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The U.S.-UK “Special Military Relationship”: Resetting the Partnership

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Although the “special relationship” between U.S. and British officials is a fixture of the international scene, recent events have raised concerns about the nature and strength of the partnership. This article explores the issues that animate the dialogue between Washington and London and describes insights gathered from a recent Anglo-American forum held in the United Kingdom. Both countries have shared interests in Afghanistan, Libya, and in the nuclear and intelligence fields more generally. Nevertheless, a changing geopolitical setting, especially increasing U.S. preoccupation with China and the declining British defense budget, suggests that sustaining the special relationship will become more difficult.

Introduction

For over half a century, U.S. and British officials have enjoyed a “special relationship,” a form of close military and diplomatic consultation and coordination that has come to be expected as a matter of course in Washington and London. Frequent attempts have been made to abolish the use of the term. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles banned the term in the State Department. Prime Minister Harold Wilson preferred the term “the close relationship” during the Vietnam War and Prime Minister Edward Heath used the phrase “the natural relationship” at a time when Britain was negotiating entry to the European Community and wished to play down its close ties to the United States.¹ More recently, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee recommended that the British government stop referring to relations with the United States as “special” because it conjured up images of subordination to Washington’s objectives.² In the early stages of the conflict in Libya in March 2011 there were reports in the British press of serious differences between Prime Minister Cameron and President Barack Obama.³ Despite this, a close Anglo-American partnership continues, especially in terms of the myriad bilateral committees, working groups, and liaison officers who coordinate common approaches to policy, procurement, research and development, and operations across an array of issues and programs. Nevertheless, the special relationship is not immune from the stresses and strains created by external threats, errors of omission and commission, and changing geostrategic realities.⁴ In recent years, the strains on the partnership have become particularly acute, causing renewed claims in some quarters that the special relationship is in serious decline.⁵

As a reaction to these concerns, efforts were made in May 2011 and March 2012 to breathe new life into what the two leaders described as “the essential relationship.”⁶

One important aspect of the special relationship is that it is not symmetrical. Although at the working level the balance of effort entailed in all sorts of cooperative endeavors is often equally shared between American and British counterparts, the state of the special relationship is of far more political and intellectual concern to British politicians, scholars, and citizens than to their counterparts in the United States. The special relationship looms large in the United Kingdom, while Americans take British cooperation and collaboration as a normal fixture of the international milieu. The pervasiveness of American culture also seems to provide British officials with a better appreciation of their U.S. counterparts, who for their part often lack the same level of exposure to life in the United Kingdom.⁷ These asymmetries can be a source of friction, especially because alliance politics burden one party far more than the other.

There also is a palpable sense that Britain is now in a serious decline militarily. This decline is typified by the Iraq experience, the perceived loss of faith in the UK armed forces on the part of the U.S. military, and the political imperative to extricate forces from Afghanistan as soon as possible. These pressures are compounded by the financial crisis, which directly influenced the recent UK *Strategic Defense and Security Review*. The review, primarily a cost-savings exercise, was driven by the requirement for all government departments to cut spending as part of its deficit reduction plan. The result will be a reduced capability in the context of North Atlantic Treaty Organization commitments and in terms of contributing to other international deployments. The implications are likely to be multidimensional, including greater reliance on the United States; further interoperability issues with U.S. armed forces if the United Kingdom does not invest in high technology; military intervention will become the *very last resort* for UK governments; and increased collaboration is likely with France and potentially other European countries in defense matters. For the United States, there were some very controversial decisions in the Strategic Defense and Security Review, including scrapping the new Nimrod MR4 maritime patrol aircraft before it is brought into service, putting one of the two new aircraft carriers into mothballs as soon as it is built, and gapping the UK capability to fly aircraft off its remaining aircraft carrier.⁸ These trends were brought into relief by the limitations in UK military capabilities shown during the campaign against Gaddafi's forces in Libya.

The “perfect storm” analogy may be too strong a phrase to describe the various factors that appear to be influencing the United Kingdom's military decline, but the context within which British officials think about and plan for defense has changed significantly in recent years and this will undoubtedly influence the U.S.-UK relationship in the future. This article offers an assessment of the special military relationship in light of these recent changes, in both what William Wallace and Christopher Phillips call, its “political and ideological superstructure” and its “embedded military and intelligence substructure.”⁹ It is based on the findings of a recent forum that was held in Upper Slaughter in the United Kingdom in October 2010. British and American scholars and former officials from both governments were asked to address a series of themes and issues, with an eye toward exploring how these issues are likely to shape the relations between the allies. Participants were asked to address shared national experiences in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, U.S.-UK relations and the war on terror, counterproliferation efforts directed against Iran, and the nuclear force postures of both countries.¹⁰ What emerged were serious concerns about both the superstructure and substructure of the relationship. The article briefly surveys the findings related to these issues and concludes by offering some general observations about the state

of the special military relationship and what might done to deal with some of the strains in contemporary British-American relations.

Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan

Engaging in coalition combat operations has posed a series of challenges for the special relationship over the past ten years. In terms of the experience in Iraq, British-American relations were strained by alliance disagreements over the resources devoted to various operations, differing approaches to counterinsurgency, and the apparent overextension of British forces in the region. British officials also quietly questioned the U.S. ability to plan for and execute a long and complex engagement in Iraq.¹¹ In the United Kingdom, the Chilcott Enquiry into the war has shown that British officials were aware of the American failure to consider various aspects of postwar nation building in Iraq prior to the war, but in the end followed the U.S. lead when it came to operations and tactics.¹² Their apparent unwillingness or inability to voice these early concerns to their American allies has led to soul searching among some former members of the Labour government at the time.¹³

For the United States, Basra is seen as a British failure that has yet to be confronted. The view is that the British struggled to commit adequate resources to both Iraq and Afghanistan and that it is clear in hindsight that they tried to do too much with too little. In spite of the initial successes, the British forces failed to deliver rapid reconstruction to areas under their jurisdiction, manage force protection, protect the local population, and eliminate insurgents. British forces refused to request U.S. assistance, which made it even more difficult to deal with the complexities of securing Basra and the surrounding region. Ultimately they made deals with local militias and withdrew to safe compounds, leaving the new Iraqi government and the United States to take the necessary military action to reestablish control of the area.¹⁴

In terms of Afghanistan, coalition efforts have suffered severe mission creep. U.S.-UK forces, fighting the Taliban and Pashtu tribes in addition to forces loyal to al Qaeda, have differed in their approach to counterinsurgency operations. Following setbacks in Iraq, the British deployed to Helmand province in 2006 with limited forces, faulty intelligence estimates, and little understanding of the threat they faced. Based on previous experience they set up fixed "platoon houses" to provide area defense but soon found themselves suffering significant casualties, which lasted until they handed over responsibility for the area to the U.S. military in 2010. Recent reports suggest that senior U.S. military officers warned their British counterparts at an early stage that UK operational tactics were flawed, but there was little response to this warning. Subsequent different (and more successful) U.S. counterinsurgency operations in the Helmand area after the British pulled back has led to further questioning of British military capabilities in the United States.¹⁵

U.S.-UK Relations and the "War on Terror"

Despite the problems of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States and the United Kingdom confront common terrorist threats. The air link between London's Heathrow airport and the United States, for instance, appears to be a favorite target of terrorists. The 2006 plot to destroy airliners, the 2009 New York City subway plot and elements of the Mumbai attack shared a transatlantic link. Both countries also face threats from homegrown terrorism. Diaspora populations pose unique challenges to law enforcement and intelligence officials on both sides of the Atlantic. This shared threat creates pressure to get inside the terrorists' operation and decision-making cycles to launch effective countermeasures. The existence

of this common threat creates tangible incentives to coordinate counterterrorism efforts. This means that Anglo-American working relations in the “war on terror” have never been better and that these efforts are leading to positive results.

The existence of close cooperation, however, in some respects obscures the practical constraints, political differences, and different legal frameworks that can make it difficult to coordinate national efforts in the war on terror. A major difference between the U.S. and UK counterterrorism effort, for instance, is related to scale. The United States has many organizations engaged in the war on terror, which makes it difficult for the British government to “staff” various liaison relationships. Simultaneously, the British government enjoys a greater “unity of effort” compared to their American counterparts, who have difficulty coordinating policies, operations and investigations among the many U.S. agencies fighting the war on terror.

British and American officials also act on different threat assessments. In other words, while there is a shared agreement on what constitutes unlawful behavior, different groups are given different priorities by British and American officials. For instance, Hamas and Hezbollah are not as high a priority for the United Kingdom as they are for the United States. By contrast, British officials are more concerned with issues related to the South Asian diaspora population. Although “homegrown” terrorism takes different forms in both countries, there is nevertheless a growing realization that both governments are experiencing a common problem related to individuals who undertake acts of terror. This means that both sides are able to finesse disagreements over priorities and can collaborate effectively when it comes to more immediate threats. It appears that close collaboration has derailed several serious terror plots that would have had a direct impact on both countries.

At the same time there are practical differences between the British and U.S. legal systems. These differences complicate routine law enforcement activities. For example, there is a major difference in tactics between the two countries regarding plea bargaining, the practice of allowing suspects to plead guilty to a lesser charge to quickly close cases. In the United Kingdom, pleabargaining is nonexistent; creating inducements to talk is not permissible. U.S. officials complain that abandoning this tool leads to a loss of prosecutorial intelligence. In contrast to their British counterparts, American courts make a practice of allowing informants to face reduced charges after first giving up useful information about their nefarious activities and collaborators.

There also are differences between the two court systems regarding rules of evidence. Some U.S. intercept evidence, for instance, cannot be used in UK courts. From a U.S. perspective, the circumstances under which an interview is conducted can affect how evidence is treated, and this can create problems in a British context where a more uniform treatment of evidence prevails. Another important difference between the British and U.S. legal systems is the public safety exception to the so-called “Miranda rights” enjoyed by suspects. In the United States, the public safety exception is exercised to attain timely and tactical intelligence. This sort of activity is not permissible in Great Britain. Smoothing out these differences remains a key challenge for both governments from a policy perspective and for their officials from a practical perspective.

Countering Proliferation: Iran as the “Hard Case”

Counterproliferation is another strong field of collaboration between the United States and the United Kingdom, especially in relation to the jointly perceived problem of Iran. A sort of division of responsibility has emerged between the British and Americans in which Britain plays an important regional role while the United States operates on the

wider international stage. The United Kingdom helps shape the European Union agenda by keeping the European Union focused on the threats posed by the Iranian nuclear program. By contrast, the United States tends to play a larger role in leading the United Nations to enact international sanctions against Tehran. By working together, British and American officials aim to generate a unified international position against the proliferation threat.

U.S. and UK officials are well informed about proliferation matters and some have argued that this knowledge could be used to further strengthen the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international agencies.¹⁶ There probably should be a greater willingness on the part of both governments to help staff and consult key international organizations engaged in the battle against nuclear proliferation.¹⁷ There is, however, a danger that the special relationship might produce British complacency regarding the issue of proliferation. British officials might be tempted to “free ride” on the active U.S. counterproliferation agenda.

There is a growing consensus that more joint efforts should be made to engage the People’s Republic of China effectively in the nonproliferation regime. The international community has a clear interest in limiting procurement of nuclear materials, strategic delivery systems, and all sorts of dual-use technologies from and through China. Both the U.S. and British governments have repeatedly asserted the need for China to take a stronger stand against proliferation and clandestine trade in dangerous technologies. U.S. officials, however, tend to be somewhat schizophrenic when it comes to enlisting Beijing in the counterproliferation battle. If Beijing becomes active, Americans start fretting about Chinese international activism, which sends a mixed signal to all concerned. The UK-China relationship might be strengthened to overcome this weakness in nonproliferation efforts. The United Kingdom could usefully play a role in this counterproliferation context given that relations between London and Beijing are not colored by the prospect of great-power rivalry.

Nuclear Issues

The United States has committed itself in the 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review* to reducing global nuclear dangers.¹⁸ The *Nuclear Posture Review* indicates that the Obama administration has embraced the push toward nuclear net zero as the basis of U.S. nuclear policy. Until net zero is achieved, however, the United States is committed to maintaining a safe and effective nuclear arsenal. The United Kingdom’s approach to its *Defence White Paper* assisted the United States in articulating its position on nuclear weapons. In interviews conducted in January of 2011, U.S. defense officials suggested that collaboration in drafting the *Nuclear Posture Review* was sustained and highly constructive.¹⁹ Although changes in the UK defense budget affect the U.S.-UK relationship, cooperation dealing with nuclear issues is an especially robust element of the special relationship. The ten-year reviews of the 1958 agreement on nuclear cooperation renew the relevance of this shared heritage. Despite this profound and enduring cooperation, the United Kingdom regards its nuclear capability as operationally independent. U.S. officials recognize that this independence makes the United Kingdom a valuable nuclear partner.²⁰

Against this background, however, is the shared realization that the U.S. and UK nuclear weapons programs are not booming enterprises. In fact, with the exception of a few programs, they tend to be relatively moribund enterprises that are beginning to struggle to maintain critical research and manufacturing capabilities. This list of problems is long and growing. The United States and United Kingdom, for example, face serious challenges when it comes to designing and testing new nuclear weapons. Not the least of these challenges

is the distinct lack of political support when it comes to developing replacement warheads for arsenals that are reaching the end of their useful lives. Technical problems created by an aging nuclear infrastructure are also beginning to complicate maintenance of nuclear warheads. Compounding this issue is the lack of experience among junior scientists—which is often described as the loss of tacit knowledge. Many of the scientists, engineers, and researchers who work in the nuclear complexes maintained on both sides of the Atlantic were not involved in the design or manufacture of the weapons they are maintaining. Because they entered the work force after the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, many have never participated in a nuclear test.

Concerns about the future of the nuclear deterrent are voiced in London and Washington. In the United Kingdom, the domestic debate regarding the fundamentals of the nuclear program centers on two principal issues: maintaining nuclear weapons or simply embracing nuclear disarmament. In the United States, policymakers want to have their cake and eat it too—they talk about maintaining a strong nuclear deterrent but are willing to do so with a shrinking arsenal and nuclear infrastructure. The Obama administration also has taken to drawing attention to the benefits of moving towards a nuclear posture of global net zero.

The way these concerns are voiced in policy debates can sometimes be illogical and contradictory. One of the central arguments about maintaining a strong British nuclear deterrent is that given the strength of the U.S.-UK relationship, the UK nuclear force is of limited relevance or utility. In other words, a threat that would trigger a British nuclear response also would probably trigger a U.S. nuclear response.²¹ Another British concern is that nuclear program spending increases dependency on the United States. By contrast, U.S. officials are worried that close collaboration with their British counterparts on key systems—joint work on the follow-on to the nuclear submarine force is a case in point—can create vulnerabilities, especially since political justifications for these programs are often based on the need to collaborate with the United Kingdom.

UK domestic support for a nuclear program is rather ambiguous. There is general latent support for nuclear weapons in an uncertain world, but also support for further marginalization of nuclear capabilities and concerns that significant expenditure on such weapons undermines Britain's conventional capabilities that are being cut in the recent *Defence Review*. Controversy over the Trident ballistic missile submarine program typically coincides with international tension and replacement cycles. It seems therefore that the ongoing financial crisis and its impact on UK defense may well influence future British decision making on the nuclear question, such as contemplation of extending the life of the current Trident submarines. Such a decision in itself could add momentum to those arguing for a more limited deterrent capability (notwithstanding the arguments for what makes a “credible” deterrent) and even for further disarmament over the longer term. It is clear that the Obama administration also faces a similar situation in the United States today. The U.S. public supports maintaining a strong nuclear arsenal, but there is no enthusiasm for new weapons, delivery systems, or significant research activity. The key question is how low to go with nuclear capabilities. For Britain and the United States, however, an answer to this question involves very different operational considerations, given the vast difference in their nuclear capabilities and global responsibilities.

Conclusion

Although the decision to invade Iraq and its aftermath are beginning to fade from political memory in the United States, both British officials and members of the public continue to question the political, intelligence, and policy mistakes leading to the decision to topple

Saddam Hussein. These issues are being kept at the forefront of public consciousness in the United Kingdom by the ongoing Chilcott Enquiry into the entire conduct of the Iraq campaign encompassing the case for war all the way through to the withdrawal of UK forces several years later. The Iraq issue will remain highly politically charged, at least until the commission issues its report (which is not seeking to attach blame related to any decisions or their implementation but to identify lessons learned). There is a widespread feeling across Great Britain that an obsequious attitude in the face of Washington's demands led to British participation in some sort of U.S. crusade in the Middle East. In contrast, American participants note that British officials were willing, active, and valued participants in the decision making leading up to the Second Gulf War. Americans appear willing to dismiss past events as "so much history," while the British have difficulty coming to terms with events that they believe do not reflect their best tradition of level-headed, sophisticated strategic judgment. This divergence in attitudes places ongoing issues in a different context in London and Washington. This was reflected in the differences in emphasis that emerged as a result of the Arab Spring in March 2011, especially over the issue of a no-fly zone.

Within the UK defense community, there is also concern over the health and resilience of the U.S.-UK operational military relationship. An internal report circulating amongst UK defense and military officials in late 2009 articulated a growing anxiety within Whitehall concerning the state of the U.S.-UK military relationship. The report reflects concerns that military cooperation is showing signs of strain. Areas of the report explored perceived U.S. concerns about the quality and effectiveness of British armed forces. Examples cited included recent British tactical performance in Helmand Province in undertaking counterinsurgency operations, the British experience in Basra in the aftermath of the second Iraq invasion, and the American perception that senior British officers have often been rather arrogant in their dealings with U.S. counterparts. In the light of this report, *The Times* claimed that U.S. commanders were "privately dismissive of British counter-insurgency tactics after their troops took a hands-off approach to Basra . . . and the supposed arrogance of some British generals who were given to quoting the lessons of Northern Ireland." It also indicated that "similar criticisms were circulating about the performance of British troops in Afghanistan," which posed serious dangers of "a damaging rift" between the military establishments of both countries. U.S. officials, including Admiral Mike Mullen, then Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, reacted to the concerns expressed in the report by trying to reassure their British colleagues by emphasizing the overall value they place on the British contributions to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.²² The tensions, however, remain. Some see the origins of this operational friction as being rooted in Vietnam-era scholarship that depicted the British military as experts in counterinsurgency operations. Generations of scholars and military writers often depicted the British experience suppressing insurgents during the Malayan Emergency and the writings of Sir Robert Thompson as demonstrating British superiority over their American counterparts when it came to counterinsurgency.²³ British officers were quick to offer the lessons of Northern Ireland and other British counterinsurgency campaigns as something that could be broadly leveraged in support of actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. military initially was eager to accept this advice. During the early years of the Iraq campaign, the United Kingdom was flooded with Americans determined to study archives and after-action reports to reap the lessons from the history of British counterinsurgency operations. These shared perceptions and expectations might have set the stage for the friction and private criticisms that followed.

Despite frictions and strains over Iraq and Afghanistan, it does still seem to be the case that at the *working level*—in the military, intelligence, and nuclear fields—the U.S.-UK strategic relationship continues to function reasonably effectively.²⁴ It has been at

the *political level* where there appeared to be more friction, flux, and divergences of view. This may partially be explained by the fact that U.S. officials might be taking the British contribution to various activities for granted in a political sense. It also may involve sensitivities in Britain about the fact the current administration in the White House is thought to be less “UK leaning” and pays less attention than its predecessor to protecting British sensibilities (e.g. the “British” Petroleum controversy). There also seemed to be a determination by the Cameron government shortly after coming to office to chart a slightly more independent policy than its predecessors. This was evident in the no-fly zone controversy during the Libyan government offensive against its opponents in March 2011. The difference between U.S. and British positions on this issue caused *The Times* of London to claim that Britain had been “deserted by Obama.” The lead article argued that: “The U.S., may have complaints about the special relationship from its side, such as the U.K.’s willingness to look for the door in Afghanistan. But as seen from London, and even more keenly from Bengazi to Bahrain, Mr. Obama is proving to be a brutal disappointment.”²⁵ The United States eventually joined Britain and France in establishing the no-fly zone and supporting the Anglo-French demand that Gaddafi should leave Libya. Nevertheless, U.S. officials apparently did not believe they had the same strategic interests at stake as their British and French counterparts. They curtailed their direct enforcement of the no-fly zone after just one week of air activity.

For Britain and the United States, the so-called “Arab Spring” in 2011 created a difficult dilemma over whether to support stability over democracy. Events in Libya highlighted this dilemma because they placed important interests at risk. There were certainly concerns about not repeating the mistakes of Iraq, but there were also serious worries about Libya becoming a “failed state,” which implied renewed support for terrorism in the United Kingdom, disruption of oil supplies and the international economy, and migration across the Mediterranean into Europe. Both governments were concerned about their “responsibilities to protect” after the debacle in Rwanda. The Obama administration’s sensitivity about leading another Western campaign in the Muslim world, however, limited the support it felt able to give to the Anglo-French initiative. For Britain, ideas about improving military ties with France that were voiced by the Cameron administration on coming to office were reinforced by the Libyan experience. This difference in the response to the Libyan campaign seemed to many to highlight the gradual shifts in the military relationship that were being produced by changing geopolitical trends.

As a result, there was a growing feeling in late 2010 and early 2011 that it was becoming more difficult to maintain the coherence of the U.S.-UK political relationship as the perceived interests and policy preferences of both countries began to diverge. It was believed that if this continued, the traditional close working relationship between a wide range of officials on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in the security field, which has been at the heart of the day-to-day special relationship, would erode over time. If this was not to happen there would need to be a recognition at the *political level* in Washington and London that the continued close relationship required renewed and careful attention.

One of the issues that emerged in the October 2010 Upper Slaughter Conference was that although there were continuous discussions between officials in different areas and at different levels, there appeared to be no overarching strategic dialogue that looked at the U.S.-UK security relationship as a whole. Such a strategic dialogue at an official level, at regular intervals, it was argued, would be of great value in helping to take the temperature of the relationship and provide suggestions for improvements that could be made to deal with the tensions that exist. It was believed that this would need to be done at a high level,

perhaps by an annual meeting of elder statesmen, from both sides of the Atlantic, with long experience of the workings of the relationship.

Significantly, during the president's state visit to Britain in May 2011, the need for such a high-level strategic dialogue was recognized. It was announced that a new joint National Security Strategy Board would be set up bringing together leading figures to develop a joint long-term foreign and defense policy agenda. It was announced that the board would be co-chaired by Sir Peter Ricketts, Britain's national security adviser, and his U.S. counterpart, Tom Donilon. Press reports suggested that the arrangement would be "unique," and that it "was a sign of the U.S. recognizing the need for closer links with the UK, amid fears that Mr. Obama is less interested in the special relationship than his predecessors." At the same time President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron published a joint article in which they argued that they looked at the world in a similar way, shared the same concerns, and saw the same strategic possibilities. This reflected an important attempt to reset the high-level *political* relationship between the two countries. At the same time, however, after the operational problems and criticisms of recent years, both leaders stressed the continuing close ties between the security establishments of both countries. They argued that: "Today the foundations of our partnership are rock solid. Our servicemen and women serve alongside one another, whether fighting in Helmand, protecting innocent people in Libya or combating piracy off the Horn of Africa. Every day our intelligence agencies work together." They went on to stress that the key to the relationship was that although it was founded on a deep emotional connection, by sentiment and ties of people and culture, the reason it survives is because "it advances our common interests and shared values. It is a perfect alignment of what we both need and what we both believe. And the reason it remains strong is because it delivers time and again." It was, in the view of both the prime minister and president, not just a special relationship, but an "essential relationship."²⁶

This attempt to reset the relationship after the difficulties of recent years is an interesting development, especially the establishment of a new joint National Security Strategy Board. The effort to deal with the political relationship at the highest level of government was again evident in March 2012 during Prime Minister Cameron's visit to Washington. Despite continuing British concerns about a U.S. drift toward East Asia, President Obama went out of his way to emphasize the enduring quality of the Anglo-American relationship, arguing that it was "one of the greatest alliances the world has seen." The key question is whether the rhetoric of these visits will be translated into substance. Both countries continue to have important interests in common, not least in Afghanistan and over Iran, as well as in the nuclear and intelligence fields more generally. At the same time, however, the important geopolitical changes taking place in the world and the declining defense capability of the UK, mean that the task of maintaining what Margaret Thatcher called "the extraordinary relationship" is likely to become ever more difficult.

Notes

1. See John Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations, 1939–1984* (London: Macmillan, 1984), chapters 5 and 6; and John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (London: Macmillan, 2001).

2. The committee noted: "The perception that the British government was a subservient 'poodle' to the U.S. administration leading up to the period of the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath is widespread both among the British public and overseas," see "Special Relationship Between U.K. and U.S. is over, MPs Say," *BBC News*, March 28, 2010, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8590767.stm

3. "Deserted by Obama," *The Times*, March 17, 2011.
4. David Hastings Dunn, "U.K.-U.S. Relations After the Three Bs—Blair, Brown and Bush," *Defense and Security Analysis*, vol. 27, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 5–18; and Amy Kellog, "'Special Relationship' Between the U.K. and U.S. Still Unparalleled," *Live Shots*, November 18, 2010, available at <http://liveshots.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/11/18/special-relationship-between-the-u-k-and-u-s-still-unparalleled/>
5. See Rachel Sylvester, "'Special Relationship.' Passed Away 2009. R.I.P." *The Times*, September 1, 2009.
6. Barack Obama and David Cameron, "Not Just Special, But an Essential Relationship," *The Times*, May 24, 2011.
7. Interview with British Official, Washington, DC, January 10, 2011.
8. Deborah Haynes, "Clinton Sounds Alarm over U.K. Defence Cuts," *The Times*, October 15, 2010.
9. William Wallace and Christopher Phillips, "Reassessing the Special Relationship," *International Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 2 (2009).
10. The Upper Slaughter conference was held under "Chatham House rules." The issues raised in this article reflect discussions at the conference and the views of the authors as well as various participants who wish to remain anonymous. The outcome of the conference was discussed at a meeting in Washington in January 10, 2011, with British embassy officials and U.S. defense officials. The Advanced Systems and Concepts Office of the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency was instrumental in organizing and supporting the event.
11. Christopher Meyer, *DC Confidential: The Controversial Memoirs of Britain's Ambassador to the U.S. at the time of 9/11 and the Iraq War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005); and Warren Chin, "British Defense Policy and the War in Iraq, 2003–2009," *Defense and Security Analysis*, vol. 27, no. 1 (March 2011), 65–76.
12. The British Chilcott Enquiry is scheduled to publish its findings later in 2012.
13. Tony Blair, *Tony Blair: A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010), 347–359.
14. Max Hastings "Listen Up, Limey, the Special's Off the Menu," *The Sunday Times*, September 6, 2009.
15. Michael Evans, "U.S. General warned the British Commanders that Their Afghan Strategy Was a Disaster," *The Times*, August 30, 2010.
16. This was a view expressed by a number of the participants at the conference in October 2010.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Nuclear Posture Review Report, April 2010, available at www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf
19. Interview with U.S. defense official, Washington, DC, January 10, 2011.
20. This was confirmed by U.S. participants during the October 2010 conference.
21. The converse, however, is not true. Conferees agreed that there were scenarios that would probably trigger a U.S., but not a British, nuclear response.
22. Tim Shipman, "Defence Chief Tries to Heal Rift over Britain's Front Line Troops," *The Times*, December 5, 2009.
23. Peter Busch, *All the Way with JFK? Britain, the U.S. and the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Andrew Krepenivich, for instance, depicts Thompson as a perceptive critic of the U.S. effort in Vietnam who accurately foresaw and described the nature of the U.S. defeat. See Andrew Krepenivich, *The Army in Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 170–171.
24. Participants at the 2010 conference confirmed the very close working relationship between the intelligence communities of both countries. For the history of the intelligence relationship, see Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray Publishers, Ltd., 2001).
25. *The Times*, March 17, 2011. There was also an article in the same newspaper by Roland Watson, Giles Whittell, and Will Pavia entitled, "Cameron Rift with Obama over Libya."
26. *The Times*, May 24, 2011.