freedom in Europe. Free markets promote self-determination for individuals, businesses, and nations. This is why we believe it is a good idea to have a free-trade zone throughout Europe that dismantles trade barriers in Europe and, hopefully, one day between Europe and the U.S.

Unlike a single market, however, a single European currency is an inherently political project designed as a stepping-stone along a well-advertised path to centralize both political and economic decision making across the EU with the implicit intent to minimize democratic accountability. Political and monetary centralization between nations significantly reduces self-determination.

Also, on the ongoing European financial crisis, America's stance should be guided by the defense of national sovereignty and fiscal responsibility, opposition to bailouts of governments or financial institutions, and a commitment to advance economic freedom. We now know the euro is a failed experiment. We have known all along it was a dangerous experiment. The cause of freedom has nothing to gain by continuing the experiment by propping up the euro, which is increasingly likely to break apart. While this will prove painful for many of our allies, it is also a necessary step on the road to recovery. Without a doubt, Washington and especially the Federal Reserve should play no role in keeping the euro on life support.

Understanding Our National Interests

Our policies, in conclusion, must be based on a clear-eyed understanding of our national interests and the interests of our closest ally, Britain.

- First, we should not and cannot support calls for United Nations mediation over the Falkland

Islands. The Islanders should determine their own future.

- Second, we should resist an increasingly undemocratic concentration of power in Brussels that thwarts the wishes of independent nation-states and threatens the principles of national sovereignty.
- And third, we should work relentlessly to ensure that our Special Relationship is alive and well.

Towards that end, if you ever see fit to give me a bust of Winston Churchill, I will display it proudly

in my office at The Heritage Foundation. With his American mother and love of our country, he symbolized our Special Relationship. I promise I will put the bust near the window, where Sir Winston can stare down the shenanigans taking place in Congress. We already have a sizable statue of Lady Thatcher overlooking our boardroom, so if you give me a bust of Churchill, I promise I won't send it back.

—The Honorable Jim DeMint is President of The Heritage Foundation and a former member of the Senate of the United States. He delivered these remarks at a meeting hosted by the Henry Jackson Society in London on June 12, 2013.