

# **The Special Relationship during the War on Terror**

*Examined through the concept of friendship*

Nick van der Stoel

490359NS

Master Thesis

Y. van Hoef

The Rise and Fall of the American Empire

12-07-2022

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>2. Theory &amp; Methodology</b> .....	5
<b>2.1 Defining state-relationships</b> .....	5
<b>2.2 Defining a Special Relationship</b> .....	7
<b>2.3 Assessing relationships between states – institutional or individual significance?</b> .....	12
<b>2.4 Conceptualization of Friendship</b> .....	16
<b>2.5 Methodology</b> .....	17
<b>3. How can the relationships between Blair and his American counterparts be defined?</b> .....	21
<b>3.1 The Special Relationship after 1991</b> .....	21
<b>3.2 Personal Relationship Blair &amp; Clinton</b> .....	25
<b>3.3 Personal relationship Bush &amp; Blair</b> .....	35
<b>4. How can the period of Obama and his American counterparts be defined?</b> .....	54
<b>4.1 Personal Relationship Obama &amp; Brown</b> .....	54
<b>4.2 Personal Relationship Obama &amp; Cameron</b> .....	64
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	79
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	83

## 1. Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup> century was, from the start, characterized by conflict in the Middle East. Conflict in this region was not a new phenomenon, the sort of impact it had on the West was. Terrorist attacks on Western soil characterized this shift, of which the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, would mark its unexpected, severely impactful starting point. The Western response to these attacks was highlighted by intense cooperation between the British prime minister Tony Blair and American president George W. Bush. 9-11 would start a chain of events later labelled as the ‘War on Terror.’ The prelude of these attacks had already taken place before Bush entered office, as his predecessor Bill Clinton had been significantly involved in the region in the aftermath of the Gulf War.<sup>1</sup> The Anglo-American alliance would continue intense cooperation during these series of events. Blair's successors, Gordon Brown and David Cameron respectively, would cooperate with Bush his successor, Barack Obama, to persist in their joint fight against terrorism.<sup>2</sup> This cooperation consequently meant a rejuvenated expression of the long-lasting, intense Anglo-American alliance, which, from the Second World War, was labelled as the ‘special relationship.’<sup>3</sup> Their renewed bilateral relevance primarily manifested itself in the strategic aspect of the relationship, as the War on Terror required the Anglo-American alliance to prioritize their military cooperation. The individual leaders and their relationships appeared to have a significant influence on the manner in which the joint military efforts took shape. In assessing this relational involvement and, more importantly, how they influenced the special relationship in general, this thesis attempts to answer the following research question:

How can the development of the special relationship between the US and the UK during the war on terror (1997-2017) be explained through the concept of friendship, when examining the biographies of the leaders involved?

The next chapter will explain the concepts needed to properly understand the content of this research question: the special relationship in general, its strategic aspect in the context of the war on terror, and the concept of friendship. Furthermore, additional relevant historiography will be assessed, after which the theory will be introduced and explained. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the method applied in this thesis. The third chapter will briefly assess the background of the components required to properly comprehend the main focal point of this chapter, the tenures of Tony Blair and his American counterparts, Bill Clinton and George Bush. The fourth chapter will continue in the assessment of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Jane M. Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 59, 60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>2</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 118-27.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane, *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2.

main focal point, as the tenures of Barack Obama and his British counterparts, Gordon Brown and David Cameron, will be examined. Naturally, the chapters in which the leaders spent an extended time in office together, will be described more extensively than shorter tenures. After assessing their administrations, the thesis will provide a conclusion containing an accurately outlined answer to the main research question.

## 2. Theory & Methodology

### 2.1 Defining state-relationships

To understand the concept of a special relationship, some degree of comprehension regarding relationships between states in their general, institutional sense, is required. In diplomatic terms, relationships between two countries are usually defined as “*bilateral relations*.” These bilateral relations are, according to Thomas Gomart, “*the basic form of the diplomatic game*.”<sup>4</sup> This form can be explained through three levels: Historic, Strategic, and Numeric.

The historic level refers to traditional diplomacy, in which European monarchies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century started to engage in diplomatic relations. A significant milestone in this new trend occurred at the Westphalia congress in 1648, where all sovereign states received recognition of equal status. The finite amount of states participating in this event illustrates the limited influential range of this trend, as traditional diplomacy at the time, mostly entailed European bilateral diplomacy. This first wave of international diplomacy was characterized by three central elements; negotiations between states distinguished by a significant degree of secrecy, the prominent role of embassies, and political alliances; primarily through intermarriage among families within the ruling elite. European bilateral diplomacy would remain the sole centre of diplomacy for centuries, lasting until the end of the Great War. However, before the Great War, colonial empires had paved the way for diplomacy on a more global scale. Eventually, decolonization led to the emergence of different types of diplomatic relations, which were not limited to just Europe, but to the forging of bilateral alliances on a more global scale.

Second, the strategic level. This level includes promoting the state's national interest and structuring international negotiations. The latter is important to mention, as a significant part of the outcome of multilateral relations (negotiations between more than two countries) has already partially been determined through bilateral agreements between participating states before the multilateral negotiations have even started. This phenomenon also explains the lasting utility of researching bilateral relations within a global political environment increasingly defined by multilateral, supranational institutions such as the EU or the UN. For example, within UN negotiations, the votes of influential members France and the United Kingdom are in sync 80% of the time, consequently impacting the outcome of the general votes. This impact illustrates the significance of the Franco-British bilateral relationship on a multilateral stage. Another example is the Franco-German relationship, which has been extremely dominant in shaping European institutions and the European integration in general, with the multilateral European Union as a substantial result of their bilateral significance.

Third, the numeric level, which resembles the growing importance of bilateral relations through

---

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, Gomart, “La Relation Bilatérale: Un Genre De L’histoire Des Relations Internationales,” *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps* 65, no. 1, (January 2002): 65-66, <https://doi.org/10.3406/mat.2002.403316>.

the assessment of statistics, the most important being the growing number of signed bilateral treaties. These same statistics also show a decline in multilateral agreements since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the UN recorded a record amount of 5000 multilateral agreements between 1990 and 1999.<sup>5</sup> This decline, which consequently meant a return to bilateral diplomacy, further proves the lasting essence of researching bilateral relations. For this thesis, the strategic level is pivotal. This level is a central point within the main context of this research: The War on Terror. The latter doesn't serve solely as a suitable red-line from a narrative standpoint; using the War on Terror as the context for this thesis automatically lays an emphasis on the strategic aspect of the relationship. The strategic aspect appears to be most determining in defining bilateral relationships, a suggestion that will be explained below, apart from what the strategic aspect entails in its most basic form.

The strategic role of bilateral relations in general functions as a basis for the strategic aspect of the relationship between the US and the UK in its more distinct form. As Alice Pannier accentuates the strategic essence regarding multilateral negotiations, strategic interaction in the bilateral sense can take a multitude of forms, all while interconnected to varying extents. However, in its current use, scholars emphasize security and defence cooperation as crucial parts of strategic alliances. P.R. Kumaraswamy argues that strategic alliances are mainly revolved around military and security cooperation.<sup>6</sup> Alexander Korolev depicts military cooperation as *“the backbone of strategic alignment in general.”*

Yet, the strategic aspect arguably entails economic and diplomatic collaboration, in addition to military cooperation. Nevertheless, Korolev states that these forms of cooperation are both inferior to, and motivated by military cooperation. Inferior in the sense that military cooperation can be regarded as the highest form of inter-state cooperation. A significant amount of states do cooperate within the economic and diplomatic realm, far fewer states amplify the intensity of their alliance through additional engagement in military cooperation. Conversely, no states cooperate on a military basis without diplomatic or economic interaction, as the realization of the former requires execution of the latter. This also explains Korolev's suggestion that diplomatic and economic alliances are intensified through military cooperation, as its incentives are largely materialized in the economic and diplomatic realm.<sup>7</sup>

Concerning the cooperation between the US and the UK, Hordiienko and Khamula classify military, or in its more general term, security cooperation, in three different forms: Conventional, nuclear

---

<sup>5</sup> Alice Pannier, “Bilateral Relations,” *Global Diplomacy*, (September 2019): 28-30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-2878632>.

<sup>6</sup> P. R. Kumaraswamy, “Redefining ‘Strategic’ Cooperation.” *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 4 (2017): 356, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1330451>.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Korolev, “Measuring Strategic Cooperation in China-Russia Relations,” *The United States and Contemporary China-Russia Relations* (2022): 34, 50, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93982-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93982-3_2).

and intelligence cooperation.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which individuals can influence these forms, will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs. Regardless, all forms are indisputably related to the main context of this thesis: The War on Terror. In addition, this context is similar to other periods in which a common threat bound the US and the UK. History has shown that the presence and intensity of their relationship has been most prominent in these periods, which would indicate the possibility that conclusions on the strategic level directly translate to the special relationship in general.

The definition of bilateral relations through the strategic level introduced by Pannier might prove insufficient in terms of analysis, which means a particular qualification within the concept is required. Helen Wallace provides such a qualification, in which she argues that bilateral relations can be categorized in at least three different forms. In the first, most basic form, transactions directly involve and affect governments, which is the sole reason the governments, in these cases, engage in dialogue. In the second stage, these transactions are significant enough for governments to feel forced to engage in a more extensive dialogue or cooperation because of the importance of the transaction. The third stage refers to relationships 'deemed privileged' by governments: Special relationships. These relationships are the most long-lasting and successful relationships on the international stage, and maintaining these relationships is often regarded as an important part of the states' national interest.<sup>9</sup>

While the assessment of Helen Wallace created some distinction within the broad term of bilateral relations, it did not offer practical insight on measuring whether a relationship is unique. This element is vital to consider, as the question surrounding the proper measurement of special claims in bilateral relationships, is part of a prominent debate within the historiography relevant for this research. Moreover, assessing the proper measurement is necessary to understand and justify the theoretical framework that will be applied in this thesis.

## **2.2 Defining a Special Relationship**

Assessing what the label 'special' in diplomatic terms exactly entails, appears to be rather complicated when considering the academic debate on this topic, and how the concept is used in practice. Both considerations lead to a particular conviction that a special relationship appears to be a rather broad concept, lacking any clear, one-folded definition.

In correspondence to these complications, Kathleen Burk raises valid questions within this debate: Can a special relationship only be regarded as special when it is special all the time, or just occasionally? Furthermore, does public opinion affect the special relationship? Are there any other individuals involved

---

<sup>8</sup> Larysa Hordiienko & Serhii Khamula, "Special relationship between the United Kingdom and the USA: current state and future prospects," *Political Science and Security Studies Journal*, Vol 1, no. 2 (2020): 10, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4395111>.

<sup>9</sup> Helen Wallace, "The Conduct of Bilateral Relationships by Governments," in *Partners and Rivals in Western Europe: Britain, France, and Germany*, ed. Caroline Bray and Roger Morgan (England: Blackmore Press, 1986), 152-53.

that can determine the degree of ‘specialness’ within the relationship, or do the leaders possess sole power to determine this degree? According to her, two aspects are certain. First; a special relationship is different from an alliance, in which the agents do not necessarily have to like each other, which was the case with the grand alliance between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Second, a special relationship needs a specific foundation it can emerge from, containing at least some common roots and interests.<sup>10</sup>

Still, assigning a pre-determined set of characteristics to what a special relationship between two countries entails, remains complicated, as it expresses itself in different forms. As previously indicated, the label ‘special’ within the reference to the relationship between the US and the UK has revolved heavily around military cooperation.<sup>11</sup> However, the special relationship between France and Germany is opposed to close military ties, mainly derived from close cooperation on an economic and political level.<sup>12</sup> This relational difference serves as a reminder that a special relationship does not contain specific indicators, and therefore requires separate specifications. This notion appears to be confirmed when considering other bilateral relationships deemed ‘special’ by the governments involved—for example, the special relationship between Israel and the United States. Since 1948, the ties between the US and Israel have continuously been referred to, by their respective governments, as special. As in 1962, President John F. Kennedy told Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir: *"The United States has a special relationship with Israel in the Middle East, really comparable only to that which it has with Britain over a wide range of world affairs."*<sup>13</sup> In 1977, President Jimmy Carter expressed similar claims:

We have a special relationship with Israel. It's absolutely crucial that no one in our country or around the world ever doubt that our number one commitment in the Middle East is to protect the right of Israel to exist, to exist permanently, and to exist in peace.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of Israel and the US, Y. Bar-Simon Tov argued that their relationship is characterized by high degrees of trust, amity, friendship, and political cooperation, making it a unique and unparalleled

---

<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Burk, “Presidents and Prime Ministers,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 32-33.

<sup>11</sup> Larysa Hordiienko & Serhii Khamula, “Special relationship between the United Kingdom and the USA: current state and future prospects,” *Political Science and Security Studies Journal*, Vol 1, no. 2 (2020): 11, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4395111>.

<sup>12</sup> Alice Pannier, “Bilateral Relations,” *Global Diplomacy* (September 2019): 29, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3_2).

<sup>13</sup> Mordechai Gazit, “Israeli Military Procurement from the United States,” *Dynamics of Dependence: U.S.-Israeli Relations* (March 13, 2019): 98, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429040443-4>.

<sup>14</sup> Seth P. Tillman, *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983), 53.



relationship.<sup>15</sup>

Another example is the relationship between Poland and Hungary, who regularly express their special relationship. The strength of their self-proclaimed friendship is illustrated by centuries-old, close relations between people of Hungary and Poland, weekly meetings between state representatives and even an annual celebration of their friendship on the 23rd of March.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, India and Bangladesh often claim to have a special relationship. Indian foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, called the relationship in December 2021 unique, while expressing the following: "*As far as we are concerned, India and Bangladesh are bound by ties of history, language, spirituality and culture.*"<sup>17</sup> Despite the different backgrounds of these claims, and the contrasting circumstances inducing its continuation, similarities can be found. All claims to a special relationship argue their relationship is unique, regardless of what elements behind this conviction translate to in reality. This unique element is commonly characterized by friendship and intense cooperation, derived from shared ties regarding values, history or other binding aspects.

However, the environment in which these relationships emerge, is entirely different from the relationship between the US and the UK, and appear to serve an entirely different set of political interests. These examples further explain the variety of differences in reasoning with regards to legitimizing the self-proclaimed conviction of 'specialness' by governments. The various reasons governments propose to defend these claims show that Korolev's suggestion of military cooperation being the highest form doesn't universally apply. Yet, it does not take away the strategic significance in the Anglo-American relationship, especially regarding their military and security cooperation. It is the highest form for the US and the UK, which will become evident throughout this thesis. Furthermore, this evidence confirms the necessity to examine their relationship in the context of the War on Terror.

Since their relationship has been labelled special, the Anglo-American relationship has been examined in countless studies, in which scholars attempt to either define or explain its special claim. In his attempt to clarify the Anglo-American claim, Edelman has defined four specific factors. First, the shared values of the English-speaking people. More specifically, the conviction of the presence of these values not merely being an assumption of the elite, but agreed upon across all layers of both the American, and British population. Second, their willingness to fight shoulder to shoulder. Third, their

---

<sup>15</sup> Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?", *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 2 (1998): 231, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7709.00115>.

<sup>16</sup> "The alliance between Poland and Hungary is a historic one," MTI, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://miniszterelnok.hu/the-alliance-between-poland-and-hungary-is-a-historic-one/>.

<sup>17</sup> "India-Bangladesh ties 'special' and 'unique', not comparable with relationship with other countries: Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla," Times of India, accessed May 2, 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-bangladesh-ties-special-and-unique-not-comparable-with-relationship-with-other-countries-foreign-secretary-harsh-varadhan-shringla/articleshow/88305727.cms>.

nuclear cooperation, and fourth, the extensive interaction between their respective intelligence agencies.<sup>18</sup> These four elements do need further explanation, as the manner in which they are described, would insinuate an equal distribution in both country's needs, while also disregarding their own, independent motivations for maintaining the relationship. Especially the fourth factor needs specification. Whereas the cooperation between their intelligence services falls under the UKUSA agreement, its primary purpose is achieving goals of the US. While the UK is aware of their inferior position to the US in terms of technical ability, it still chooses to participate in cooperation defined by unequal distribution. This particular element further corresponds to the widely agreed upon assumption that maintaining the cooperation with the US is more crucial for the UK than it is for the former.<sup>19</sup>

Robert M. Hendershot disagrees, as he stresses the presence of an Anglo-American sentiment derived from a shared cultural affinity. He argues that both Brits and Americans are bound to more than just strategic and economic convergence, which, according to him, became evident in the post-war period, after the necessity of working intensely together during their war efforts was severely diminished. He describes the continuing presence of a sincere feeling of friendship between the two countries, which goes beyond solely a personal connection. This sentimentality is, therefore, a major component responsible for the relationship's durability, as it proved to be strong enough to endure multiple policy convergences, as it did during the Suez crisis and Vietnam. Furthermore, it enabled the relationship to survive a severe decrease in economic equality between the two nations.<sup>20</sup>

Michael Calingaert puts a heavier emphasis on the economic aspect of the special relationship. He argues that the continuation of their shared economic system and its execution helps solidify the relationship's special element. While he acknowledges that the US shares its greatest amount of defence technology with the UK, he does emphasize the unequal nature of the relationship. According to him, the UK must compete for recognition of the US, to be able to occasionally fulfil their desire to influence US economic policies; The UK is, according to Calingaert, the apparent lesser power in the partnership.<sup>21</sup> For Hendershot, Calingaert's assessment of inequality is oversimplified. Hendershot argues that the cultural affinity he advocates emerged from a relational shift during the Vietnam war. During the latter, the US

---

<sup>18</sup> Eric Edelman, "A special relationship in jeopardy," *The American Interest*, accessed March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2010/07/01/a-special-relationship-in-jeopardy/>.

<sup>19</sup> Larysa Hordiienko and Serhii Khamula, "Special relationship between the United Kingdom and the USA: current state and future prospects," *Political Science and Security Studies Journal*, Vol 1, no. 2 (2020): 11-12, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4395111>.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Hendershot, "'Affection is the cement which binds us' Understanding the cultural sinews of the Anglo-American special relationship," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 52-54.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Calingaert, "The Special Relationship — Economic and Business Aspects: American Perspective," in *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY*, ed. Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006), 17-18, 24.

remained primarily reliant on the military aspect of the relationship. However, after the UK refused to provide its American counterpart with military support, the US grew hesitant in requesting military assistance from the UK from this moment forward. However, the relationship remained special, as this consequential hesitance led to a shift in which the military alliance transformed into a cultural alliance, which was accompanied by conditions that gave the UK rejuvenated influence within the relationship. The emphasis on the cultural aspect made the relationship politically valuable for both. Therefore, Hendershot does not necessarily reject the existence of inequality; he rather argues that the cultural component within the relationship is powerful enough to prevent these unequal elements from becoming significant enough to threaten the special relationship.<sup>22</sup>

Within the countless views on the special relationship, Alan Dobson provides a classification to create some clarity within this 80-year ongoing and continuing debate. He defines three schools of thought. The school of sentiment, the school of interest, and the school in between. The school of sentiment accentuates that the relationship's strength is based on shared cultural and democratic principles, resulting in a common vision with regards to approaching international issues. According to the members of the school of sentiment, these factors lead to an unrelenting urge to cooperate. The members of the school of interest tend to be more pragmatic. They argue that as long as the trend of overlapping national interests continues, the relationship is functional. Would the relationship lose its functional element, the claim to a special label to define the relationship would become unjustified. The relationship appears more fragile for the school of interest than for members of the school of sentiment. The school in between is much more specific. These scholars argue that the most critical factors are the shared contribution to the international balance of power, the cooperation in defence and security, and their intertwined economies.<sup>23</sup> According to Kathleen Burk, the most crucial characteristic of the special relationship is their persistent desire to be involved in each-others decision-making in every instance possible.<sup>24</sup>

Yet this thesis will not attempt to define the special relationship. Nor will it attempt to either highlight or reject specific characteristics. Instead, its purpose is to define whether it is unique in one of the proposed components in the current debate. As mentioned, this research focuses on assessing the alliance within the context of the War on Terror. This context, in terms of analysis, inherently prioritizes the strategic aspect of the relationship. Yet, assessing these other characteristics is not irrelevant. While

---

<sup>22</sup> Robert Hendershot, “‘Affection is the cement which binds us’ Understanding the cultural sinews of the Anglo-American special relationship,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 53, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations* (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 2-4.

<sup>24</sup> Kathleen Burk, “Presidents and Prime Ministers,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 33.

the interaction between the leaders within the military aspect of the alliance will be most prominently present in this research, the individual interaction during their joint tenures isn't limited to solely strategic policy. Therefore, the characteristics and interactions within them return throughout the text and will function as complementary components to the primary purpose of the research, consequently explaining the necessity to describe them in this section.

The development of the special relationship will be examined through an assessment of the interactions between the leaders involved, while applying the concept of friendship. This approach automatically grants significance to the individual agent. This has been part of a long-lasting, more general discussion within international relations: What is the decisive factor in determining bilateral outcomes: the individual agent representing the state, or the state as an institutional entity? This debate is, therefore, more critical to assess than the discussion regarding the characteristics. Without advocating for at least individual significance, focussing on the presidents of the US and the prime ministers of the UK would have little value. More importantly, the central premise of this thesis would lose its purpose.

### **2.3 Assessing relationships between states – institutional or individual significance?**

The debate on whether individuals or institutions are determining factors for the outcomes of bilateral relations, has raised numerous questions. How do institutions and individuals relate to each other? Do they exclude each other or function complementary? Furthermore, how does their connection relate to friendship? Before assessing this debate, it might prove useful to approach this question from its most basic form: Examining forms of leadership in which the individual leaders have the most significant domestic influence and the highest degree of institutional independence. This type of leadership automatically translates to increased individual independence on the international stage. In other words, nations defined by a political environment in which the leader has the most individual freedom to forge friendships with other leaders: Authoritarian regimes.

While leaders in authoritarian regimes have a significant degree of independence, their rule is not entirely unilateral. These types of governments contain some degree of collective participation. Suggesting complete independence in foreign affairs would therefore be somewhat oversimplified. However, the elite is often smaller, and when deemed necessary, the leader has the authority to increase or decrease the governmental influence of members of this elite.<sup>25</sup> For example, Vladimir Putin's policymaking exists of multiple weekly meetings with different groups. These groups differ to some extent but consist of a few select regulars. These select regulars form the exclusive group invited to the most critical meeting, consistently taking place on Monday. Those who are not part of this group but are

---

<sup>25</sup> Annamaria Prati, "Cost Cooperation: How Authoritarian Regimes Can Make Credible Commitments," *Committee on International Relations, The University of Chicago* (August 2013): 12-15.

present at other meetings, Putin doesn't trust entirely or has trouble working with.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, Putin's rule is not absolute, as he surrounds himself with consultants. He does, however, unilaterally decide who participates in his consultation.

When assessing bilateral cooperation between authoritarian regimes in general, it predominantly takes place on a regional level, as it does within the Eurasian region. This regional cooperation isn't aimed at forging sincere, genuine relationships to have an external, joint bilateral effect. It rather revolves around a more selfish, internal purpose of defending their regimes. The most dominant power within the Eurasian, authoritarian, integration, is Russia. Putin supports this process, as Russian leadership within a high extent of regional integration adds to the image of a powerful Russia. While these nations are like-minded to some extent, it still hinders an equal dimension because of Russia's hegemonic presence.<sup>27</sup> As will become evident in the next paragraph, the degree of equality is an important component in measuring friendship. This suggestion complicates advocating the presence of trans-national friendship in the Eurasian region; a region characterized by significant individual power predominantly free of institutional limitations. Therefore, it appears that individual freedom and limited institutional influence do not necessarily lead to friendship between state leaders.

As in reality, the majority of Putin's allies have to oblige with his interests. The sole ally that could be considered equal is China. The Russian view on their relationship with China compared to their other foreign relations, is strikingly summarized by Ruslan Pukhov, the head of the Centre for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies in Moscow: "*We have powerful enemies but we do not have powerful friends, that's why we need the support of such a giant as China*"<sup>28</sup> As a consequence of their friendship seemingly based on necessity, their relationship is defined by cooperation within the common ground, while evading topics in which disagreement is likely.<sup>29</sup> So when prominent authoritarian regimes are equally powerful, cooperation is characterized by mutual restraint. Therefore, individual independence of authoritarian leaders does not lead to political friendships, regardless of the degree of equality between the leaders involved.

In contrast, democratic states are defined by forms of leadership with a higher degree of institutional influence. These democratic institutions limit the leader's freedom, yet their high degree of

---

<sup>26</sup> Ol'ga Kryshantovskaya and Stephen White, "Inside the Putin Court: A Research Note," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 7 (2005): 1068-69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130500302830>.

<sup>27</sup> Alessandra Russo and Edward Stoddard, "Why do Authoritarian Leaders do Regionalism? Ontological Security and Eurasian Regional Cooperation," *The International Spectator* 53, no 3 (July 2018): 20-37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2018.1488404>.

<sup>28</sup> Qureshi Aurangzeb, "Flawed US Foreign Policy Encourages Russia-China Alliance," *Foreign Policy Journal*, 29 May 2014, <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/05/29/flawed-us-foreign-policy-encourages-russia-china-alliance/>.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Korolev, "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relations", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 4 (September 2016): 385-86, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pow013>.

influence functions as a driving force. The institutions force the individual agent to engage in personal diplomacy. For the individual leader, being successful in foreign affairs is necessary to sustain individual influence within these institutions. As in democracies, the leader of the state is faced with a higher chance of being replaced than authoritarian leaders. Pressure to achieve success in order to be able to stay in office is therefore far more significant, and being active and successful in their bilateral efforts will help them remain in office. The obligation to be diplomatically active in order to achieve this political success, will automatically lead to a higher amount of friendships between democratic leaders. Therefore, it appears that a higher degree of institutional influence leads to more friendship compared to state forms in which the individual has full bilateral independence.

Yet, what is the role of individuals within these institutions? As this thesis focusses on the individual leaders of the UK and the US, this is crucial to assess. In the earlier mentioned example of Poland and Hungary, it appears that state leaders entering office have to honour this friendship as an act of national duty, regardless of any potential dislike they might have or develop for their Hungarian or Polish counterparts.<sup>30</sup> However, indications that the other perspective is not necessarily inaccurate, can also be found when examining the history of state relations. For example, the current Franco-German relationship is very close. This closeness is in high contrast with their relationship in the early 1970s, when their interaction was much more hostile. Their cold relationship was mainly caused by the economic resurgence of West Germany, which France regarded as a significant threat. Their relationship changed in 1972, when German finance minister Helmut Schmidt met with his French counterpart: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. They became extremely close, and when they took office as state leaders in 1974, it led to a close relationship between France and Germany, which lasts to this day. This development illustrates the noteworthy impact individuals can have on state relations.<sup>31</sup>

The US and the UK show similar trends. Thatcher and Reagan were extremely close, leading to a solid relationship between the UK and the US. However, Reagan's successor, Bush, appeared to despise Thatcher, which led to a distant relationship, and, consequently, a colder relationship on a state level.<sup>32</sup> Further proof of individual significance within the special relationship can be found in their successors. UK's John Major rooted for Bush in his attempts to remain another four years in office. Clinton won, however, and reportedly never overcame Major's support for Bush, leading to a distant state relationship

---

<sup>30</sup> "The alliance between Poland and Hungary is a historic one," MTI, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://miniszterelnok.hu/the-alliance-between-poland-and-hungary-is-a-historic-one/>.

<sup>31</sup> Yuri van Hoef, "Positive Peace through Personal Friendship: Franco-German Reconciliation (1974–1995)," *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Peace* (2021): 9-12, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3\\_54-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3_54-1).

<sup>32</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 84.

during their joint tenure.<sup>33</sup> However, even in the case of the Anglo-American relationship, scholars severely disagree on the degree of individual impact. P.E. Digeser argues that states determine the strength of a relationship, rather than the representative of the state in office. So when studying the concept of friendship, a distinction has to be made between interpersonal relationships and relationships between states. In the former, relationships are defined by emotional commitments. In the latter, the states represent institutions incapable of showing emotion or feelings.<sup>34</sup> Gill Bennett agrees with Digeser, but does not entirely reject individual influence. As he puts it: “*The individual interaction between the leaders of the UK and US have never been truly decisive in the extent to which the two nations successfully worked together through the past.*”<sup>35</sup>

Conversely, Lakoff does argue that a state is often personalized by the leader representing the state.<sup>36</sup> Giacomello, Ferrari and Amadori agree with Lakoff. They argue that the necessity to focus on personal relationships between leaders has mainly emerged after the cold war. They mention three reasons for this; first, the more complex, multipolar and flexible world had led the state leader as an agent to become more significant after the static and rigid structure that characterized the bipolar system of the cold war. Second, the increased willingness of leaders to act as ‘*political CEO’s during international summits,*’ whose outcomes heavily influence international politics. Third, the amplified extent to which media and digital communication push a leader's public image and, consequently, their image as the state representative.<sup>37</sup> Another element that could potentially support the scholars that argue for individual significance, is the media. Media shapes the appearance of the special relationship, and creates an image accessible to the public, in which the image is derived from the individuals representing the states.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, there is undisputed proof that there has been an uninterrupted continuation of institutional cooperation in at least some form since the second World War. Rejecting institutional essence altogether is, therefore, difficult to defend.

As previously explained, the strategic aspect of their relationship is predominantly defined by military cooperation, which consists of the conventional, nuclear, and intelligence level. The conventional

---

<sup>33</sup> Yuri van Hoef, “Leadership through Friendship: The Dangers and Advantages of State Leaders Establishing Close Personal Relations,” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): 70-72, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21631>.

<sup>34</sup> P. E. Digeser, “Friendship between States,” *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 2 (April 2009): 324-25, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123408000525>.

<sup>35</sup> Gill Bennett, “Conclusion,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 443.

<sup>36</sup> George Lakoff, “Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf,” *Cognitive Semiotics* 4, no. 2 (1992): 465, <https://doi.org/10.1515/cogsem.2009.4.2.5>.

<sup>37</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 248, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane, *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 4.

relates to military operations, in which the individual is undisputedly involved. As in the case of the UK, the monarch is the official head of the army. Peter Hennessy distinctively argues that: “*war is an intensely prime ministerial activity.*”<sup>39</sup> In the case of the US, the president is the commander of the army without any monarchical intervention. The only restriction being that military operations taking longer than 30 days require the approval of congress.<sup>40</sup> Both indicate the severe extent of authority the individual has in the conventional level of military cooperation. While their presence in the intelligence and nuclear part is less noteworthy, it appears unlikely that any important decision within these aspects does not at least require some form of consultation with the state's leader. Neither perspective should be ruled out, as both can rely on examples in practice that corresponds to their credibility.

Therefore, this essay will use a middle way, which is best described by Kathleen Burk: “significant but not determining.”<sup>41</sup> Significant in the sense that the extent to which the leaders are close can have a significant effect on the closeness of the general, institutional relationship. Not determining in the sense that there is always a continuation of institutional cooperation, regardless of whether the prime minister and president are close. This distinction means that a theory is required that considers a president or a prime minister at least a significant element in determining the strength of a bilateral relationship. Furthermore, it needs to offer a proper conceptualization in measuring political friendship, as this is needed to determine its influence in the first place.

## **2.4 Conceptualization of Friendship**

In the previous paragraph, the relationship between institutional and individual significance and how this corresponded to friendship is explained. Yet, how does friendship directly relate to politics? The utility of answering this question lies in the fact that this relationship is necessary to describe to understand any distinct conceptualization. Because the strength of political relationships, at least within the special relationship, has regularly shown deviations from relationships defined by a common ideology. Wilson and Nixon had a solid relationship despite having different political views. Conversely, Wilson had a weak relationship with Johnson, while sharing the same political views. Edward Heath had similar political views as Nixon, yet their relationship was weak. These conclusions indicate that friendship has the ability to transcend political ideology, while consequently showcasing its ability to move and affect relationships independently from the influence sphere of the institutional agencies.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2002), 45.

<sup>40</sup> “The Executive Branch,” The White House, accessed March 30, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-executive-branch/>.

<sup>41</sup> Kathleen Burk, “Presidents and Prime Ministers,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 8.

<sup>42</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 96.



The question remains, however, by which method of analysis friendship can be measured on a political level. As mentioned, the theory requires a clear conceptualization of friendship and an emphasis on the individual politically. The theory of Van Hoef applies to both. Within his conceptualization, he describes five elements used to measure political friendship. First affect, which relates to shared elements, such as interests or specific personality traits. When the degree of affect is high, the chances of the individuals developing a strong relationship increase. In the political sense, friendship is defined by a shared political interest. The common interest within the friendship often expresses itself through the second element of friendship: Their “*grand project*.” The joint efforts during the War on Terror could be regarded as such a project. Such endeavours can strengthen the project itself, but more importantly, the bond between the friends.<sup>43</sup> The grand project can be regarded as the core of a political friendship. Throughout history, it has become evident that these grand projects can lead to friendships, but changes within these grand projects can also damage these relationships.<sup>44</sup>

The third and fourth aspects of the conceptualization of friendship revolve around acts within a friendship. These acts are split between altruistic reciprocity and moral obligations. Altruistic reciprocity refers to actions undertaken for the sake of the friendship alone.<sup>45</sup> This altruistic element turns the relationship into a friendship. The unselfish and voluntary nature of altruistic reciprocity contradicts the fourth concept, moral obligations. These obligations are demands expected to be fulfilled. In a less radical sense, van Hoef defines these as ‘*active appeals for assistance*.’ Failing to meet these demands can have significant consequences for the friendship itself.<sup>46</sup> Lastly, the concept of equality. If there is no equality among and between the parties involved, their relationship cannot be defined as a friendship. The concept of equality is, in the case of relationships between state leaders, therefore often the most significant one.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.5 Methodology

In this chapter, we have assessed what state relationships and their strategic aspects entail. The focus on the strategic aspect will likely offer the most important conclusions in measuring the relationship. In addition, focussing on this aspect corresponds with the main context of this thesis: The War on Terror. Second, the definition of a special relationship and the scholarly debate on the special relationship between the US and the UK is examined. The characteristics proposed by other scholars needed to be mentioned, as the interaction between the leaders isn’t limited to solely the strategic realm. Third, the

---

<sup>43</sup> Yuri van Hoef, “Leadership through Friendship: The Dangers and Advantages of State Leaders Establishing Close Personal Relations,” *Journal of Leadership Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): 70-72, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21631>.

<sup>44</sup> Yuri van Hoef, “Positive Peace through Personal Friendship: Franco-German Reconciliation (1974–1995),” *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Peace* (2021): 4-5, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3\\_54-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3_54-1).

<sup>45</sup> Yuri van Hoef, “Leadership through Friendship,” 70-72.

<sup>46</sup> Yuri van Hoef, “Positive Peace through Personal Friendship,” 4-6.

<sup>47</sup> Van Hoef, “Leadership through Friendship,” 70.

relationships between institutional and individual significance was assessed, as both an explanation and an introduction to the debate on the proper emphasis within examining bilateral relationships. This thesis will argue, after considering both sides of the debate, that in the case of the US and the UK, individual influence is at least significant. Fourth, a theory was required that offered two key elements: First, the perspective of an individual representative of a state as a significant actor. Second, a clear conceptualization that offered a suitable method of measurement to thoroughly analyse these relationships. The theory by van Hoef offers both. His theory is revolved around individual state actors, and it defines five specific elements on which a relationship can be measured: Affect, the grand project, moral obligations, altruistic reciprocity, and equality. These five elements will function as separate tools to analyse the relationships of the three prime ministers of the UK and three US presidents, during the War on Terror between 1997 and 2017. This war will serve as a red line throughout this essay, while the biographies of the leaders involved will serve as primary sources.

All these elements combined lead to the following method in assessing the main conclusions necessary to answer the main research question: The general timeline of their joint tenures will serve as the main narrative. In this narrative, the content of the biographies, especially regarding important events, meetings, and statements, will function as one of the main two components forming the basis of the research method. The other main component is the application of the theory on the content of the biographies. Thereafter, the legitimacy of these results will be tested through specific steps.

First, it will be compared with content of the biography of the other leader in question. Second, the same content will be assessed in writings by people who have worked closely with these leaders at the time, such as cabinet members, aides, and advisors, to determine the validity of the statements regarding the events in question. Third, the examination of how this translated to reality. Fourth, secondary literature from scholars and political analysts will be added as a final fact-checking framework, combined with media assessments of the events in question. In addition, results of public opinion polls will be added when deemed appropriate. Naturally, media has significant effect on the public opinion, which on its own can affect the position of their state leader, which eventually, has the ability to affect the relationship in general. Finally, these results will be traced back to the initial conclusions regarding the statements in the biographies, after which can be determined whether the outcome of the earlier application of the components of friendship still remain valid.

When following these steps for all the joint tenures of the leaders, this thesis will hopefully be able to draw conclusions on the development of the special relationship in the general institutional sense, which is the central aim of the main research question. In addition to these steps, all the personal characteristics of the presidents and prime ministers will be defined, based on their biographies, biographies of the other leaders, people close to them, and assessments from secondary literature, to create an even better understanding of the individuals involved. This method will therefore evade

subjective complications that often accompany the usage of sources such as biographies. The method uses the content, but verifies its validity through multiple stages to use it most effectively.

Finally, the findings in this research showed that some elements of van Hoef's theory are, on occasion, difficult to apply. Altruistic reciprocity, for example, is difficult to measure as it is hard to assess whether a state leader did something merely for the sake of the friendship, or to serve their own political interest. These difficulties do not mean that elements are rejected. Yet, some will be more important than others. Another essential specification regarding the theory is related to the grand project. While, as a component, very significant, a distinction has to be made between regular joint bilateral efforts and grand projects. To regard all instances the leaders work together as grand projects, would lead to a significant amount of projects between the leaders, and would therefore increase the chances of contradicting conclusions. Findings in this thesis show contradictive conclusions when assessing all of them, but showcase a great extent of alignment when choosing the most significant ones.

Therefore, a set of propositions is needed to assess this significant component properly. First, at least some individual interaction between the leaders of the US and the UK has to be present. The findings will show that, in some instances, one of the two states is managing the execution of a project without directly consulting the other leader at any stage of the project. While institutional strategic cooperation may be present during these projects, it cannot be considered a grand project within measuring political friendship, as they did not involve individual interaction. Secondly, the projects must take place outside the US and UK. This appears straightforward, but it does exclude, on the surface, instances with considerable interaction between the leaders. For example, Clinton's assistance in Northern Ireland for Blair appeared significant, yet the potential consequences both face with a particular outcome differ to such an extent that it is impossible to consider it a grand project. Aiding in a domestic dispute of a foreign agent will never carry the same weight as having to deal with the domestic dispute as the domestic agent. Therefore, these interactions will not be sufficient to provide valuable conclusions, as the project lacks the necessary pressure to truly test the relationship.

This last point relates to the third preposition: the project needs to be significant enough to make or break the relationship, which corresponds with van Hoef's description regarding this component. For example, the joint efforts of Bush and Blair in West Africa do not compare with their efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The outcome of this project would have had little effect on both. Furthermore, considering this project equally important as Afghanistan or Iraq would severely devalue the theoretical component in terms of analysis, as granting them the same amount of importance would lead to contradictive and distorting results. Critically applying these components in addition to the previously described method, will increase the chances of accurately defining a definitive answer to the earlier introduced main research question. In summary, political friendship is measured in the context of the

most imperative expression of their strategic cooperation between 1997 and 2017: The War on Terror. Conclusions on both will enable this thesis to explain the general development of the relationship.

### 3. How can the relationships between Blair and his American counterparts be defined?

#### 3.1 The Special Relationship after 1991

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, Winston Churchill would, for the first time, call the relationship between the US and the UK special.<sup>48</sup> The United Kingdom is therefore regularly regarded as the inventor of the Special Relationship as a concept. Inventing, and continuously emphasising the concept and its central characteristics; shared interests, a common ideology, and a network of interstate personal contacts, corresponded to the global position the UK found itself in during the post-war period. After the Second World War, the UK had lost most of its once immense empire. This loss led to a concern among the British elite that the United Kingdom would lose its influence on a global stage.<sup>49</sup> During the Second World War, the ties between the US and the UK had strengthened significantly, mainly due to their shared management of the war efforts.<sup>50</sup> This cooperation offered both states potential advantages for maintaining this close alliance. Apart from the British desire to maintain their diplomatic influence on a global stage, it would also help the UK to effectively cope with the loss of their empire, as cooperation with the US would still lead them to have a significant global impact, the sole difference being the impacts shape. As the UK still possessed territories throughout the World, it would prove a powerful military ally for the US. This ally was precisely what the US needed after the Second World War, both as a new world leader and as valuable addition to their military ability which was needed to counteract the swift rise of the Soviet threat.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, considering the fact that the special relationship was born out of a common threat, what would keep the relationship together if there wasn't any? Laryssa Hordiienko argues that their strategic cooperation helps enable them to achieve their goal of international security.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Alice Pannier argued that leaning intensely on solely the military aspect appears to be more stable than the basis for the relationship between Germany and France. This relationship relies on, according to her, much more

---

<sup>48</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane, *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Larysa Hordiienko and Serhii Khamula, "Special relationship between the United Kingdom and the USA: current state and future prospects," *Political Science and Security Studies Journal*, Vol 1, no. 2 (2020): 11-12, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4395111>.

<sup>50</sup> Alice Pannier, "Bilateral Relations," *Global Diplomacy*, (September 2019): 29, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3_2).

<sup>51</sup> Robert Hendershot, "'Affection is the cement which binds us' Understanding the cultural sinews of the Anglo-American special relationship," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 54-55.

<sup>52</sup> L. Hordiienko & S. Khamula, "Special relationship between the United Kingdom and the USA: current state and future prospects," 10-16.

fragile elements such as economic cooperation.<sup>53</sup> Yet doesn't the fragile relational nature of a strategic emphasis lie in the absence of a clear common threat without an apparent, meaningful necessity to achieve international security? Robert M. Hendershot argues that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the alliance continued, illustrated by the intense cooperation during operation Desert-Storm in the 1990s.<sup>54</sup> However, this suggestion seems highly debatable when considering the significant policy convergence that characterized the Anglo-American relationship throughout the 90s, arguably caused by the lack of strategic purpose.

The questionability of suggesting a stable continuation of the Special Relationship after the Cold War, lies within evidence of this clear policy divergence during the 1990s. The divergence was evident in their respective responses to the new world order that would emerge after the fall of the Soviet Union. This new world order was mainly characterized by the rise of the PRC and India, who both successfully challenged the US and the EU on an economic level. Regional trading blocs such as ASEAN and Mercosur further undermined US economic interests. The rise of the PRC was also accompanied by substantial growth in political influence on a global scale, as they solidified their hegemonic position in East-Asia, but made several additional agreements with countries outside their regular influence sphere, specifically in Latin America and North Africa. This expansion meant that China's threat to the US wasn't just economically, but also politically. The US wanted to maintain a stable relationship with China, yet they drew a firm line regarding China's foreign endeavours, predominantly in the strategic realm. For example, in 1995, when the Chinese government conducted missile tests close to Taiwan, Clinton immediately sent US carriers to the Taiwan sea.

The UK took an entirely different approach to this new world order. They actively sought to profit financially, illustrated by the increasing importance of Chinese diplomacy for the UK, which helped bring London back to its old position as the international investment and insurance centre. The UK wanted to ensure its global economic position, rather than its strategic position. This was in contrast to the American emphasis on strategic interests, part of their explicit desire to retain their position as the global world leader. Furthermore, the UK evidently paid more attention to the EU, despite domestic criticism of this shift potentially threatening British sovereignty. Whereas, the US had, as mentioned, shifted its attention towards East-Asia. They applied a more ad-hoc form of diplomacy, in which the UK would find themselves often in second place.

This policy divergence was a symbolic step back to the first few years after the Second World War, in which the interest of countries was diverging, yet back then saved by the mutual recognition of

---

<sup>53</sup> Alice Pannier, "Bilateral Relations," *Global Diplomacy*, (September 2019): 29, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3_2).

<sup>54</sup> Robert Hendershot, "'Affection is the cement which binds us' Understanding the cultural sinews of the Anglo-American special relationship," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 54-55.

the Soviet threat soon after the war ended. Regardless, the 1990s were characterized by a special relationship crumbling down, illustrated by a severe decrease in their similar interests and their visibly uncoordinated joint policy on a strategic level.<sup>55</sup>

This relational specification of the 1990s serves as a necessary framework to emphasize, mainly two elements. First, it is essential to assess the fragile nature of the strategic aspect. As this aspect is central in this essay, both benefits and shortcomings must be described comprehensively. Second, it provides valuable consideration of the fragile diplomatic circumstances in which the leaders of the first joint tenure in this research found themselves. Apart from this apparent diplomatic rupture on an institutional level, personal diplomacy during these years did not necessarily serve as a converging counterweight against the institutional divergence.

In the early 1990s, prime minister John Major had become friends with President George Bush senior, after the latter had endured a somewhat cold relationship with Thatcher's predecessor.<sup>56</sup> Especially Major's active and outspoken support for Operation Desert Storm, aimed at liberating Kuwait, was a welcome change for Bush after Thatcher's dismissive attitude towards the foreign policy plans of the US.<sup>57</sup> Bush famously compared meetings with Thatcher's to visits to the dentist.<sup>58</sup> Policy disputes continued despite their apparent friendship, leading to the British press being openly convinced the special relationship was over. The most significant disagreements between Bush and Major revolved around the crisis in Bosnia. This particular crisis continued to play a major part in the poor relationship between John Major and Bush's successor, Bill Clinton.

Major called Clinton "*alarmingly under-briefed*" when it came his approach to the crisis.<sup>59</sup> Clinton's interventions in Ireland further worsened the relationship. In 1994, Clinton offered Sin Feinn leader Gary Adams a visa. Major was furious, and refused to talk to Clinton for weeks.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, Clinton was reportedly annoyed with Major regarding his overall cautious attitude within foreign policy.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, multiple accounts suggested he had not forgiven the Major administration for openly

---

<sup>55</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 120-23, 125.

<sup>56</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 86-87.

<sup>57</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>58</sup> Kathleen Burk, "Presidents and Prime Ministers," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 29.

<sup>59</sup> Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," 86-87.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Patrick Cullinane, *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 4.

<sup>61</sup> McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941*, 117.

supporting Bush in his election against Clinton. The latter would elaborate on both granting the visa and his reported animosity towards Major dating back to the elections, in his memoirs: *Some of the press implied that I had issued the visa to appeal to the Irish vote in America and because I was still angry at Major for his attempts to help President Bush during the campaign. It wasn't true.*<sup>62</sup> Regardless of whether it was true, the relationship in later years appeared for both to be an obligation, while neither president did anything significant to fix their issues.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, it could be questioned whether Clinton had any sympathy for the idea of the special relationship at all. When considering the memoirs of Ray Seitz, US ambassador in the UK between 1991 and 1994, this suggestion seems at least somewhat valid:

Just before the Prime Minister arrived at the White House, Clinton was sitting with a few aides in the Oval Office. 'Do not forget to say "special relationship" when the press comes in,' one of them joked—a little like 'do not forget to put out the cat.' 'Oh, yes,' Clinton said. 'How could I forget? The 'special relationship!' And he threw back his head and laughed.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, this statement corresponds to the earlier described institutional convergence after the Cold War. In addition to the earlier specifics regarding this divergence, the UK sought a leading role within the UN and the EU, further amplifying the diplomatic rupture. Despite these diverging interests, the UK was still more keen to maintain the special relationship during the Major-Clinton years.<sup>65</sup> And despite the increasing distance, the UK still appeared to be America's most important ally. Sir John Kerr, the British ambassador in Washington between 1995-1997, stated that, during these years, no embassy in Washington had the same influence as the British one.<sup>66</sup> Clinton, however, seemed to ignore the possibility of the Special Relationship being fruitful entirely.<sup>67</sup> Considering the cold relationship between Clinton and Major, in addition to the described convergence, the Anglo-American faced a dual relational decline: In both the institutional and individual sense, the Special Relationship was falling apart when Tony Blair entered office in 1997.

---

<sup>62</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 523.

<sup>63</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 86-87.

<sup>64</sup> Raymond Seitz, *Over Here* (London: Phoenix, 1999), 322.

<sup>65</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 118.

<sup>66</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, "The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo-American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007," in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 205.

<sup>67</sup> McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941*, 120-23, 125.



### 3.2 Personal Relationship Blair & Clinton

When Blair entered office, the strategic purpose of the Special Relationship appeared to return, as both leaders were faced with the beginning of the War on Terror and the ongoing tensions in the Balkan.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, despite the bad shape of the Special Relationship, it appeared on the surface that, under the Blair years, the relationship would be restored to a large extent. It was argued that the UK enjoyed a positive reputation in the US during these years, which was mainly contributed to Blair's overall competence in cooperating with US presidents.<sup>69</sup>

Blair would work with both Clinton and Bush, and reported a considerable difference between them: “People often ask me: ‘Tell me, how was it with Bill Clinton, and then George Bush?’ I always reply jokingly: ‘Here’s a real insight: they were very different from each other!’”<sup>70</sup> During the troubling Clinton-Major years, the young and promising politician had become the Labour party leader in 1994, and would be elected prime minister three years later, at age 44.<sup>71</sup> He was extremely self-confident and firmly believed in his ability to control events.<sup>72</sup> In his memoirs, Blair doesn’t shy away from this image: “I had led the Labour Party to victory. I had reshaped it. I had given it a chance to be a true party of government. All of this took a degree of political skill and courage.”<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, Clinton was conceived as a highly charismatic figure, accompanied by his remarkable ability as a communicator. He was known for possessing the quality to process ideas and information quickly.<sup>74</sup> The substantial amount of similarities regarding personality traits appeared to improve the chances of a rejuvenation of the, once successful, joint bilateral cooperation. Clinton was attracted by Blair's energy and his ideas, which made Clinton seem more welcoming to embrace the relationship with the UK than he did during the Major years.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 86-87.

<sup>69</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, “The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007,” in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 214.

<sup>70</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 13.

<sup>71</sup> Hopkins, “The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007,” 200.

<sup>72</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 258, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>73</sup> Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life*, 29.

<sup>74</sup> Fred I. Greenstein, “The Qualities of Effective Presidents: An Overview from FDR to Bill Clinton,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2000): 180, 183-85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0360-4918.2000.00104.x>.

<sup>75</sup> Kathleen Burk, “Presidents and Prime Ministers,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 29.

The two first met on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1995, in Washington. Clinton's speech suggested a clearly scripted diplomatic assessment of the special relationship. However, it could be argued that the positive assessment of the relationship was a sign that Clinton was already looking in the future, with Tony Blair as, in his eyes, the right person to make the Trans-Atlantic connection useful again. At least a part of Clinton's attraction towards Blair likely lay in the fact that the future prime minister of the UK had inspired his new Labour movement on the New Democrat Movement of Clinton.<sup>76</sup> *I also had my first meeting with the impressive young opposition leader, Tony Blair, who was in the process of reviving the Labour Party with an approach remarkably similar to what we had tried to do with the DLC.*<sup>77</sup> Blair used Clinton's ideas to gain inspiration on the most effective way to gain domestic power. Consequently, Clinton made a considerable effort to have a private moment with Blair on this particular day. The suggestion that this conversation must have gone well is credible, because one year later, he was invited to the White House, where he was granted an extraordinarily long, one-hour meeting in the Oval Office, while not even being leader yet. The night before the meeting, he had met with Hilary Clinton, Bill Clinton's wife, who would later express to her husband that Blair's ideas corresponded perfectly to his. It, therefore, seems likely that the solid foundation for their relationship, had already been laid before Blair started his tenure as British prime minister.

When he did enter office, the New Labour and New Democrat Movement quickly merged into third-way politics. This movement was defined by the purpose of establishing an international social-democratic movement.<sup>78</sup> This merge further proposes the conviction that all the right conditions for a great relationship to emerge were present, mainly concerning the degree of affect. In both their biographies, they distinctively mention elements they have in common. As Blair states in his memoir:|

We were political soul-mates. We shared pretty much the same analysis of the weakness of progressive politics. We were both quintessential modernisers. We were both informal in style and young in outlook for our age. And both of us were at one level easy-going; but when you reached right down, there was a lot of granite providing the foundation.<sup>79</sup>

Clinton expressed mutual affect towards Blair in his biography: *“Blair was young, articulate, and forceful, and we shared many of the same political views.”*<sup>80</sup> In line with their earlier discussed third-way

---

<sup>76</sup> James Ellison, “Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 322-23.

<sup>77</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 645.

<sup>78</sup> Ellison, “Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order,” 323-24.

<sup>79</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 231.

<sup>80</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 705.

merge, they shared similar views on the market economy and necessary reforms regarding social welfare.<sup>81</sup> Blair and Clinton both shared a progressive, modern and liberal vision.<sup>82</sup> Another important shared vision related to foreign policy, as both desired to emphasize the position of the UK as the “Atlantic Bridger”, which advocated for a strong role of the UK within Europe, with the former serving as the continent's bilateral representative.<sup>83</sup> Concerning foreign policy, they also shared some potential shortcomings, as similar to Clinton, Blair had little experience with foreign affairs before entering office.<sup>84</sup> This lack of experience did not seem to be an issue in the first months of Blair's leadership, as he was preoccupied with his domestic agenda, leading to limited focus on foreign affairs. The majority of his diplomatic responsibilities were handed to his secretary of state, Robin Cook. In addition, Clinton would not request British assistance within his foreign policy until late 1998.<sup>85</sup> Apart from the absence of a notable, common threat, both had to deal with severe domestic issues. Blair was forced to focus on the dispute in Northern Ireland. Clinton, meanwhile, was in the midst of his impeachment process after his affair with Monica Lewinsky:

During the government shutdown in late 1995, when very few people were allowed to come to work in the White House and those who were there were working late, I'd had an inappropriate encounter with Monica Lewinsky and would do so again on other occasions between November and April, when she left the White House for the Pentagon.<sup>86</sup>

When Blair made his first trip to the USA as Prime Minister in 1998, Clinton was in the midst of the fight against these allegations. Blair supported him actively, which granted him much credit from Clinton. It is argued that Blair later used this credit to gain US support for his efforts in Northern Ireland.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, we could still regard this as an act of altruistic reciprocity by Blair, regardless of what

---

<sup>81</sup> Jane M. Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>82</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>83</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 86-88.

<sup>84</sup> Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” 63.

<sup>85</sup> James Ellison, “Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 324.

<sup>86</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life*, 720.

<sup>87</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, “The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007,” in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 209.

having Clinton on his good side could mean for him politically. Either way, Clinton seemed sincerely grateful for Blair's support:

On February 5 and 6, Tony and Cherie Blair came to the United States for a two-day state visit. They were a sight for sore eyes for both Hillary and me. They made us laugh, and Tony gave me strong support in public, emphasizing our common approach to economic and social problems and to foreign policy.<sup>88</sup>

Clinton would return the favour to Blair, actively aiding him in the Northern Ireland affair. As since the 1960s, 'the Troubles' had been tormenting the Irish territory. The conflict mainly revolved around the question of Northern Ireland's future. On one side were the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the political party Sinn Fein, collaborating with catholic republicans. They proposed an Irish nation-state, which would unify Northern Ireland with Ireland. On the other side were the protestants unionists and their leader David Trimble, who advocated for Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. Prime minister Blair was in clear favour of the latter.<sup>89</sup> After extended meetings between both parties, the issue was resolved on Good Friday 1998, after almost 40 years of fighting, with Northern Ireland staying part of the United Kingdom.<sup>90</sup> Northern Ireland would receive an independent assembly regarding political representation, and in return, both sides would lay down their arms.<sup>91</sup> This was a huge political victory for Blair, who gave significant credit to president Bill Clinton for his aid.<sup>92</sup> Admittedly, other individuals had far more impact on establishing the agreement; however, Clinton proved to be at least a factor.<sup>93</sup>

While it is debatable whether the US had any specific things to gain with involvement in Northern Ireland, this could be regarded as altruistic reciprocity, regardless of whether Clinton returned the favour to Blair for his support after his impeachment. When considering the following quote by Clinton in his memoirs, his assistance did seem sincere: "*Good Friday, April 10, was one of the happiest days of my presidency.*"<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, in the weeks before the peace, Clinton kept backing Blair without the latter

---

<sup>88</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 724.

<sup>89</sup> Steven J. Brams and Jeffrey M. Togman, "Cooperation through Threats: The Northern Ireland Case," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31, no. 1 (March 1998): 32-33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/420430>.

<sup>90</sup> Etain Tannam, "Explaining the Good Friday Agreement: A Learning Process," *Government and Opposition* 36, no. 4 (2001): 493-94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-7053.00078>.

<sup>91</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, "The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007," in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 209.

<sup>92</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 193.

<sup>93</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 324.

<sup>94</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life*, 730.

having to ask for this assistance.<sup>95</sup> Yet, considering Clinton's assistance as altruistic reciprocity, becomes problematic when assessing this quote by Clinton on the proposal of a framework for peace resolution with regards to Northern Ireland during John Major already in 1993: *It was a wonderful Christmas present, one that I hoped would give me an opportunity to play a role in resolving a problem I had first become interested in as a student at Oxford.*<sup>96</sup>

This statement complicates assessing both the support by Blair during the Lewinsky-affair and the support from Clinton in Northern Ireland. Clinton's quote would appear to suggest that Clinton would have been keen to actively aid in the affair, regardless of who would be prime minister. This is also arguable when considering the fact that Clinton had tried to intervene in the conflict during the Major years, seemingly regardless of the lack of personal affect he seemed to share with Major. Furthermore, arguing against the conviction that Blair would merely assist Clinton during the Lewinsky-affair to get his support in Northern Ireland would only be somewhat valid under the assumption that Blair was fully aware of Clinton's pre-dated interest in the dispute. While not rejecting the possibility, all these contradictory circumstances combined do not lead to a definitive conviction that any of these acts could be regarded as altruistic reciprocity.

In addition, Clinton's assistance in Northern Ireland can not be regarded as an actual grand project, as it does not apply to two of the precomposed conditions: It took place on British soil, and it wasn't long-lasting and significant enough to potentially jeopardize the relationship. The first real, joint foreign project they shared related to events that would eventually lead to the War on Terror. To properly understand this central, strategic red line that will follow through the joint tenures in this essay, it is necessary to understand its background. While the background of the events could be traced back to as far as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it will be described more briefly and start in 1979. This year will be used as a starting point, as the main perpetrators regarding the events surrounding the War on Terror would surface.

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The US and the West proved expeditious in their response, defeating the Soviet Union and for the moment, stopping the further spread of Communism. The coalition that would fight and eventually defeat the Soviet Union would lay the basis for the defining threats within the War on Terror. Apart from the US, Western Europe, Pakistan, and Saudi-Arabia, the 'Muhadjeen' had joined the alliance, a group consisting of Afghan and Arab Muslims. Among them, was Osama Bin-Laden.<sup>97</sup> During the Reagan administration, the Iran-Iraq war would be most significant, in which the US claimed to be neutral but provided military assistance to Iraq. More specifically, Reagan

---

<sup>95</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 322-23.

<sup>96</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 508.

<sup>97</sup> Shamila Ahmed, *The 'War on Terror', State Crime & Radicalization* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), 115-17.

actively encouraged Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to acquire weapons of mass destruction, which would later prove to be a significant development within the prelude of the most significant events during the War on Terror.<sup>98</sup>

The Middle-East policy of the US required strategic revision when their former ally, Iraq, invaded Kuwait in 1990, a crucial state for the US in the region. Both Iraq and Iran had now clearly unfolded as threats to US interests in the region. This shift was accompanied by a visible growth in US presence in the region, illustrated by a substantial increase in military presence in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and eventually Oman.<sup>99</sup> In 1996, the first distinct step towards what would become the War on Terror: Osama Bin-Laden declared war on America. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1996, Bin-Laden released a video, recorded from a cave in Tora Bora, in eastern Afghanistan. The Saudi-born Bin-Laden presented himself as a devoted Islamic nationalist and blamed the West for the majority of the misery the Islamic people had endured throughout the 20th century. He argued that since 1919, the West had divided the Middle East simply based on oil interests, without any regard for the people in the Middle East. He marked this point as the start of a century of humiliation and exploitation. The war against the US and its Western allies would be aimed at retrieving their pride.<sup>100</sup>

The basic premise of Bin-Laden's justification for starting this war with the West, would remain a returning premise within the motives of terrorist groups that would continue the anti-Western efforts initiated by Bin-Laden and Al-Qaeda. To illustrate this continuation, the Islamic State, formerly known as ISIS, released a video called: "End of the Sykes-Picot", referring to the treaty of 1916 in which the Western division of the Middle East was determined.<sup>101</sup> This video had the same purpose as the Bin-Ladens video and was released almost 20 years later, illustrating both Bin-Ladens prominence in starting the War efforts and his continuing inspiration for the terrorist groups dominating the later stages of the War on Terror.

However, the foundation for Bin-Laden's rise had already been constructed in the years prior, ironically, for a significant part, by the West itself. As mentioned, Bin-Laden had played a major role in extruding the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Bin-Laden came from a wealthy family that, among other philanthropical investments, sponsored scholarships for prestigious American academic institutions, such as Yale and Harvard. After the events in Afghanistan, Bin-Laden stayed in close contact with the US. In

---

<sup>98</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>99</sup> Steven Wright, *United States and Persian Gulf Security, the Foundations of the War on Terror* (Reading: Garnet Publishing (UK) Ltd, 2007), 2-4.

<sup>100</sup> Patrick Tyler, *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East, from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 467-69.

<sup>101</sup> Yassamine Mather, "The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and Current Conflict in the Middle East," *Critique* 42, no. 3 (November 26, 2014): 471-72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2014.972151>.

1989, the CIA helped him set up a major arms depot, which would later serve as the exact location on which Al-Qaeda would be founded. After the US increased its presence in Saudi-Arabia in 1991, Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda officially detached themselves from Western support. This detachment can be explained by the fact that Bin-Laden considered the increased US presence as a similar crime to Soviet intervention in 1979. According to them, the military expansion illustrated an active intrusion by external forces, not being part of the cultural or religious realm defining the region.<sup>102</sup>

The other threat to the West within this War on Terror was Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq. After the Gulf War had ended in 1991, a no-fly zone was maintained over Iraq, which continued under the Clinton administration. Domestic opposition pushed for an increased regular presence of the US in the Middle East, and, more importantly, a regime change in Iraq. Specifically, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Clinton remained hesitant. The UK kept supporting the Clinton administration, Tony Blair included. They worked actively together in their joint efforts to contain Iraq with air strikes.

The active UK support could be regarded as remarkable, as they were preoccupied with the beginning of the Kosovo affair, the main reason many other Western countries did not actively participate. In 1998, Saddam terminated his participation with the (UNSCOM) the UN inspection team. Clinton decided to retaliate with four uninterrupted days of air and missile attacks: Operation Desert Fox. Blair assiduously supported the operation.<sup>103</sup> In addition to the air strikes, the Iraqi Liberation act was passed in 1998, which meant support from the US government for Iraqi opponent groups challenging the Saddam regime.<sup>104</sup>

Blair and Clintons initial, mutual consensus on foreign policy can be regarded as a continuation of their affect within their first projects. However, this assumption can be disputed for two reasons: First, disagreement did appear within the part of the conflict against Bin-Laden. In Augustus 1998, embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were bombed by Al-Qaeda. Clinton reacted to this with attacks on Taliban training camps in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, rumoured to belong to Bin-Laden. Blair supported Clinton's response, but later claimed Clinton might have been too soft on Bin-Laden.<sup>105</sup> Second, when considering the grand-project prepositions described in the methodology chapter, none of their significant interactions apply to all three. Lewinsky and Northern Ireland were domestic disputes for one of the leaders. Their joint project in the Middle East complied with the first two prepositions but was not substantial enough to make or break their relationship.

Regardless, their next challenge would become their distinct grand project: The war in Kosovo.

---

<sup>102</sup> Shamila Ahmed, *The 'War on Terror', State Crime & Radicalization* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), 122-23.

<sup>103</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 61-62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>104</sup> Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," 60.

<sup>105</sup> Sharp, "Poodle or Partner?," 73.

Their shared vision regarding foreign policy would be jeopardized in handling this conflict. Initially, Clinton and Blair shared the same vision on the right policy in the Balkan, as opposed to the different outlook Clinton and Blair's predecessor Major had.<sup>106</sup> Throughout the 1990s, the Balkan was characterized by conflict. Many Western countries were hesitant to intervene in the region, as it contained regions and disputes that were not directly threatening other NATO members, which meant an intervention would be against UN resolutions. The dispute occurred outside their borders and would be against a recognized state, Serbia, for the first time. However, since images of Slobodan Milosevic expressing cruelty against human rights in Bosnia, which involved ethnic cleansing and concentration camps, went all across the world in 1995, public opinion pushed the Western states to get involved. These interventions led to numerous casualties, and many regarded the intervention as too late in hindsight. This political regret resurfaced during the Kosovo campaign.<sup>107</sup> Kosovo made the same attempt as Bosnia did four years prior, when they tried to break away from Serbia. Similar to Bosnia, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic again responded brutally. Especially Blair demanded action, and NATO eventually agreed to use air forces. Milosevic did not surrender, however, and the initial discussion over the question concerning the use of ground troops resurfaced.<sup>108</sup> Blair's active backing of the initial US initiative to enter the Kosovo war was partially due to the fact that he wanted to ensure the place of the UK within the new global distribution of power that emerged after the end of the cold war. This desire corresponded to his proclaimed doctrine of the international community<sup>109</sup>, which he proposed in Chicago on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1999:

We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper. We cannot ignore new political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate. We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>107</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, "Blair's Kosovo Campaign Political Communications, the Battle for Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *Civil Wars* 3, no. 1 (2000): 55-58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240008402431>.

<sup>108</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, "The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo-American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997-2007," in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 209.

<sup>109</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 118.

<sup>110</sup> Tony Blair, "Doctrine of the International Community," (Chicago Economic Club, Chicago, IL, April 22, 1999)



This doctrine essentially meant a justifiability to intervene in other states' affairs in case of genocide or other acts against humanity being carried out.<sup>111</sup> The premise of his doctrine corresponded to the events in Kosovo and justified military intervention. Furthermore, this doctrine would serve as a prelude for tensions to come. The Bosnia war of 1995 was fought by the US primarily and could be called Clinton's major war. The war was terminated with the Dayton Accords. Yet when Kosovo undertook similar action as Bosnia, and Milosevic responded in similar fashion, it was a clear sign that Milosevic had little respect for the agreements. Responding would therefore make sense for Clinton and the US, and while Europe was not really involved in Bosnia, the US would at least have Blair and the UK on their side this time.<sup>112</sup> It would be the first actual test on foreign policy for Blair, which he remembers clearly in his bio: "*My awakening on domestic policy took place over time. The awakening on foreign policy was, by contrast, abrupt. It happened over Kosovo.*"<sup>113</sup>

His lack of experience did not appear to hinder him at first; however, he quickly accomplished NATO support for the mission, something Clinton hoped he would do. Clinton had significant praise for Blair after achieving this, which in addition to Blair's continuing support for Clinton during the Lewinsky affair, led to an excellent relationship. Clinton told Blair that he could not thank him enough for the strength he showed on Kosovo, probably assuming NATO assistance would end the war and the Milosevic threat. Unfortunately, it did not, and discussing different strategies became an unexpected necessity.<sup>114</sup> Initially, Blair and Clinton both expressed a desire for the war to be over quickly because of potential outcomes of public opinion, and therefore expressed the plan of not using ground troops. In April 1999, at a Washington summit, both leaders expressed the following: "*the difficulties of such an undertaking, in the face of organised Serb resistance, are formidable... the potential loss of life among our service men and women would be considerable*"<sup>115</sup> Blair however, introduced his doctrine on the same summit, and consequently changed his mind a week later.<sup>116</sup> He pressed Clinton for US troops in

---

<sup>111</sup> Kathleen Burk, "Presidents and Prime Ministers," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 29.

<sup>112</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 325.

<sup>113</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 223.

<sup>114</sup> Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," 323-25.

<sup>115</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, "Blair's Kosovo Campaign Political Communications, the Battle for Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *Civil Wars* 3, no. 1 (2000): 57, 65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240008402431>.

<sup>116</sup> Vickers, "Blair's Kosovo Campaign Political Communications, the Battle for Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," 65.

such a way that this could be regarded as a form of a moral obligation, as he actively appealed for his assistance.<sup>117</sup> This appeal proved to be unsuccessful.

Tony Blair and some members of Congress thought it was time to send in ground troops, while the House of Representatives voted to deny the use of troops without prior approval of Congress. I still believed the air campaign would work, and hoped we could avoid sending ground troops until their mission was to keep the peace.<sup>118</sup>

The fact that Clinton declined, was likely due to the challenging domestic position he found himself in. In contrast to Blair, he was at the end of his administration. Continuing Democratic rule was, therefore, one of his priorities. Al Gore emerged as the top Democratic candidate and openly rejected the idea of using troops in Kosovo.<sup>119</sup> Blair grew frustrated and even suspicious of Clinton in the weeks after the rejection. His speculations went so far that Blair grew scared of Clinton possibly making a deal with Milosevic.<sup>120</sup> He furiously expressed to his advisors: “*If he does that, that’s it. I’m finished with him*”<sup>121</sup> Meanwhile, Milosevic drew back after Russia dismissed the continuation of their assistance. Peter Ridell, a journalist of *The Times*, argued after these events that Blair was ‘*very, very lucky*.’<sup>122</sup> Regarding the US aid in Kosovo and surrounding his call for US ground troops, Blair expressed the following in his biography:

“In addition, I put the most colossal strain on my personal relationship with Bill Clinton. It says a huge amount about him and is to his unalloyed credit that he allowed the pressure to be put on him in the way that I did so.”<sup>123</sup>

This statement confirms it is a moral obligation. Clinton does mention the rejection of sending in ground troops, but not the following tensions.<sup>124</sup> Blair does further assess it: *It turned ugly for a bit until, having got it out of his system, the conversation turned back to the issue and for the first time I could feel he was*

---

<sup>117</sup> Jane M. Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>118</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 788.

<sup>119</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, “Blair’s Kosovo Campaign Political Communications, the Battle for Public Opinion and Foreign Policy,” *Civil Wars* 3, no. 1 (2000): 66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240008402431>.

<sup>120</sup> James Ellison, “Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 327-29.

<sup>121</sup> Anthony Seldon, Peter Snowdon, and Daniel Collings, *Blair Unbound* (London: Pocket Books, 2008), 402.

<sup>122</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, “The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007,” in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 209.

<sup>123</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life*, 227.

<sup>124</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life*, 788.

*manoeuvring his side into supporting a ground operation.*<sup>125</sup> Blair's statements show the significant effect extent to which both changes in grand projects and a moral obligation pressure the relationship, as van Hoef proposed. Nevertheless, Russia's rejection prevented the tensions between Blair and Clintons materializing. While it is argued that the project ended with Blair and Clinton expressing a common threat to Milosevic for both sending ground troops, which could have potentially contributed to Milosevic's withdrawal, apart from Russia's response. This manner of reasoning would indicate a successful grand project. Yet, Ellison argues that in addition to the Russian withdrawal, Milosevic's retreat was mainly due to the increasing amount of Serbian casualties he was faced with, which led to severe domestic pressure. Regardless, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1999, Milosevic officially gave in.

This successful ending could be regarded as a strategic success. However, the abrupt ending complicates a proper analysis of their political friendship and its influence on the strategic aspect. Whether the moral obligation by Blair would end the relationship, will remain a mystery, as the abrupt ending made the moral obligation irrelevant. Furthermore, while applying to the first two conditions, the premature ending also raises the question of whether it was long-lasting enough. What does seem clear however, is that despite all their shared elements, politically and personally, and despite their apparent genuine like for each other, their differences in strategic vision seemed powerful enough to create a rupture. It was Blair's first war, while Clinton had experience with the Balkan cruelties from four years prior. At least, in this case, Clinton proved to be more realist, while Blair tended to have an idealist attitude.<sup>126</sup> But again, this difference would not prove significant enough: *The speech also gave me a chance to publicly thank Tony Blair for his friendship and our partnership. I had treasured our times together and would miss them.*<sup>127</sup>

Ironically, Blair confirms the proposed notion of the Kosovo affair not being significant enough when assessing Clinton's diplomatic abilities: *But it is fascinating to speculate how he would have handled later world-changing events. There neither charm nor intellect would have been sufficient.*<sup>128</sup>

### **3.3 Personal relationship Bush & Blair**

In the final months of the Clinton administration, George W. Bush and Al Gore were the candidates to become Clinton's successor. Based on his political preferences, Blair hoped for Al Gore's victory.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 240.

<sup>126</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 329, 332.

<sup>127</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow, 2005), 858.

<sup>128</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life*, 8.

<sup>129</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, "The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo-American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007," in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 210.

However, Bush won, which appeared to be a troubling development for the special relationship. The lack of affect was clear from the start: In contrast to his father, he was no Anglophile; he had rarely been abroad in general. In contrast to Clinton and Blair, he was an extremely conservative politician.<sup>130</sup>

His political ideology stands in high contrast with the reports on his youth. He grew up in a prominent family, exemplified by his father being president of the United States. He attended Yale and Harvard, graduating on the latter. Yet rather than for his academic accomplishments, his reputation as a party animal defined his academic career. After college, he found himself fulfilling an imperative role within the oil enterprise owned by his family. A colleague depicted Bush as a ‘high energy person’, which served beneficial to Bush in his primary task; ‘*the land man*,’ a position revolving around persuading land owners to enable the Bush enterprise to drill their lands.<sup>131</sup> After his time in the family business, he would become governor of Texas. In this position, Bush actively emphasised creating an image of him being an ‘*uniter*’ and a ‘*team-builder*.’<sup>132</sup> Other, less appealing characteristics became apparent, however. His spokeswoman at the time, Karen Hughes, described Bush's severe impatience during policy meetings. He refused to engage in extensive meetings and preferred brief oral presentations. During his presidency, he showed similar disinterest in policy meetings, yet this time more substantially. Paul O’Neill, former secretary of treasure within the Bush administration, recalled a meeting on the California energy crisis, in which Bush showed severe disinterest, showcased by the fact that he asked zero questions. According to O’Neill, this was a typical meeting.<sup>133</sup>

Bush developed a no-nonsense attitude in his political positions, a sign of continuation of his business-like approach derived from his period before entering the political realm.<sup>134</sup> As attributed to his faith, Bush was known for his explicit, yet simple vision of the world: Black vs white, good vs evil.<sup>135</sup> His oversimplified worldview would imply a straightforward manner in which Bush approached interaction with others. Yet, this implication is in high contrast with suggestions of Bush's most prominent quality; his ability to be aware of the impression he makes. According to political journalist Joe Klein, Bush disliked talking about policy details but was highly skilled in sensing ‘every nuance of interpersonal

---

<sup>130</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 119.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow’s Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 29-30.

<sup>132</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 255, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>133</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance*, 31.

<sup>134</sup> Giacomello, Ferrari, and Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” 253.

<sup>135</sup> Garran, *True Believer*, 79.

relations.’<sup>136</sup>

Additionally, his conservative stance seemingly did not relate to his persona in the public political realm. Throughout his presidency, he became known for his significant craft in ‘social influence’<sup>137</sup>: Immelmann described the manner in which Bush approached interpersonal interaction. According to her, already during his first stance as president, Bush’s significant social craft was illustrated by a: ‘*charming, engaging personal style that tends to make people like them and overlook their gaffes and foibles.*’<sup>138</sup> This description suggests, at least from Blair’s perspective, that the lack of similarities he had with Bush could be overlooked due to Bush’s social abilities. Furthermore, with regards to Bush’s interaction with Blair, a common thread was their Christian faith, which insinuated some foundation a close relationship could be forged from. Yet whether Bush deliberately ignored this shared aspect or was sincerely unaware of this fact, he responded in a surprising, yet telling way when he was asked what he thought the leaders had in common: “*We both use Colgate toothpaste.*”<sup>139</sup> Even Blair himself would later refer to this as an odd comment in his biography.<sup>140</sup>

It also became apparent that there weren’t many social issues the two leaders agreed on. The relationship was quickly labelled as ‘*cordial and correct*’ while lacking the closeness Blair shared with Clinton. On a political level, two major indifferences initially prevented the leaders from growing close. Blair disapproved of Bush’s unilateral attitude towards the Kyoto and arms control agreements. Bush severely disagreed with Blair’s support for NATO enlargement, which would be accompanied by a closer relationship with Russia’s Vladimir Putin with NATO.<sup>141</sup> In addition to these significant disagreements, Bush had made it explicitly clear that East Asia would be prioritized over Europe, hereby moving away from the apparent long-lasting US tradition within foreign affairs of putting Europe first, a conviction already under pressure when considering the relationship in the early 1990s.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow’s Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 32.

<sup>137</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 255, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>138</sup> Aubrey Immelman, “The Political Personality of U.S. President George W. Bush,” in *Political Leadership for the New Century: Personality and Behavior among American Leaders*, ed. by Linda O. Valenty and Ofer Feldman (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 100.

<sup>139</sup> James Ellison, “Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 332.

<sup>140</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 347.

<sup>141</sup> Jane M. Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>142</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 119.

Additionally, attempts for the UK to maintain Blair's self-proclaimed preference for the nation's role as the trans-Atlantic bridge, became increasingly more complicated when, on seemingly every occasion in which multiple international issues arose, the UK found itself in the difficult position in which it was forced to choose between the EU and the US. For instance, the EU, including the UK as one of its main drivers, had hoped that they could renew and restrengthen the Kyoto protocol, aimed at fighting climate change. However, in March 2001, Bush backed out of the protocol, stating it would hurt the US economically. These type of policy moves made it difficult for the UK to explain any joint active cooperation with the US domestically and in Europe.

Furthermore, the first bilateral meetings between the two did not run particularly smooth, as a month before Bush backed out of the Kyoto protocol, Blair tried to warn Bush about Saddam and Iraq. Bush had, however, little interest.<sup>143</sup> *I probably thought more about Iraq than he did.*<sup>144</sup> Yet at the time, vice president Dick Cheney and secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld were already discussing Iraq. According to O'Neill, this conversation mainly focused on when and how Iraq should be invaded. Already as early as 2001, evading any armed confrontation with Iraq did not appear to be an option.

Nevertheless, assuming Blair had Saddam Hussein on his mind far longer than Bush does seem plausible, as Blair's earlier encounter with Hussein during the Clinton administration, deeply impacted him. This encounter was highlighted by Saddam's refusal to cooperate with UN inspectors. He appeared to have made it his purpose to put the focus of the international community on dealing with Hussein. He had been the only one significantly attempting to make other countries move against Saddam for a long time.<sup>145</sup> Either way, it seemed that Blair and Bush would have a rough joint period in office ahead of them.

However, apparent genuine personal warmth between the two leaders would eventually emerge.<sup>146</sup> It could be argued that this mutual feeling of friendship followed after an impactful event, six months into Bush's presidency. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the US was attacked by terrorist group Al-Qaida, with airliners being hijacked and flown into four targets, two into the World Trade Centre, one in the Pentagon, and one near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Over 3000 people lost their lives. This event led to the bond between Blair and Bush becoming significantly closer and demanded joint, strategic cooperation. Blair

---

<sup>143</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 334.

<sup>144</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 394.

<sup>145</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 123.

<sup>146</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 88.

immediately expressed his solidarity with Bush and joined his campaign to punish the preparators.<sup>147</sup>

Bush confirms they slowly grew closer in his memoirs:

The more time we spent together, the more I respected Tony. Over the years, he grew into my closest partner and best friend on the world stage. He came to the United States for meetings more than thirty times during my presidency.<sup>148</sup>

The events of 9-11 would mark the start of the War on Terror, which would later include the invasions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, combined with, and motivated by the rise of radical movements; most notably Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, ISIS. After the hijackers could be linked to Al-Qaeda, the US was convinced Bin Laden and his followers were behind the attacks. Not even a month after the terrorist attacks, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the US, backed by a Western coalition, invaded Afghanistan to fight the Taliban. The invasion was considered a necessity to counter-attack the terrorist danger Osama Bin-laden personified.<sup>149</sup> Blair defended his immediate, intense support for Bush to his Labour party by claiming that actively assisting the US would lead to more British influence within the cooperation with their more powerful ally. The latter indicates Blair's realistic view about the imbalance of power that had characterized the special relationship since 1945.<sup>150</sup> In his memoir, he recalls similar awareness:

I believed then, as I do now, that the U.S. could not afford to lose this battle, that our job as an ally who faced a common threat should be with them in their hour of need. I know all this can be made to sound corny or even, as some would have it, self-deceiving in terms of our effect on U.S. decision-making. I was well aware that ultimately the U.S. would take its own decisions in its own interests.<sup>151</sup>

Blair's sincere dedication was exemplified by his personal letter to Bush, one day after the attack on the World Trade Centre. The letter was five pages long, and described a 3-point agenda, aimed at achieving proper restitution. First, to target the Taliban in Afghanistan. In the second point, Blair emphasized the need for the construction of a political agenda aimed at fighting terrorism on a global scale. The third point proposed by Blair was revolved around establishing world cooperation through the leading countries in assisting and supporting action.<sup>152</sup> Especially the last two points happen to coincide with

---

<sup>147</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, "The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo-American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997-2007," in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 210.

<sup>148</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York, NY: Crown Publ., 2010), 231.

<sup>149</sup> Shamila Ahmed, *The 'War on Terror', State Crime & Radicalization* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), 1-2.

<sup>150</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 119.

<sup>151</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 400.

<sup>152</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 336.

Blair's self-proclaimed doctrine, which raises the question surrounding his motives: Was the sincere dedication a sign of genuine support for Bush, or a favourable opportunity for him to push his own international agenda? Whatever the case, Blair continued the idealist vision he applied in Kosovo, and he seemed to have a substantial influence on the Bush administration. Yet, according to Sir John Chilcot, Blair severely overestimated his influential ability.<sup>153</sup> Chilcot, a British civil servant, who would later be assigned to conduct the inquiry report on the controversial war that would follow Afghanistan, a conflict in which Blair's proposed overestimation would become significantly evident.

As two years later, in 2003, the US launched 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', primarily an effort between the UK and the US, accompanied by a few allies. While many Western countries joined during the Afghanistan invasion, the Iraqi operation was executed without the approval of a second UN resolution, leading to a limited amount of participants. Despite the severe lack of international support, Bush was convinced that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, which corresponded to his self-proclaimed purpose to fight terrorism in the region.<sup>154</sup> The Iraq invasion, was from the start, highly unpopular in both nations, especially in the UK. Multiple riots on British soil illustrated domestic discontent. Several demonstrations against the war took place: in Belfast and Glasgow, but most notably in London on 16 February 2003, where one million people took the streets to oppose the war.<sup>155</sup> Concerning the relationship between Bush and Blair, the War on Terror became a central element. In terms of analysis, the war in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq can be seen as grand projects, as they apply to all predetermined conditions. They took place outside the UK and the US, involved a significant degree of individual interaction, and were long-lasting and significant enough to be deemed pressuring on the relationship. Assessing these conflicts more specifically will therefore likely provide crucial conclusions on their degree of friendship.

The sudden emergence of strategic purpose made them grow close, despite the initial lack of affect. However, was the durability and intensity of this strategic purpose a consequence of a moral obligation? As especially during the Iraq invasion, Bush made active appeals for assistance. It could be argued that not obliging to this appeal could have been an early end of their relationship. Blair contradicts the mandatory nature of Bush his appeal in his memoirs: *We could opt out, of that I was sure. Package one was designed with that in mind. George had regularly given me the chance to take it and stay out of*

---

<sup>153</sup> James Ellison, "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 335-36.

<sup>154</sup> Shamila Ahmed, *The 'War on Terror', State Crime & Radicalization* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), 97-99.

<sup>155</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 120.



*the conflict, coming in only for the aftermath.*<sup>156</sup> Conversely, Bush's relationship with Schroeder was reportedly over when he refused to cooperate with the Iraqi war.<sup>157</sup> After initially appearing to be in favour of the Iraq operation, he changed his mind after he was re-elected.<sup>158</sup> This change of heart wasn't taken lightly by Bush:

I continued to work with Gerhard Schroeder on areas of mutual interest. But as someone who valued personal diplomacy, I put a high premium on trust. Once that trust was violated, it was hard to have a constructive relationship again.<sup>159</sup>

When French president Chirac refused to participate, an anti-French sentiment in the US quickly emerged.<sup>160</sup> Bush himself recalls corresponding thoughts on his French colleague: *Jacques Chirac and I did not agree on much. The French president opposed removing Saddam Hussein.*<sup>161</sup> These conclusions lead to the conviction that the Iraqi operation was indeed a moral obligation from Bush's part, and refusing to participate could have arguably well been the end of a Blair-Bush relationship. Yet signs of sincere respect from Bush's side for Blair did surface. For instance, Blair was the first leader invited to his Texas ranch. Multiple accounts reported that this was Bush's way of showing appreciation to other leaders.<sup>162</sup>

This expression of appreciation wasn't a common occurrence, however. Bush was known for having a limited number of foreign leaders or US congressmen who had any influence on them. Bush reportedly had an inner circle, which Blair would become part of. The other reported members were Israel, Australia, Italy and Japan, which Bush labelled his 'most trusted allies'.<sup>163</sup> In terms of analysis, this particular depiction insinuates the utility of considering these countries, and their leaders, as his foreign friends. Under this plausible assumption, assessing their friendship with Bush, and how this translated to efforts in the Iraq war, might aid in drawing conclusions about the relationship between Bush and Blair. What did answering to the moral obligation mean for these nations?

Regarding Italy, Silvio Berlusconi and Bush were reported to be close friends. The former was

---

<sup>156</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 412.

<sup>157</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York, NY: Crown Publ., 2010), 234.

<sup>158</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 143-44.

<sup>159</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, 234.

<sup>160</sup> Christopher Dickey, "Jacques Chirac Stood Up to George W. Bush on Iraq, and Made Paris Shine," published September 2019 at Daily Beast, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/jacques-chirac-stood-up-to-george-w-bush-on-iraq-and-made-paris-shine>.

<sup>161</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 331.

<sup>162</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, "With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship," *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 255, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>163</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, "With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship," 255.

eager to forge a relationship with such a powerful ally in terms of cooperation. Berlusconi would be the third president invited to the Texas ranch. Yet, Italy would soon be removed from the most trusted allies group because of its limited ability to valuably contribute to the war efforts. Italy's swift dismissal suggests that the strength of any close relationship Bush forged, was directly connected with its value for his war efforts. While Berlusconi and Bush reportedly have remained friends, it is clear that Italy got nothing in return for the support, while it sacrificed significantly. More than 30 Italian soldiers died, and Italy remained a victim of US 'entrapment.' This entrapment policy is built around American awareness of the unequal dimension between the USA and its allies. The US foreign policy is suggested to revolve around the conviction that the ally would rather surrender than challenge the US. In addition to these negative consequences, Italy became an outcast in the EU. Its exile was mainly driven by Iraq opponents France and Germany, a damaging development further aggravated by the fact the Italian exclusion occurred during their semester of EU presidency. More prominently, Berlusconi would be banned from all informal high-level meetings until the end of his time in office.<sup>164</sup>

Regarding Australia, president John Howard too, would forge a relationship with Bush, which, similar to other cases, appeared to be primarily driven by his support for the Iraq invasion. Howard was convinced that Australia needed a powerful friend able to offer protection. After offering his support, 'friendship' seemed to materialize quickly. This rapid emergence was confirmed by the American ambassador in Australia, Tom Schieffer, who stressed that: *'You had a deepening of the relationship.'* Intensified interaction between the two leaders unwittingly coincided with Australia's official moment of commitment. Howard, too would receive an invitation to Bush his ranch, recalling a gift shop that sold mugs with various presidents depicted on them: He recognized himself, Tony Blair, and Jose Maria Aznar, the Spanish prime minister. Coincidentally, Spain too supported the Iraq invasion. Howard's friendship was publicly confirmed during his next visit to America. Schieffer emphasized this point by stating that Bush cherishes friendships with those born out of adversity. The harder it is to be a friend, the more valuable the friendship: *'The United States has got a great friend in Australia, and I've got a personal friend in the prime minister. And I want to thank you for your steadfast support when it comes to fighting terror.'*

Yet again, Australia and its leader did not get any reward, and a lot of consequences. There was severe domestic backlash about supporting the US. Members in parliament resigned, multiple political parties actively opposed the decision, and a vote of no-confidence was appealed. While this was eventually defeated in the Australian House of Representatives, it was clear that pressure was high. The criticism of the invasion was also present in the public sphere. Already in January 2003, a striking 6%, according to an AC Nielsen poll, voted in favour of an invasion without UN approval. A month later, 100

---

<sup>164</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, "With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship," *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 254, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

000s of people, in multiple major cities, took the streets to protest against the war.

These same voters would become the primary victims of the eventual Australian engagement, as they eventually ended up paying over 5 Billion dollars in taxes for their government supporting Bush. The high costs were partially induced by the fact that Iraq was their key wheat export market. Iraq froze Australian imports completely, translating to a loss of roughly 800 million a year. In correspondence, Australia jeopardized its trade relations with countries in East Asia by openly supporting the US, further leading to economic damage. As June Verrier argued, the support for the US meant a strategic and economic step away from the policy of the majority of states Australia was forced to deal with on a regular basis, due to its geographic location. The main goal of achieving international security by bringing peace to the Middle East had also failed, while the US made little effort to invest in Australia's security after the war. The sole reward Australia did receive rather appeared to be a compensation for Australia's decreased trading position: The Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement. This accord would reportedly be extremely beneficial, with a yearly revenue profit of roughly 5.6 Billion a year. Yet economists quickly agreed on the numerous uncertainties surrounding this projection, while highlighting one element that did seem certain: Australia's position in its region would further deteriorate in terms of trade. The Centre of International Economics extensively researched the agreement examined the degree of effect it would have on trade. Their conclusion was straightforward: 'the effects would be small.'<sup>165</sup>

Japan's contributions to the Iraq operation showed similar trends. Japanese sacrifices were less substantial than the other 'most trusted' allies. The lack of reward however, was similar. The Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi granted his support already in February 2002, for similar reasons as Australia: He was convinced that Japan needed the US to help protect them from potential nuclear powers like China and North Korea. Yet no efforts were made during, or after the war, to compose any sort of foundation to ensure continuing security assistance from the US. Furthermore, Koizumi received a significant amount of backlash. The Asahi Shimbun, one of the major newspapers in Japan, conducted a poll that showed 78% of the population was against the Iraq operation without UN approval. His own popularity dropped over 40% of the ratings, and he would soon gain the reputation of being an American servant. As a socialist member of parliament, Mizuho Fukushima stated: "*Japan is the 51st state in the union. Koizumi's attitude is just to obey the United States. To show his friendship, he sent troops to Iraq even though it is against our pacifist constitution.*"<sup>166</sup>

While Israel's situation is somewhat more complicated, as it was not officially part of the coalition, their support was present, mainly in terms of intelligence. Furthermore, Ariel Sharon openly

---

<sup>165</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 204.

<sup>166</sup> Michael J. Green, "U.S.-Japanese Relations after Koizumi: Convergence or Cooling?," *Global Powers in the 21st Century*, (2008): 424-26, <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262622189.003.0024>.

supported the Iraq invasion. However, the suggestion that Israel had less choice than the allies seems valid. Israel is a crucial ally for the US in a vital region, so support from Israel will primarily serve American interests. However, considering Israel's path to supporting the US as a straightforward process merely induced by the rigid, unequal nature of their relationship, would be oversimplified. In 2002, Sharon tried to warn Bush about Iran. According to Sharon, Iran posed the most significant threat with regards to the possession and production of weapons of mass destruction. While an entire Israeli team went to Washington to present considerable evidence of Iran developing a nuclear program, the Bush administration simply dismissed it; the focus should be on Saddam. Sharon had no choice but to give in. Sharon and Israel were aware of the consequences it would have if they lost the US as an ally in their isolated region, in which they were already surrounded by ideological hostility. So, in terms of security, joining was necessary, despite the chance of further aggravating Israel's fragile position in the region if the operation failed. In correspondence, Sharon hoped that the USA would more actively support Israel in its long-lasting dispute with Palestine.

Unfortunately, nothing positive emerged from the Israeli contribution, on the contrary. The USA and the Iraq operation further exacerbated the region's anti-Israel sentiment. Sharon's initial fears came closer to reality, as Iran got more powerful, and so did their nuclear threat. Iraq was left in pieces, while tensions in Syria and Lebanon were growing more severe. All these countries contain a like-minded sect of the Islam, the Shiites, known for their substantial degree of anti-Zion sentiment. The increased regional dominance of this shared sentiment illustrated additional, alarming developments for Israel in the region. Concerning the Palestine dispute, another 'reward' Ariel had hoped for, Bush's efforts were inconsistent and inefficient.<sup>167</sup>

Considering the effect that participating in the Iraq invasion had on the assessed nations, Bush's most trusted allies appear to have specific elements in common. First, they all needed the strategic assistance of the most powerful ally, the US. Second, they all supported the Iraq war and made significant sacrifices in return. Third, none of them received tangible reward, instead further deteriorating the problems they hoped would be solved. While some, Israel in particular, did not appear to have a choice, this assessment is not meant to create sympathy for the leaders and nations involved. Its purpose is rather to assess Bush as a friend more closely. The leaders of these nations were his most trusted allies, and the friendship with Bush granted them little to nothing. As van Hoef proposed, Obama showcased degrees of inequality given the fact that he always welcomed foreign leaders with the same speech.<sup>168</sup> Bush applied the same, yet more impactful form of this inequality. The only consistency that can be found in Bush his treatment of his friends, is the equal distribution of neglect. Even under the unlikely assumption that Bush

---

<sup>167</sup> Dov Waxman, "From Jerusalem to Baghdad? Israel and the War in Iraq," *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (February 2009): 13-15, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2008.00354.x>.

<sup>168</sup> Yuri van Hoef, "Leadership through Friendship: The Dangers and Advantages of State Leaders Establishing Close Personal Relations," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21631>.

regarded them as friends, his friendship was of little worth. The assumption of Bush regarding these leaders as friends, is further complicated by his severe lack of evading institutional inequality highlighting these relations. When the institutional inequality emerged most significantly, Bush always favoured American interests, regardless of the consequences it would have for his 'friends'; a choice the other leaders did not have.

More importantly, chances seem likely that Blair would await the same fate. To properly understand the specific assessment of the consequences the friendship with Bush would have for Blair, the background of the Iraqi operation should be elaborated further upon. As mentioned, the controversial operation was characterized by limited support of other nations. The lack of international support for the invasion was primarily due to the manner in which the invasion was justified. Overall, there were five claims defending the Iraqi threat. First, Iraq had allegedly attempted to obtain uranium oxide in Niger. Second, Hussein was said to import aluminium tubes with the sole purpose of converting the previously mentioned uranium oxide into weapon material. Third, it was claimed that Saddam had a biological program. Fourth, it was mentioned that he possessed the ability to deploy these weapons within 45 minutes, therefore posing a clear threat to the West. Fifth, he was claimed to be closely linked to Al-Qaeda and, therefore, partially responsible for the 9-11 attacks.

Regarding the first claim, Vice-President Dick Cheney ordered the director the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), George Tenet, to investigate the claim, which after investigation, was deemed unreliable, whereafter the State-Department called the same claim incredible. Bush eventually used the claim to justify the invasion in January 2003, but claimed British intelligence was responsible for confirming the allegations. Regarding the second accusation, the CIA and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), claimed it was true; however, the Department of Energy expressed sincere doubts about the allegation. According to them, the tubes had the wrong size for uranium enrichment. Regarding the third claim, two mobile labs had been seen on satellite photos of Iraq, however, after investigation, both locations were empty, and the investigation teams couldn't find anything that would indicate any trace of bio-weapon production. Concerning the fourth claim, as early as September 2002, Blair had published that Iraqi troops could deploy missile attacks in less than 45 minutes. Blair's secretary of state, Robin Cook expressed his doubts, based on the fact that this claim came from a single, questionable source.

In May 2003, the BBC reported that the claim had come from a former Iraqi military operator. Former UNSCOM inspector David Kelly, who would also be part of the US-led Iraq Survey group, had told the BBC, and was promised anonymity. Despite their promise, news broke out. The negative

backlash following the report was reportedly used to shift the attention to Kelly as his scapegoat. He was humiliated from all sides. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, Kelly committed suicide near his house.<sup>169</sup>

Dr. Kelly, a decent and honourable man, took his own life. The two top people at the BBC, Greg Dyke and Gavyn Davies, resigned. Alastair and numerous officials went through several months of absolute hell over an allegation that was untrue. Probably my own integrity never recovered from it.<sup>170</sup>

Regarding the fifth claim, during the 1990's, both Blair and Clinton were convinced that Saddam's secular Baath Party would not be able to cooperate with a radical religious group such as Al-Qaeda. No evidence was found after. In January 2003, the UK and US admitted there was no link. Yet Dick Cheney, continued to say that there was.

Signs that Blair did have some influence on the Bush administration can be found within the process of deciding whether to invade Iraq. Bush wanted to evade UN approval, but he ultimately brought the operation into UN talks after Blair requested him to.<sup>171</sup> This was supposedly done out of sincere respect for Blair's advice and interests. As Bush recalls the conversation in his memoir: *But if Tony wanted a second resolution, we would try. "As I see it, the issue of the second resolution is how best to help our friends," I said.*<sup>172</sup> This statement corresponds to remarks made by Dick Cheney, also referring to Blair as Bush's friend: *"Blair argued that a UN resolution was necessary to achieve maximum international cooperation. He was very persuasive, and I understood that the president wanted to support his friend."*<sup>173</sup> These statements could be regarded as altruistic reciprocity, as Bush claimed that engaging in discussions with the UN was merely done for Blair. However statements after this meeting, depict an entirely different story. Bush seemed severely disinterested in the outcome of Blair his request:

This just needs to be resolved quickly. Should the United Nations decide to pass a second resolution, it would be welcomed if it is yet another signal that we're intent upon disarming Saddam Hussein. But 1441 gives us the authority to move without any second resolution, and Saddam Hussein must understand that if he does not disarm, for the sake of peace, we, along with others, will go disarm Saddam Hussein.<sup>174</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>170</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 450.

<sup>171</sup> Douglas T. Stuart, "Well, Isn't That Special?" Concluding Remarks on U.S.-UK Relations at the Start of the 21st Century," in *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY*, ed. Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006), 205.

<sup>172</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York, NY: Crown Publ., 2010), 200.

<sup>173</sup> Dick Cheney and Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 392.

<sup>174</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 156.

The fact that Cheney recalls this meeting in this manner is even more remarkable. The British government saw Cheney as the most challenging factor in interacting with the US government. He consistently opposed the UN's Security Council resolution as he appeared to be most eager to invade Iraq. Even more than Bush, which is exemplified in a segment of the book: *'Bush at War'*, written by Bob Woodward. Woodward was a journalist at the Washington Post, and conducted numerous interviews with people working close to Bush at the time. In his book, based on these interviews, Woodward describes a meeting where Bush wasn't present: "*Cheney was beyond hell-bent for action against Saddam. It was as if nothing else existed.*"<sup>175</sup>

Blair grew severely annoyed with Cheney manifesting himself as the main obstacle to getting UN approval. The prevailing hypothesis among members of the Blair administration was that Cheney deliberately tried to undermine the UN and the UK government. This interaction also confirms the earlier mentioned notion of Chilcot regarding Blair's over-estimation of his influence. On numerous occasions, Cheney and Rumsfeld openly ridiculed Blair's vision of the new international security cooperation derived from his Kosovo doctrine. The degree of influence Blair did have, was actively treated with a severe extent of animosity, mainly by Rumsfeld and Cheney.<sup>176</sup> Blair's treatment was part of a longer trend of members of the White House administration bullying Blair and his administration. Before the war efforts, Donald Rumsfeld severely downplayed any effect UK's military contribution would have. During the war, the US blamed the UK for its own intelligence mistakes on several occasions. It was reported that instead of getting rewards, Blair's efforts in the war were characterized by resentment from the US government towards him whenever they failed.<sup>177</sup> Therefore, granting any credibility to Cheney's friendly depiction of the meeting with Blair seems hard to defend.

Furthermore, it became apparent that Bush did not return the favour to Blair on more significant matters. This notion also relates to the pressure Blair faced in the UK for dragging the country into war. The main domestic doubts in the UK revolved around the reason Blair would send troops to Iraq in March 2003, without any strategy to stabilize the region after the war. Christopher Meyer, a former UK ambassador in Washington at the time, claimed Blair and Jack Straw, Cook's successor, repeatedly urged Bush to prepare such plans between November 2002 and March 2003. However, there was no response from the president, Cheney, or Rumsfeld. The State Department had made preparations for this post-war planning, but the White House rejected these plans without any further continuation. The lack of a post war strategy was a blow for Blair. Not only caused the absence of a plan significant difficulty for Blair to

---

<sup>175</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 299.

<sup>176</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 145-48.

<sup>177</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 84-85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

defend himself to rising domestic criticism, he had also hoped that the UN would be used for post-war planning, as was the case in Kosovo.<sup>178</sup>

In an attempt to explain Bush's minor concessions in some occasions, the value Blair did have for Bush should be considered. His value for Bush becomes evident when considering the minor domestic pressure Bush faced in comparison to Blair. The latter is suggested to be a major reason for this. It was claimed that Bush used Blair's communicative abilities for defending the war. US citizens often saw Blair as the voice of reason and the one who reasonably legitimized the war.<sup>179</sup> Blair recalls Bush verbal shortcomings himself: *I would be at a press conference with him, in the epicentre of those world-changing events, and I would think "George, explain it; do not just say it."*<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, according to multiple accounts, Blair was also repeatedly used to correct and criticize allies on occasions they were failing, such as towards Italy and Spain.<sup>181</sup> Therefore, Bush's minor concessions can hardly be seen as altruistic reciprocity when considering what he requested from Blair in return. It also indicates a high extent of inequality, making it irrelevant whether Blair acted from altruistic reciprocity.

As mentioned, Blair's domestic issues emerged right from the moment of the UN resolution. Before the vote, it became clear that only the UK, the US, and Spain would vote in favour, while France, Germany, and Russia all openly stated that they would not support the war. For Blair, domestic pressure was increasing, illustrated by multiple cabinet members threatening to resign if there would not be a second UN resolution. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the resolution was rejected after Bulgaria, Spain, and the Anglo-American alliance were the only ones in favour. With Bush expressing to Blair that he couldn't wait any longer, as the US troops were already fully ready in the Gulf region, Blair gave in and started the US-UK led war without any concrete proof or support from anyone other than himself and the USA. It has to be noted that Blair did gain approval from the House of Commons on March 18<sup>th</sup>. This approval was achieved through two promises by Bush: first, he promised that the UN would play an active role in Iraq after the War, and second, that he would make solving the Israel-Palestine dispute a high priority.

Despite the approval, domestic pressure increased significantly. Robin Cook resigned from cabinet after Blair's undisrupted willingness to go to war without either domestic consent or supranational approval. Cook's resignation was followed by eight ministers and secretaries in parliament, all resigning on the same day, on March 19<sup>th</sup>, one day after the House approval.<sup>182</sup> In addition, Blair's victory in the

---

<sup>178</sup> Jane M. Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 78, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>179</sup> Sharp, "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?," 84.

<sup>180</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 9.

<sup>181</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, "With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship," *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>182</sup> Sharp, "Poodle or Partner?," 66.



house was the worst victory imaginable. 399 voted in favour, 199 against. Out of these 199, 120 were members of his Labour party, the largest ‘parliamentary revolt’ in over 100 years.<sup>183</sup>

This severe domestic blow was amplified and confirmed by an additional component characterizing Blair's war efforts and the domestic pressure that followed. Blair became known for not consulting anyone before making decisions regarding foreign affairs. This lack of consultation became evident in Straw's motives for his decision to resign, as he berated Blair's unwillingness to consider his numerous appeals not to go through with the Iraq invasion. Blair's unilateral approach within decision-making became increasingly hard to defend, which further challenged his position. The fact that Blair was regarded as the prime minister with the least amount of experience in foreign affairs when he came into office since the end of the world war made matters worse.<sup>184</sup> As the war continued, the domestic pressure would also persist in the public realm, amplified by the 2005 London bombings, leaving 56 people dead. A significant part of the British population resented Blair for openly presenting the UK as together with the US as a symbol of the fight against terrorism, in which he exposed his own country to the threat it was supposedly fighting against.<sup>185</sup> This public image was confirmed in polls conducted by *The Guardian* in 2006. 63% of the participants felt that Blair had pushed the UK too close to the USA. A poll conducted by *The Times* during the same year showed that 65% of the questioned citizens were convinced that UK's future lay with the EU, rather than with the US.<sup>186</sup>

Public perception of the relationship became emphasized in the later stages of the war efforts. In St Petersburg at the G8 top, Bush addressed the prime minister with “*Yo Blair!*” Furthermore, according to multiple accounts, Bush had the tendency to interrupt Blair in conversations consistently. At the same event in St. Petersburg, Blair was filmed standing next to the sitting, lunch-eating Bush, further helping to create the image of Blair and Britain as a butler to the US and Bush.<sup>187</sup> These events created an image of British inferiority towards the US, indicating an unequal dimension in the relationship.<sup>188</sup> Blair disagreed with this conviction: *Personally I did not have the chip, so I thought the “Yo, Blair” greeting funny. In fact, it indicated total intimacy.*<sup>189</sup> The inequality of the relationship continued to characterize their joint

---

<sup>183</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 159.

<sup>184</sup> Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” 63.

<sup>185</sup> Sharp, “Poodle or Partner?,” 84.

<sup>186</sup> Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations* (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 1.

<sup>187</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 258, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>188</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 93.

<sup>189</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 588.

war efforts. In January 2007, Bush wanted to increase US troops, with Blair being against it. Despite this, Bush pushed through, again ignoring Blair's opinion.<sup>190</sup> In the meantime, Blair's sacrifices for his joint operation with Bush resulted in more severe domestic consequences. Members of his own Labour party had already grown extremely irritated with Blair's closeness with Bush.<sup>191</sup> The party's view of their leader had meanwhile, grown beyond irritation:

I immediately called Gordon to reassure him I did not mean to carry on to the end of the term. However, I could tell he, and possibly more particularly his team, had decided they were going to be “robbed” again and had better start the battle. So began the “coup.”<sup>192</sup>

The political criticism of Blair wasn't limited to party members: According to Douglas Hurd, former foreign secretary during the Thatcher and Major administration, Blair's influence in Washington was extremely limited, while another former foreign secretary condemned Blair's ‘grovelling’ towards president Bush. Rodric Braithwaite, former UK ambassador in Moscow, described the relationship as follows: “*a junior partnership taken for granted is a junior partner with no influence.*”<sup>193</sup> The attitude from Blair towards Bush would later be recalled as a form of ‘*slavish devotion.*’ However, Kathleen Burk argues that Bush was devoted to Blair as much as the other way around.<sup>194</sup> Blair recalls similar conclusions on Bush: *I was asked recently which of the political leaders I had met had most integrity. I listed George near the top.*<sup>195</sup> Admittedly, the image of Blair as purely a servant to Bush's interests grew more popular and widely accepted in the public realm. It seemed over time, that Blair could not escape this image, whatever he did. In a sense, it be argued that all the backlash they received because of their Iraq endeavours, served as a bonding element for their relationship.<sup>196</sup> However, without assigning more or less importance to the described events in assessing their relationship, an objective overview of Blair's sacrifices for Bush, and the rewards he received in return, should be described.

---

<sup>190</sup> Michael F. Hopkins, “The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007,” in *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*, ed. John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 213–14.

<sup>191</sup> Mark Gilbert, “Stranded between Two Receding Shorelines? The Anglo-American Special Relationship after the May 5, 2005, Elections,” in *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY*, ed. Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006), 81.

<sup>192</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life*, 607.

<sup>193</sup> Jane M. Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>194</sup> Kathleen Burk, “Presidents and Prime Ministers,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 31.

<sup>195</sup> Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life*, 507.

<sup>196</sup> Kathleen Burk, “Presidents and Prime Ministers,” 30.

Blair jeopardized the perspective of Britain in the US. He significantly undermined supranational institutions that would normally aid in preserving British security: the EU, the NATO and the UN. He severely damaged the way European leaders saw the UK. The international perspective of the UK received a major blow. He exposed the UK significantly for the terrorist threat by supporting Bush, arguably resulting in the bombings.<sup>197</sup> He lost the trust of his own population, in addition to the trust of members of his own Labour party. The extensive amount of sacrifices proved fatal. The earlier introduced coup led to a premature ending of his tenure:

Part of the so-called ““orderly transition”” was that I would set a date. Now clearly at some point I would have to. Gordon, naturally suspicious of my motives and actions—and by this time in a sense rightly, from his own perspective—was pushing hard for a date and was assuming it would be at party conference.<sup>198</sup>

This forced exit marked a disillusioning end to an initial, successful tenure as the British prime minister. Additionally, his premature departure further aggravates the consideration of what Blair received in return for his devotion to Bush. Unsurprisingly, he received little. His lack of reward could be traced back to three specific hopes Blair had expressed regarding a reward for active British participation in the Iraq war. He hoped for US concessions regarding the Kyoto-protocol, the Palestinian state, and the International criminal court. Bush did little to nothing on these matters, and Blair was disappointed by the US every time.<sup>199</sup> With regards to the Kyoto protocol Blair recalls the following: *On assuming office, George had flatly dissed the whole thing. He added that there was no way America could possibly meet the Kyoto targets without doing immense damage to its economy, and he was just not going to do that.*<sup>200</sup> Bush himself claimed different reasons: *I worried that the intense focus on climate change would cause nations to overlook the desperate immediate needs in the developing world.*<sup>201</sup> Concerning the International criminal court, the US refused to recognize the institution. The US claimed, among different reasons, primarily that it would damage their authority and limit their independence to intervene against terrorism when deemed appropriate.<sup>202</sup> Bush would not change his position, despite Blair's attempts. Regarding the Palestinian state: Blair attempted to get Bush to become more actively engaged in achieving progress in the Israel-Palestine conflict, mainly in order to bring a better image to the wars in

---

<sup>197</sup> Jane M. Sharp, “Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?,” *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 85-86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.

<sup>198</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 605.

<sup>199</sup> Giampiero Giacomello, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori, “With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 255, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.

<sup>200</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life*, 550.

<sup>201</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York, NY: Crown Publ., 2010), 281.

<sup>202</sup> Douglas E. Edlin, “The Anxiety of Sovereignty: Britain, the United States, and the International Criminal Court,” in *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY*, ed. Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006), 59-64.

middle-east. Bush his efforts were, as Robert Garran put it: erratic and inconsistent.<sup>203</sup> Bush however, does recall a tangible reward for Blair: “*In the final week of my presidency, I was proud to make him one of the few foreign leaders to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.*”<sup>204</sup>

During the Iraq invasion, Blair appeared to be the strongest ally among the most trusted allies. Unfortunately for Blair, this position merely translated to sacrificing the most. The way Bush treated Bush from the Iraq effort onwards showed a different image from their first years together. The latter years contradict that they ever shared a friendship characterized by equality, a suggestion often confirmed in statements of politicians involved. It shows one additional, crucial element: Circumstances seem more significant for the strength the special relationship. More than personal chemistry, the UK has its most influence when the US need military or political support. So, the strength of the relationship is dependent on two components: First, the US need for British support. Second the extent to which the policy of the UK is coherent with US goals. This notion leaves little room for significant friendships, let alone impactful ones<sup>205</sup>

The world order Bush and Blair left behind, led to a conviction that it seemed challenging to maintain an intense Anglo-American relationship, let alone a special one. Iran remained a significant nuclear threat, which further led the US to focus on the Middle East regardless of whether the UK would want to cooperate. Regardless, cooperation seemed rather unlikely as Bush had become extremely unpopular in the UK, which meant that any successor of Blair would almost be forced to distance himself from his American colleague. Furthermore, the rise of China and Russia's seemingly growing desire to recapture its power influence to old Soviet extents made American attention to the relationship seem increasingly irrelevant. The US was further preoccupied with the rise of supranational institutions, which left many questions about the place of the UK within this new world order.<sup>206</sup> J. Ellison offers a final, striking conclusion on Blair's relationships with his counterparts:

A UK prime minister, however familiar with a US president, could not transcend the realities of power or get him to defend ideas or promote policies which were not prioritised by his administration. That fact was

---

<sup>203</sup> Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance* (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 124.

<sup>204</sup> George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York, NY: Crown Publ., 2010), 192.

<sup>205</sup> Mark Gilbert, “Stranded between Two Receding Shorelines? The Anglo-American Special Relationship after the May 5, 2005, Elections,” in *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY*, ed. Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006), 78.

<sup>206</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 121.

especially true after 9/11 when the liberal intervention and liberal order that Blair had sought since 1999 became casualties of the US-led war against Iraq that he supported.<sup>207</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> James Ellison, “Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane, and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 346.

## 4. How can the period of Obama and his American counterparts be defined?

### 4.1 Personal Relationship Obama & Brown

This thesis will not include the short time Blair's successor, Gordon Brown spent with Bush in office. He actively distanced himself from Bush, due to the bad image Bush had gained during the years prior in the UK. Brown supported the relationship but openly expressed a desire to move away from the major cause for Blair's downfall: Allowing the US to determine British interests.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, their tenure has little value for this particular research. Brown's deliberate distancing from the US would change when Obama entered office.<sup>209</sup>

After becoming senator of the state of Illinois, he eventually beat John McCain in the presidential election in 2008.<sup>210</sup> When Barack Obama was elected president, the majority of Europe, including the UK, hoped for a renewed, strong form of trans-Atlantic relations. These relations had worsened during the Bush administration, specifically regarding the American display of unilateralism in Bush's efforts surrounding the war on terror.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, it is argued that the strength of the special relationship predominantly depends on the US president's willingness to acknowledge the UK as the Atlantic bridge, in which the UK serves as the representative for Europe in relations with the US.<sup>212</sup>

The War on Terror had grown to be resented in the US, especially in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it helped that already in October of 2002, Obama had expressed his disapproval of a potential war in Iraq when he was senator of Illinois: "*I am not against wars. I am against dumb wars.*"<sup>213</sup> During his election in 2008, Obama expressed a clear goal to establish peace in Afghanistan and Iraq by establishing states expressing a pro-western stance. Furthermore, he promised to gradually bring back his troops.<sup>214</sup> After Obama was elected, Blair's successor, Gordon Brown, rushed to call Obama a true friend

---

<sup>208</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 123.

<sup>209</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 352.

<sup>210</sup> Hassan H. Elkatawneh, "Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2016, 5, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2867772>.

<sup>211</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "'Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era,'" in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 231-32.

<sup>212</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 97.

<sup>213</sup> Elkatawneh, "Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama," 5.

<sup>214</sup> McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941*, 123.

of Britain, stating: “*I can work with him.*”<sup>215</sup> Yet, Brown was not convinced immediately. Both leaders met when Obama was still running for Democratic candidacy. Brown conducted 45-minute meetings at the British embassy of the UK in Washington with the presidential candidates on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Obama would be the first one. Brown was not impressed: “*A bit light’, I do not think he really gets what’s happening with the economy; talking about how we need to reform for the future and all this stuff, he doesn’t get how serious things are now.*”<sup>216</sup> Two months later, the two would meet again after Obama was confirmed as the Democrat candidate for the US presidency. He would state the following, significantly contradicting his earlier assessment: “*He’s done some bloody homework, that guy; he’s on top of it all now, totally gets what’s happening. He’s really impressive, really impressive.*”<sup>217</sup>

Clearly having moved away from his initial hesitance, Brown referred to Obama’s victory as ‘*The dawn of hope*’. Obama’s victory was considered one of the main factors that could induce a restrengthening of the special relationship. The British press put this hope into words: Ian Martin of the Telegraph expressed his conviction that the British people could love the US again, and Obama would restore the special relationship that had worsened considerably during the Bush administration. Obama was considered the remedy to Bush’s unilateral attitude that severely damaged the alliance. A YouGov poll in November 2008 confirmed similar sentiment among the British population. 80% argued that a close and special relationship with the US would be vital to consolidate Britain’s long-term security. The same question was asked in 2006; when only 58% of the respondents thought so. These results too, confirm that America’s image among the British population had improved to a significant extent.<sup>218</sup>

However, the first years of the special relationship during the Obama administration would prove otherwise. Rachel Sylvester, a journalist from the times, called Obama in 2009: “*The least Anglophile American leader in living memory*”. According to her, Obama did not feel any affection towards the UK, partly because the only strong link with the UK Obama had was that his grandfather was tortured and imprisoned by British colonialists.<sup>219</sup> While assumptions surrounding these events are debatable, a brief examination might prove valuable. Blair’s present to Bush was a bust of Churchill. Obama had immediately removed it when he entered the White House. It so happened that Churchill’s second term

---

<sup>215</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, “Race, Empire and the British-American ‘Special Relationship’ in the Obama Era,” in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 232.

<sup>216</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 353.

<sup>217</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 352-53.

<sup>218</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, “Race, Empire and the British-American ‘Special Relationship’ in the Obama Era,” 231-32.

<sup>219</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 95.

involved the oppression of the UK in Kenya, in which Obama's grandfather was severely mistreated. Considering Obama spent 35 pages on the incident in his memoirs, *'Dreams from my father'* at least insinuates a continuing awareness of the incidents on Obama's part. Yet any clear proof of this leading to a particular type of treatment towards the UK remains invisible. Regardless of the question concerning a direct connection with Obama's initial distant attitude towards the UK, worries about Obama having something against the UK were widespread. Simon Tindell of the Guardian expressed similar concerns when he openly questioned whether Obama would believe there is anything special about the UK. <sup>220</sup>

However, scholars have concluded that Obama was not a proponent of personal diplomacy in a general sense. Obama was often labelled "*uninterested*" regarding relationships with other European leaders.<sup>221</sup> He does distinctly praise individual leaders in his memoirs, however. On Merkel, Obama stated the following: *The more I'd gotten to know Angela Merkel, the more I'd come to like her; I found her steady, honest, intellectually rigorous, and instinctually kind.* <sup>222</sup> Despite this quote, the general conviction regarding Obama's uninterest in personal diplomacy corresponds to the description of a deeper assessment of his personality traits. Political observers depicted him as reserved; some even went so far as to call him cold. His friends from the time he spent in law school, were quoted saying that even his best friends could not fully get a read on him. <sup>223</sup> Other scholars conclude a more pragmatic view on this specific matter, calling him task-oriented rather than relationship-oriented.<sup>224</sup> This also relates to Obama's tendency to use the same speeches when addressing different leaders, which indicates an unequal dimension in his relationships with others, but also shows a general disinterest in actively forging personal relations, the UK included.<sup>225</sup> This dislike of personal diplomacy leads to the question of whether Obama can show affect, as any common ground would appear useless as sincere interaction would be lacking.

There was also significant fear within the UK that Obama would prioritize relations with Asia over those with the EU. Apart from these less academic and subjective assessments, there is further substantial proof for Obama's distant attitude towards the UK specifically. Before entering office, he

---

<sup>220</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era," in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 238.

<sup>221</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 95.

<sup>222</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 568.

<sup>223</sup> David G. Winter, "Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama," *Political Psychology* 32, no. 6 (2011): 1064, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00852.x>.

<sup>224</sup> Hassan H. Elkatawneh, "Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2016): 9, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2867772>.

<sup>225</sup> Uri Friedmann, "America has no stronger ally than [fill in the blank]," Accessed March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/11/17/america-has-no-stronger-ally-than-fill-in-theblank/>.



wrote a 7000-word essay on foreign policy. The UK wasn't mentioned once.<sup>226</sup> Yet during the first meeting with Brown, Obama publicly expressed his intentions of focussing on rejuvenating the strength of the trans-Atlantic relationship. In addition, he expressed his sincere affection for the British people and admitted his fascination with all things British.”<sup>227</sup>

While these statements seemed promising on the surface, a more thorough examination of the meetings and their circumstances shows a different side. The British press detected two red flags in Obama's behaviour towards his view of the special relationship during his trip. First, the fact that he chose Berlin, rather than London as the first city he visited during this key European address. Second, the fact that when Obama did visit London, he did not use the term special relationship once. Initially, Brown and Obama remained distant in the first months of Obama's presidency. According to John Dumbrell, this could be regarded as a consequence of them being preoccupied with handling the economic crisis.<sup>228</sup> Yet this suggestion seems debatable, as their short time spent together would show that the few instances in which Obama praised Brown, were on his economic policy. He publicly thanked Brown for his aid during the crisis: *He was thoughtful, responsible, and understood global finance, and although his time in office would prove short-lived, I was fortunate to have him as a partner during those early months of the crisis.*<sup>229</sup>

While Obama and Brown shared the same ideology, their short-lasting relationship endured significant tensions.<sup>230</sup> As this showcases once again that friendship has the ability to transcend politics, their distant relationship could be regarded in their limited amount of personal affect, as they differed extensively regarding personal characteristics. The parallels between Bush and his successor, Barack Obama, could not be more inapparent. Bush grew up in a wealthy family in Texas and attended an elite private boarding school. Obama spent the majority of his youth in multiple places, which included Hawaii, Indonesia, and Chicago, in which Obama's family had to spend much effort to pay for his education. Obama was a liberal democrat, Bush a conservative republican. The latter was depicted as 'below average' regarding to verbal skills during debates, whereas Obama was known for his articulate

---

<sup>226</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 351.

<sup>227</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "'Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era," in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 237.

<sup>228</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 95.

<sup>229</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 339.

<sup>230</sup> Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," 97.

speaking manner. This quality corresponded to his visible calmness.<sup>231</sup> Brown, meanwhile, had come to power through the earlier described internal struggle: *I still wanted a consensual transition; so when, without my knowledge, a group of ministers resigned from their posts because of their impatience to see a change, I helped put the rebellion down.*<sup>232</sup>

Throughout his administration, Blair had become known for his Prime Minister-as-actor-on-screen approach. His successor, Gordon Brown, could not be more different. This difference initially seemed an advantage, as the British population and the political realm had developed resentment towards Blair due to his unilateral attitude during the War on Terror, in addition to his close relationship with Bush. Brown, therefore, symbolized a shift in personality, which was instantly recognizable. Brown personified a new, fresh, political start.<sup>233</sup>

Yet Blair had little confidence in his successor: *By then, I had come to the clear and settled view that unless Gordon spelt out whether he was New Labour or something different—and defined the “something different”—it was going to be a disaster. I knew it.*<sup>234</sup> Unfortunately for Brown, Blair’s lack of faith in his ability to successfully govern the UK, would soon appear valid. Ironically, Brown mainly received criticism on the fact that he lacked Blair’s most prominent attributes; his public persona and presentational skills. Over time, the conviction that Brown did not have the required attributes to be a successful leader started to surface. Unfortunately, the consequences of his lack of presentational skills were not limited to his public image, as they were also distinctly visible in off-screen political interactions. In June 2008, a minister confirmed this rather straightforwardly: *“He is crap at communication. And the role of a leader is to communicate.”* Even Brown himself admitted: *“I have got all the policy, all the ideas. I just can’t communicate it”*. He indirectly assessed the comparison with Blair that had haunted him from the start of his administration, later in the same statement: *“I am good in what politics used to be, but now people want celebrity and theatre.”*

However, the complications Brown endured seemed part of larger trend of issues troubling his administration. He did not develop anything close to a media strategy, which could have at least removed some emphasis on his biggest flaws. In addition, he seemed to surround himself with advisors highlighting his weaknesses instead of emphasizing his strengths. Naturally, Brown did possess qualities. He was regarded as incredibly intelligent and seen as the Labour party’s most prominent political brain.

---

<sup>231</sup> David G. Winter, “Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama,” *Political Psychology* 32, no. 6 (2011): 1064, 1076, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00852.x>.

<sup>232</sup> Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times* (London: Random House, 2018), 168.

<sup>233</sup> Kevin Theakston, “Gordon Brown as Prime Minister: Political Skills and Leadership Style,” *British Politics* 6, no. 1 (2011): 85-86, <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2010.19>.

<sup>234</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 608.

Labelled a great strategist, he was widely regarded as the most intellectual Prime minister since McMillan, the prime minister between 1957-1963. Unfortunately, Brown showed a tendency to unwittingly push his qualities to the background. As Theakston states, for a PM, it is more important to know how to use your intellect, rather than to be one. In addition, Brown was described as insecure, which reportedly led him to be weak in responding to criticism. Brown depicted criticism as unwelcome advice, which adds validity to reports of his severe temperament. These shortcomings led to advisers being extremely hesitant to consult him. Therefore, it could be argued that Brown isolated himself through his shortcomings, consequently hindering any self-development that could strengthen his position as prime-minister.<sup>235</sup> Ironically, Brown's isolation suggests a return to the unilateral attitude of Blair. Brown had despised the attitude of his predecessor, but seemingly found himself in the same position, with the sole difference being that Brown's shortcomings became apparent much sooner than they did with Blair. The latter emphasized the shortcomings of Brown rather blunt in his memoirs: *Political calculation, yes. Political feelings, no. Analytical intelligence, absolutely. Emotional intelligence, zero. Gordon is a strange guy.*<sup>236</sup>

The issues Brown endured can be partially explained by assessing his early political career. In 1997, Brown became Chancellor of the Exchequer, the British equivalent of the minister of finance. Brown was known for severely disliking meetings with other EU finance meetings and was reported to significantly lack the required skills to interact with other European ministers. However, Brown was regarded by senior officials as a better negotiator than Blair. Unlike the latter, Brown did not care if people hated him. Unfortunately, Brown took the same attitude with him into his position as prime minister, where Cabinet members labelled his negotiation style as a way solely based on intimidation, a style far less effective in meetings with other state leaders, compared to those with merely finance ministers.

His background as Chancellor as political preparation for the PM position created additional issues. As Chancellor, he had time to thoroughly think decisions through. Yet, the position of prime minister required quick and decisive decision-making, combined with a high degree of multi-tasking. Brown missed this skill and proved unable to adapt. This is related to another example of Brown's self-sabotaging tendencies. He was known to keep his view on a matter private until the last minute, which prevented cabinet members from having the time to respond appropriately, all while urgent issues requiring decisions were piling up because of his incapability to act decisively. One cabinet minister would call Brown authoritarian, impatient and arrogant. In June 2009, his unstable administration was

---

<sup>235</sup> Kevin Theakston, "Gordon Brown as Prime Minister: Political Skills and Leadership Style," *British Politics* 6, no. 1 (2011): 85-87, 89, <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2010.19>.

<sup>236</sup> Tony Blair, *A Journey: A Political Life* (London: Random House, 2011), 608.

illustrated by multiple cabinet resignations and even a coup attempt.<sup>237</sup>

The shortcomings of Brown were in high contrast with Obama, who was, as previously mentioned, regarded as calm, a charismatic figure, all characterized by his high emotional intelligence. In contrast to Brown, he was praised for his ability to make decision efficiently.<sup>238</sup> The decision-making process illustrated substantial differences between their personalities and how this translated to their policymaking. As opposed to the isolated manner in which Brown reached decisions, Obama preferred debate before making decisions, in which he showcased an openness to the views of others while even seeking advice from former opponents. In addition, Obama was regarded as a president with high organizational skills, which, in combination with his decision-making skills, are in high contrast with Brown's inability to cooperate with others and inefficiency in making decisions.<sup>239</sup> The substantial differences between the two leaders could arguably be seen as an additional factor next to the claims regarding Obama's negative prejudice against the UK, which would lead to the leaders having a rocky relationship. Yet Brown would state:

At the press conference, Obama did everything he needed to do to reassure the British press that when his officials had talked of a 'special partnership', rather than a 'special relationship', they were not downgrading the British–American link; Britain and America would always be linked by a 'kinship of ideals', he declared.<sup>240</sup>

The relationship already showed its fragile basis when during Obama's first trip to the EU, a member of the Brown staff had a telling statement on Obama, consequently illustrating the lack of faith even his own team members had in his boss: "*He had already written off Gordon, and they were focussed on the future; building a relationship with the leader of the UK opposition: David Cameron.*"<sup>241</sup> Nevertheless, Gordon Brown would later be the first European president to receive an invitation for a visit to Washington.<sup>242</sup> Just before the first meeting between Brown and Obama, the UK ambassador had apprised that Obama tended to come across as insensitive. Brown's prospects of a successful first meeting

---

<sup>237</sup> Kevin Theakston, "Gordon Brown as Prime Minister: Political Skills and Leadership Style," *British Politics* 6, no. 1 (2011): 88-90, 92, 94, <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2010.19>.

<sup>238</sup> Hassan H. Elkatawneh, "Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2016): 9, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2867772>.

<sup>239</sup> David G. Winter, "Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama," *Political Psychology* 32, no. 6 (2011): 1064, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00852.x>.

<sup>240</sup> Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times* (London: Random House, 2018), 316.

<sup>241</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 354.

<sup>242</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "'Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era," in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 238.

were further reduced by a quote of a staff member from the Obama team: “*There’s nothing special about Britain. You’re just the same as the other hundred and ninety countries in the world. You shouldn’t expect special treatment*”<sup>243</sup> Unsurprisingly, this visit did not go smoothly and would be remembered mainly for Obama’s rather unthoughtful present to Brown: a DVD box valued at 17,99 \$.

In contrast, Brown had given Obama a penholder made from timber derived from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century warship the HMS *grant*.<sup>244</sup> The value of the penholder was set at 16.510 \$<sup>245</sup> As the intrinsic value of gifts does not necessarily translate to its value in money, this difference on itself, might offer little value in terms of analysis. Yet, Gordon Brown himself admitted an additional issue with the gift:

When the Daily Mail later wrote that Obama’s gift to me of a set of DVDs of twenty-five US films was ‘as exciting as a pair of socks’, I did not tell them that the DVDs were coded for the US and unreadable by any UK DVD player.<sup>246</sup>

The incident would mark the start of an important aspect complicating the Anglo-American relationship during the tenure of Brown and Obama: the British media's habit of depicting cracks in the relationship, not only pressurizing Brown as a result but also leading to a significant amount of frustration on the US’s part. Yet, Obama expressed contradictive statements on the special relationship: “*one that is not just important to me, it’s important to the American people. I think this notion that somehow there is any lessening of that special relationship is misguided.*”

Brown expressed less surprising statements, illustrating his desire to renew the relationship after Bush's departure: “*I’ve come here to renew our special relationship for new times. It’s a partnership of purpose.*”<sup>247</sup> The British press continued their tendency of severely questioning the value of the special relationship, which over time, led to members of the Obama-team being less diplomatic about this trend, highlighted by comments of the White House chief of staff: “*Your press are fucking criminals. What do we have to do to convince them of our special relationship? Do they want to have pictures of Gordon banging Michelle in the Oval Office?*”<sup>248</sup>

Outside of these relational tensions caused by the British press, the relationship between Obama

---

<sup>243</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 354-55.

<sup>244</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, “Race, Empire and the British-American ‘Special Relationship’ in the Obama Era,” in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 238.

<sup>245</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 355.

<sup>246</sup> Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times* (London: Random House, 2018), 313.

<sup>247</sup> Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 354-55.

<sup>248</sup> Farr, 357.

and Brown would be marked by occasional highs. Yet, these rare highs would predominantly be overshadowed by far more regular lows. So was the case in April 2009, when Brown was praised by his colleagues on his performance in negotiations with other world leaders at the G20 summit. Obama would praise his vital contribution to the negotiations regarding the economic summit.<sup>249</sup> When Obama was asked how he felt about Brown after their first months working together, he was overly positive: “*Our relationship is terrific*”<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, Brown persuaded Obama to attend the Copenhagen Summit in December 2009, even getting the US president to not only attend, but even towards substantial involvement.<sup>251</sup> “*He was thoughtful, responsible, and understood global finance. I was fortunate to have him as a partner during those early months of the crisis*”<sup>252</sup> Yet, at the same event, an incident occurred that made his positive contributions seemingly irrelevant once again. In the incident, Brown got angry with his staffers. Obama was one of the witnesses and told one of Brown's assistants: “*Tell your guy to cool it.*”<sup>253</sup> Relations further worsened when Brown was shut-off from the decision-making regarding the issue of reinforcing troops in Afghanistan. Regarding these events, it has to be concluded that Brown wasn't even given a chance to join a grand project with Obama.<sup>254</sup>

The diplomatic ignoring of Brown was part of a larger Obama trend during the first years of his presidency when it came to the special relationship with the UK. Obama openly showed significant disinterest in anything the UK had to say on a substantial amount of world affairs. The fact that this was all shown publicly was perceived as severely damaging to the image of the special relationship. Furthermore, already prior to these tensions, Brown had released the Lockerbie bomber in early 2009, which caused significant anger within the US.<sup>255</sup> A few months later in New York, it was reported that Brown was stalking Obama to get a private meeting with his American colleague, eventually tracking him down into the kitchen.<sup>256</sup> “*Out of New York, the BBC's coverage of our attempts to revive the world*

---

<sup>249</sup> Kevin Theakston, “Gordon Brown as Prime Minister: Political Skills and Leadership Style,” *British Politics* 6, no. 1 (2011): 98, <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2010.19>.

<sup>250</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 355.

<sup>251</sup> Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 356

<sup>252</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 334.

<sup>253</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 94-98.

<sup>254</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 123.

<sup>255</sup> Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” 94-98.

<sup>256</sup> Farr, “The Ostensible Relationship,” 356.

*economy was reduced to a ridiculous story that I had been snubbed by him.*<sup>257</sup>” Regardless of any exaggeration of the media, the kitchen meeting did have an alarming background. Before coming to New York, Brown had hoped to restore his popularity in the US and his own country by publicly appearing together, which he regarded as necessary after the Lockerbie bomber incident. However, his request for a meeting, executed by British officials five times, was ignored entirely by White House officials. Assuming Obama didn’t have influence on the lack of response seems unlikely, which suggests Obama himself had little interest in any sort of interaction with Brown.

This ignoring, the stalking, and the fact that Obama did have private meetings with the leaders of Japan, China and Russia made this a complete humiliation for Brown and Britain’s position in the special relationship, which was considered to be at its lowest point since Major’s tenure with Clinton. The fact that these countries did have meetings with Obama personally, show significant inequality in the relationship. To confirm these concerns, Obama illustrated that the World had to move in a new direction, insinuating a move away from old alliances.<sup>258</sup>

Overall it would be safe to conclude that within their joined years, the two leaders did not develop anything close to a friendship.<sup>259</sup> Despite this suggestion, Brown received assistance from Obama’s election team in preparing his televised debate against Cameron, with Obama granting him a few last words of luck just before the debate: “*Go kick their ass.*” His opponent, David Cameron, won, however. After Cameron’s victory, Obama was quick to congratulate him and urged for a meeting as soon as possible: “*Come over and see me in the white house.*”<sup>260</sup> Yet the dire state the special relationship was in was further illustrated by the significant decrease in direct contact between the two nations. For example, Blair and Bush had video conferences two times per month. Brown had this seen reduced to one time a month with Bush. This decrease could be explained by the fact that Brown distanced himself from Bush. Yet, when he tried to move closer towards the US, the frequent contact characterizing the Blair-Bush years wouldn’t be restored. On the contrary, as with regards to video calls, Obama and Brown would have none.<sup>261</sup>

Furthermore, the public perception of the special relationship in the UK had deteriorated significantly. Annoyance of Blair closeness to Bush in their final years, was increased by Obama’s distant

---

<sup>257</sup> Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times* (London: Random House, 2018), 322-23.

<sup>258</sup> Andrew Porter, “Barack Obama rebuffs Gordon Brown as ‘special relationship’ sinks to new low,” *The Telegraph*, September 23, 2009.

<sup>259</sup> John Dumbrell, “Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 98.

<sup>260</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 359.

<sup>261</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 372-73.

attitude to Brown. This distance was symbolized by his banning Brown from important decisions regarding world issues. This perception corresponded to results of polls by YouGov in 2010, in which 85% of the participants believed that the UK had limited influence in American policy, while 62% responded with the conviction that the US did not consider British interests.<sup>262</sup> Obama does not discuss Brown in any Afghanistan content in his memoirs, while he does with his successor Cameron.<sup>263</sup> Brown did talk about it, but according to his reports, direct interaction never occurred: *Yet, we had no choice but to keep waiting for the US to make their decision in order to find out what the overall strength of the allied presence in Afghanistan was going to be.*<sup>264</sup> In the end, Gordon Brown would keep waiting on the call that never came, in a special relationship that never was.

#### 4.2 Personal Relationship Obama & Cameron

Brown's successor, David Cameron, became leader of the conservative party in 2005. His leadership during his tenure as the head of the opposition was widely praised from multiple angles, ranging from academic scholars to political analysts. His strong performance in the opposition contributed to the resurrection of a conviction that had long been absent; the conservative party appeared a potential party that could act in government. Cameron partially did this through the well-thought-out and evidently successful attempts to come across as a party with a substantial amount of policy characteristics similar to those of the Labour party. Cameron's performance in the opposition helped to a widely agreed upon assumption of Cameron being an intelligent and calculating political operator. All elements combined helped Cameron to a successful election campaign during the general elections in 2010.<sup>265</sup>

Opposed to the spare 14 months Obama would spend with Gordon Brown in office, he would fully overlap with Cameron, spending almost 6 years in office together. Both Obama and Cameron were characterized by a significant degree of self-assurance. Overall, both appeared competent, capable, and comfortable in office, which led to a harmonious relationship according to M. Farr.<sup>266</sup> This would relate to the conviction of components of affect leading to close relationships. This argument should be assessed more specifically, considering the damaged foundation the leaders found themselves in after the Brown years.

---

<sup>262</sup> Alan Dobson and Steven Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations* (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 1.

<sup>263</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 527-696.

<sup>264</sup> Gordon Brown, *My Life, Our Times* (London: Random House, 2018), 269.

<sup>265</sup> Tim Heppell, "The Conservative Party Leadership of David Cameron: Heresthetics and the Realignment of British Politics," *British Politics* 8, no. 3 (2013): 261, 263, 271, 281, <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2013.6>.

<sup>266</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 349-350.



When David Cameron won the elections, little evidence could be found that the two leaders would grow close. The lack of confidence in their cooperation was partially due to the focus on their differences. They differed in ideology, and during the Brown years, Obama showed little effort towards strengthening the special relationship.<sup>267</sup> Additionally, Cameron expressed himself as a huge fan of John McCain.<sup>268</sup> Yet, common threats between the two leaders were present, specifically *regarding 'age, experience and rhetoric.'*<sup>269</sup> Moreover, the Conservative party of Cameron had expressed a clear pro-American line.

Cameron met Obama for the first time in July 2008, a meeting in which he had stated to Obama that he would not encounter a more pro-American politician than himself. Obama however, regarded this statement as a consequence of Cameron's anti-European view, rather than a sincere compliment, even referring to Cameron as a 'lightweight.'<sup>270</sup> Eventually, both leaders unsuccessfully attempted to rebrand the Special Relationship into the 'Essential relationship.'<sup>271</sup> These attempts indicate the rise of a special relationship officially based on cliches rather than shared interests, as there seemed little.<sup>272</sup>

Yet, in their attempts to rebrand the Special Relationship, they both expressed components of affect. Furthermore, both seemed convinced their differences in political ideology would not lead to complications: "*Both of us came of age during the 1980s, and we can honestly say that despite being two leaders from two different political traditions, we see eye to eye.*"<sup>273</sup> In addition, there was hope that some improvement in the Anglo-American relations would occur, based on the earlier mentioned exception that without a clear common threat, friendly relations between the leaders could restrengthen the ties, as it did with Clinton and Blair. This hope could be partially due to Cameron's more realistic position regarding the special relationship. Cameron was aware of the inferior, almost desperate attitude of Gordon Brown. Instead of being needy, he was convinced that openly accepting the position of junior partner would be more beneficial.<sup>274</sup> Cameron called the idea of the utility of the special relationship simple: "*it is strong*

---

<sup>267</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 100.

<sup>268</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 354.

<sup>269</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "'Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era,'" in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 239.

<sup>270</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "'Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era,'" 239.

<sup>271</sup> Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," 103.

<sup>272</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 123.

<sup>273</sup> "Barack Obama and David Cameron, 'Not Just Special, but an Essential Relationship,'" *The Times*, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/not-just-special-but-an-essential-relationship-pk6vqnptj2d>

<sup>274</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 358.

*because it delivers for both of us.*"<sup>275</sup> According to both leaders, the special relationship works as it: *"advances our common interests and shared values"* rather than it did because of the *'deep emotional bond between the two countries.'*<sup>276</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Obama suddenly found sincere faith in restoring the special relationship now that Cameron joined office, he indisputably opposed the idea of leadership influence in the special relationship, as he would state that the relationship would be unique regardless of who would be in office. In correspondence, he told Cameron, *"You could fall out of a helicopter and it would not make any substantial difference."*<sup>277</sup>

Nevertheless, the early phase of their joint tenure was marked by contradictive and inconsistent remarks, often out of sync with their public interaction. Within these confusing signals, one element influencing the special relationship seemed certain: The dire circumstances in which the relationship started. The unstable foundation, derived from the bad relationship between Brown and Obama, in which Cameron and Obama had to restore the Special Relationship, became even more unstable on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010. A BP oil ship got a leak in the Gulf of Mexico, with severe environmental complications, all within US territory. Obama responded to the events emphasizing the leak was of British petroleum, indirectly blaming the UK for the oil spill, ignoring the fact that BP is a state-independent company. To make matters worse, the events occurred 16 days before the general elections in the UK.<sup>278</sup>

The special relationship was also bound to the returning trend of a fragile position in which there was no sign of friendly relations between leaders, which saved the relationship after the Major-Clinton years when Blair entered office. This relationship had to be saved because of an initial lack of a common threat. The UK-US relationship appeared instantly irrelevant after the new world order following the Second World War, yet back then the alliance was saved by the Soviet Threat. George Bush expressed no interest in forging relations with Blair until they were suddenly faced with a common, terrorist threat. This fragile environment repeated itself and closely resembled the global trends threatening the Anglo-American relations during the years after the Second World war and its reoccurrence in the early 1990s. China's rise had continued, leading Obama to be more interested in the Pacific and East-Asia than forging

---

<sup>275</sup> "David Cameron, 'A Staunch and Self-Confident Ally,'" *The Wall Street Journal*, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704913304575371292186815992>.

<sup>276</sup> "Barack Obama and David Cameron, 'Not Just Special, but an Essential Relationship,'" *The Times*, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/not-just-special-but-an-essential-relationship-pk6vqnpjt2d>.

<sup>277</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 100.

<sup>278</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era," in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 239.

a strong Anglo-American alliance.<sup>279</sup>

Further proof of a return to these previously mentioned trends lies in their response to counterbalancing these global changes. While the US returned to its tendency to emphasize strategic interests, it rejuvenated its relationship with Australia and the Philippines to act against the renewed rise of China. The UK returned to its habit of emphasizing its economic interests, which renewed its efforts to establish solid trading and relations with China. The position of the UK towards China was already evident during the Brown administration, in which he called Tibet an integral part of the PRC.<sup>280</sup>

Within the political context, four major points were on the agenda for their first meeting in July 2010. First, the withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan, with Cameron being back in the conversation regarding this issue after Brown's departure. Second, regarding economic policy, the questions surrounding deficit reduction. On this particular issue, Obama preferred Brown's re-election solely on this matter, as they agreed on increasing government spending to fight the ongoing economic crisis. The other two points on the agenda were pre-issues, further complicating the start of Cameron and Obama's joint tenure. The first was the Lockerbie bomber, earlier discussed in the Brown chapter. He was released in 2009 by the Scottish Government due to his terminal illness. The bomber, Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi, was precisely one year later reported to live freely in Libya, a report that led to a resurrection of the issue. Regarding this issue, both leaders were in "violent agreement." The fourth was the BP oil spill, which destroyed the majority of the Texas coast and killed 8 Americans. Cameron initially defended Obama in his anger, but later shifted towards support for BP after severe domestic pressure.<sup>281</sup>

Cameron's shift left their violent agreement being limited to only one matter, the Lockerbie bomber, as they also expressed different positions on Afghanistan and the economic crisis.<sup>282</sup> While talks about Afghanistan and the economic crisis helped move their disagreements on the oil spill to the background, the outcome only further exemplified general disagreement.

The continuation of the war efforts in Afghanistan were of significant importance, and related to the now long-lasting Anglo-American alliance within the war on terror.<sup>283</sup> This alliance was shortly interrupted under the Brown administration, which further increased hope that the renewed cooperation

---

<sup>279</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 123.

<sup>280</sup> McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941*, 122-24.

<sup>281</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 359-60.

<sup>282</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 100.

<sup>283</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Aaron Winter, "Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era," in *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* (Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 240.

would start with agreement. Unfortunately, Cameron wanted talks with the Taliban, Obama did not. Regarding the economic crisis, Cameron wanted to respond with cutting government spending, Obama wanted to respond stimulative.<sup>284</sup> In contrast to Obama's conviction to increase government spending to fight the crisis, Cameron and the UK were the first to move away from this policy; in July 2010, Cameron cut government spending by 25%. Cameron explained this decision by his desire to get his domestic finances under control. Obama openly criticized the decision.<sup>285</sup> Despite these early disagreements, Obama chose to focus on the similarities in policy matters they did have in his memoirs: *I liked him personally, even when we butted heads, and for the next six years he'd prove to be a willing partner on a host of international issues.*<sup>286</sup> Furthermore, Cameron and Obama called each other by their first name after their first meeting.<sup>287</sup> In addition, when they met for the second time at the Toronto G20, Obama let the UK ambassador through his team know that they were: *"Very impressed with his boss."* Also, the fact that Obama only met with 6 leaders, all from Asian nations, except Cameron, further appeared to be a good sign.<sup>288</sup> Moreover, in 2010, a new joint security board was founded to coordinate the special relationship.<sup>289</sup>

In general, in the early years of their joint administration, they developed a good working relationship.<sup>290</sup> Different matters in foreign affairs replaced their initial disagreements. The focus on the War on Terror shifted in 2011 from Afghanistan talks to a diplomatically more urging event: the Arab spring.<sup>291</sup> This shift forced the US and the UK to reach foreign policy agreements regarding issues abroad in a different context, which would mean a substantial test for the reportedly good working relationship between Cameron and Obama.

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Ben Ali, leader of Tunisia, was removed from power by his own population, an event that would mark the start of a trend throughout Northern Africa that would later be known as the Arab Spring. The leader of Libya, Muammar Ghaddafi, was quick to condemn the actions,

---

<sup>284</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," in *Anglo-American Relations*, ed. Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh (Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013), 100.

<sup>285</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 360-61.

<sup>286</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 527.

<sup>287</sup> John Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents," 100.

<sup>288</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 360-61.

<sup>289</sup> Dumbrell, "Personal diplomacy," 100.

<sup>290</sup> Dumbrell, 99.

<sup>291</sup> Jack Holland and Mike Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion: Strategic Rhetorical Balancing and the Tactics of Justification in Afghanistan and Libya," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 1 (2014): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2013.856126>.

not knowing that the same would happen to him some weeks later.<sup>292</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, Cameron called Obama, requesting a more aggressive attitude in making Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak stand down.<sup>293</sup> When it was Ghaddafi's turn, Western policy convergence regarding intervention became apparent. As the US and the UK shared initial hesitance regarding involvement, France proved to be more radical within their approach and proposed intervention to at least some extent. The UK quickly changed its mind and joined France.<sup>294</sup> Obama claimed to be aware of the motives behind Sarkozy's radical response: "*Meanwhile, Nicolas Sarkozy, who'd been criticized mercilessly in France for supporting the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia till the bitter end, suddenly decided to make saving the Libyan people his personal cause.*"<sup>295</sup>

The UK's decision was, on the other hand, surprising, not solely because of their apparent sudden change of heart. Cameron had initially hesitated to support EU sanctions against the Libya government, making their sudden shift unexpected.<sup>296</sup> Initially, the French-British alliance proposed no-fly zones in Libya. They defended their plans to get involved by emphasizing the support of the Arab league, which was an important aspect for Sarkozy and Cameron, making it different from the invasion of Iraq. The no-fly zones were meant to defend the Libyan population from potential air attacks from the Ghaddafi regime.<sup>297</sup> Obama was hesitant of the plan:

I asked Mike Mullen what difference a no-fly zone would make. Essentially none, he told me, confirming that since Gaddafi was using ground forces almost exclusively, the only way to stop an assault on Benghazi was to target those forces directly with air strikes."<sup>298</sup>

Yet, Obama eventually gave in and offered support, but emphasized US assistance would be limited: "*days, not weeks.*" Obama's change of heart could be explained by the fact that he wanted a draw-back of British troops in Afghanistan, while Cameron wanted his commitment in return. Whatever the case, the British press and its population were pleased to see that Cameron could affect the US president in taking

---

<sup>292</sup> Tim Dunne and Jess Gifkins, "Libya and the State of Intervention," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 5 (November 2011): 519, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199467501.003.0008>.

<sup>293</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 351.

<sup>294</sup> Jason W. Davidson, "France, Britain and the Intervention in Libya: An Integrated Analysis," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (2013): 320-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.784573>.

<sup>295</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 652.

<sup>296</sup> Jason W. Davidson, "France, Britain and the Intervention in Libya: An Integrated Analysis," 320.

<sup>297</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 362.

<sup>298</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land*, 656.

action.<sup>299</sup> Obama and the US felt forced to participate, and not without any sincere conviction, illustrated by Obama's comments on the matter: "I was irritated that Sarkozy and Cameron had jammed me on the issue, in part to solve their domestic political problems, and I felt scornful of the Arab League's hypocrisy."<sup>300</sup> Regardless, they intervened in March of 2011 to aid the overthrowing of the Ghaddafi regime. It would mean the first time such an endeavour was started by the UK and France, with the US eventually following.<sup>301</sup> Either way, the start of The first joint endeavour for Cameron and Obama was therefore characterized by disagreement. To properly understand their differences and, more importantly, their potential consequences, it is necessary to assess the details of their decisions regarding Libya. Furthermore, it provides insight into how they would eventually approach the main grand project: the War on Terror. Obama's initial hesitance could be explained through his tendency to avoid wars, illustrated by his explicit rejection of the Iraq war. This notion corresponded to his motivation not to intervene militarily, as Obama did want to help the Libyan people but wasn't a proponent of radical regime change; he did not want to repeat the events in Iraq.<sup>302</sup>

Cameron's initial hesitance was partially due to similar reasons, as he too regarded Iraq as a fiasco. In addition, the economic situation during the global economic recession led Cameron to execute significant budget cuts in his defence budget. To specify his hesitance, he labelled himself a liberal-conservative within foreign affairs. He explained the liberal part as favouring support for spreading democracy and freedom, and emphasizing the necessity to aid in humanitarian intervention, the latter being in correspondence to Obama's expressed desire to help the Libyan people. The explanation of his conservative element in his self-proclaimed dualistic ideology, also showed agreement with Obama's unwillingness to force regime change. Cameron labelled himself conservative as he was sceptical towards "grand schemes to remake the world." The conservative element would later be emphasized by the UK's new secretary of state, William Hague, who specified Cameron's conservative part by acknowledging the continuing relevance of nation-states.<sup>303</sup> Cameron's dismissal of radical intervention showed a different view than Blair, who depicted refusal for radical regime change as a way of support for an oppressive

---

<sup>299</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 352-53.

<sup>300</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 658.

<sup>301</sup> Jason W. Davidson, "France, Britain and the Intervention in Libya: An Integrated Analysis," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (2013): 312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.784573>.

<sup>302</sup> Jack Holland and Mike Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion: Strategic Rhetorical Balancing and the Tactics of Justification in Afghanistan and Libya," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 1 (2014): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2013.856126>.

<sup>303</sup> Oliver Daddow and Pauline Schnapper, "Liberal Intervention in the Foreign Policy Thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (2013): 333, 336, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.737763>.

regime.<sup>304</sup> However, Cameron would evidently later change his mind, considering his joint effort with Sarkozy with military intervention. He defended his position in the UN by pointing out that the coalition of the countries that joined France and the UK prevented the situation in Libya from becoming part of the list of massacres the world failed to prevent, like Srebrenica and Rwanda.

His change of heart could be regarded as hypocritical, especially considering Cameron's explicit criticisms of Blair's war efforts in Iraq. Yet there appeared to be important differences that contradict this argument. First, there was no intention to force Libya to become a democracy. Second, in contradiction to Iraq, much effort and attention were offered to a reconstruction program to help improve the situation after the armed conflict. Third, Cameron did not use any ground troops, and he had the approval of the UN and the Arab league. He mainly used this last point to legitimize his actions. Another important aspect has to be mentioned regarding differences with Blair. One of the elements in Blair's war efforts was the unilateral dimension in which he operated, an element many critics often emphasized. Cameron, however, gave his secretary of state, Hague, significant influence within decision-making, which helped to move away from Blair's bad image regarding foreign affairs in the public sphere. Cameron, Sarkozy and Obama eventually agreed that the Ghaddafi should not be removed by force, but should be removed.<sup>305</sup> On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the leaders released a jointly written article with a clear conclusion: *Colonel Ghadaffy must go, and go for good.*<sup>306</sup> Cameron was initially delighted with the Libya campaign:

We wove through the jubilant hordes to make our way to a stage in Freedom Square in Benghazi, and gave speeches as 10,000 people chanted 'Cam-er-on' and 'Sar-ko-zy'. Someone there had even named their baby Sarkozy.<sup>307</sup>

The initial disagreement between Cameron and Obama during their first challenge in foreign affairs, did not indicate a dismissal of the UK's general need to cooperate with the US on global issues. Regarding foreign policy, Cameron stated that the UK remained a global player with global interests but expressed awareness of their reliance on the US to achieve their global goals, further stating that the US is central in the UK's foreign policy. However, Cameron wanted to move away from the Blair foreign policy, stating

---

<sup>304</sup> Jack Holland and Mike Aaronson, "Dominance through Coercion: Strategic Rhetorical Balancing and the Tactics of Justification in Afghanistan and Libya," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 1 (2014): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2013.856126>.

<sup>305</sup> Oliver Daddow and Pauline Schnapper, "Liberal Intervention in the Foreign Policy Thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron," 333, 336.

<sup>306</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 363.

<sup>307</sup> David Cameron, *For the Record* (London: Harper Collins UK, 2020), 301-02.

that the relationship with the US would be solid, but not slavish.<sup>308</sup>

Yet, the British reliance on the US in global affairs became painfully evident after Ghadaffy was removed. The aftermath of the campaign marked a stain on the view of the US towards British ability to provide valuable contributions within foreign affairs. Sarkozy and Cameron had urged clear motivation to assist in the rebuilding process in Libya. Before the radical intervention, Cameron stated to cheering crowds in Libya: “*Your friends in Britain and France will stand with you as you build your democracy.*”<sup>309</sup> This statement completely contradicts his first reason for advocating differences with Iraq to legitimize the operation. Furthermore, in 2012, Cameron had stated a desire to construct a new template for joint US-UK foreign endeavours that would characterize the special relationship, which he described as moving away from the Iraqi model toward the Libya model. The Libya model would be characterized by significant contributions in the aftermath of these interventions. Yet, France and the UK were gone 10 days after Ghadaffy was removed.<sup>310</sup> These actions entirely contradict the second difference had Cameron proposed. Obama and the US had to pick up the pieces, and Obama was irritated by the disinterest Cameron essentially showed in the rebuilding process. *They were also convinced—correctly, I thought—that despite the rhetoric from Sarkozy and Cameron, the U.S. military would end up having to carry most of the load for any operation in Libya.*<sup>311</sup> Obama always expected to have to carry the operation eventually, but still expected more from France and the UK. He had at least hoped that they would be somewhat invested in the rebuilding process. However, Sarkozy was out of office a few weeks after the intervention, and Obama argued that Cameron was clearly distracted by a range of other things. In 2016, Obama would refer to the campaign in telling fashion: “*a shit show.*”<sup>312</sup>

Cameron had turned the majority of his arguments for the legitimization of the war into meaningless statements. Furthermore, he appeared to be rather similar to Blair in his foreign efforts, a proposed resemblance he had desperately tried to distance himself from. Apart from Cameron’s clear display of hypocrisy, the weak handling of the aftermath had more critical consequences. The Libya affair for the US, raised severe questions about the UK being suitable as a security partner. Cameron had decreased spending in defence significantly, further raising American doubts over UK’s utility in joint projects. Apart from questions about their utility, there was growing strategic distrust in the UK among

---

<sup>308</sup> Oliver Daddow and Pauline Schnapper, “Liberal Intervention in the Foreign Policy Thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (2013): 336-39, 343-344, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.737763>.

<sup>309</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 362.

<sup>310</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 363.

<sup>311</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Penquin Random House, 2020), 652-53.

<sup>312</sup> Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 362-64.



US officials, which had started after the sudden withdrawal of the UK in Basra in 2008. According to the US government, the UK was: “*Free to will the ends without being able to will the needs.*” Obama confirmed this view by criticizing Cameron’s defence cuts. His criticism within this context also put significant pressure on the special relationship, leading to a moral obligation. Obama warned the Cameron administration explicitly that any British claim of an existence of the special relationship would not be justified if not at least 2% of the total GDP would be spent on defence, especially if the UK was claiming that the special relationship was based on military ties. Obama expressed this clearly to Cameron: “*you have to pay your fair share.*”<sup>313</sup>

However, Cameron had explicitly expressed his view on this particular issue already when he just entered office. When he was asked to assess the utility of the special relationship of the UK, Cameron responded with expressing his intention of respecting the special relationship politically, but stated that the strategic side of the relationship would transcend Britain’s fiscal capacity.<sup>314</sup>

Nevertheless, Cameron listened and eventually obliged to Obama’s demands, finalizing the defence 2% target at the NATO summit in 2014. To further control the UK in future operations and prevent another Libya debacle, Obama visited the UK in 2011 to set up a joint security strategy bond. It illustrated, on one hand, the American desire to keep working with the UK, while at the same time, stressing the British position as junior partner.<sup>315</sup> Meanwhile, April 2011 would provide good news: Osama bin-Laden was captured.<sup>316</sup> The UK assisted in the operation, and Cameron would be the third to receive a call from Obama with the news, after Bush and Clinton respectively.<sup>317</sup>

Obama’s other policies during the War on Terror, were primarily aimed at withdrawal; he ended the war in Iraq by ordering the departure of his ground troops. Furthermore, he started to decrease military presence in Afghanistan. In a more pro-active sense, he actively stopped the dangers of Iran’s nuclear program.<sup>318</sup> However, these positive developments arguably led to new issues in the region: The absence of US presence in Iraq could be labelled as a factor in the rise of new terrorist groups such as ISIS. Furthermore, Russian influence increased significantly from the moment the US left, which would

---

<sup>313</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 362-65.

<sup>314</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 123.

<sup>315</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 365.

<sup>316</sup> David G. Winter, “Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama,” *Political Psychology* 32, no. 6 (2011): 1076, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00852.x>.

<sup>317</sup> Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 364.

<sup>318</sup> Hassan H. Elkatawneh, “Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (2016): 7-9, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2867772>.

later cause problems during the War on Terror.<sup>319</sup> Tensions in the Special Relationship after the Libya debacle did continue, however, as in 2012, the UK would be the first Western country to join the Chinese Development Bank. The British affiliation appeared to be to compensation for the anger Cameron had caused with the Chinese government after visiting the Dalai Lama. Regardless, Cameron did not consult Obama regarding joining, which caused severe displeasure on Obama's part: "*I can't believe you have broken with Western allies in doing this.*"<sup>320</sup>

However, as earlier discussed, Cameron's actions, in this case, were merely a part of their economic ties with China that the UK had rejuvenated after the emergence of the new world order after the terrorist threat had partially evaporated during the post-Blair years. Obama's reaction indicated two elements that make this particular incident essential to assess. First, it showcases the disinterest the US had in UK's endeavours during the Brown years, Obama seemingly being unaware of UK's actions under the Brown administration on the global stage. Second, the interest appears to return when the leaders have a specific relationship with each other, as Cameron just continued a part of British policy that had already started after Bush, but Obama only noticed now.

Nevertheless, In the middle of 2013, Cameron and Obama reached an agreement on the Afghanistan issue, officially ending NATO leadership in the region. Statements by a white house senior aide further illustrated Obama's urge to cooperate with Cameron: "*David Cameron is the first person the President wants to talk to on any issue.*"<sup>321</sup> Despite this, 2013 would mark a period in which relations would turn cold between the UK and the US. This was partially due to Russia's earlier mentioned growing influence in the Middle East. Consequently, Washington's attention shifted more actively towards Russia, leaving Cameron in the dark. The relationship being colder would be highlighted by the most pressuring event for the relationship and the second grand project: The Syria issue. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, 2013, the Syrian government launched chemical weapons, killing over 1000 of their own people, including many children. After the attack, Cameron immediately tried to contact Obama to take action, but had to wait four days for a call-back.<sup>322</sup> "*For four days I waited for him to call back. Four days.*"<sup>323</sup>

Obama's hesitant attitude is surprising when, during the first years of the rise of Syria, Obama warned them about a clear line, which should not be crossed. It would have made sense to consider the

---

<sup>319</sup> Hassan H. Elkatawneh, "Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (2016): 16, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2867772>.

<sup>320</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 367.

<sup>321</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 365.

<sup>322</sup> Farr, "The Ostensible Relationship," 366.

<sup>323</sup> David Cameron, *For the Record* (London: Harper Collins UK, 2020), 460.

chemical attack as crossing the line, yet Obama undertook no explicit action, at least not swift action.<sup>324</sup> When he finally called back, he informed Cameron that the US would launch air strikes and he requested immediate British support.

This delay had two significant consequences for Cameron. First, Cameron had limited time to formulate a British contribution. Second, the opposition had used these four days to advocate against military support in Syria actively. The second led to Cameron needing official approval from parliament. The first would make it more difficult to convince the parliament. Yet Obama put even more pressure on him if the US would have to act alone: “*we may need to have a difficult conversation.*” This statement strongly indicates a moral obligation. He lost the vote. Cameron apologized to Obama, who immediately cancelled the operation. He blamed Cameron’s failure as a big part of the reason, further humiliating Cameron by openly calling his handling of the matter “*clumsily*”, and was reportedly very annoyed at his overall stumbling performance during the incident. Obama showed little interest in the potential implications his slow communication would have for Cameron.

The parliament’s refusal meant a major domestic blow for Cameron. It was the first time since 1782 that a prime-minister lost a vote on war.<sup>325</sup> Cameron would later call Obama his biggest frustration among the many he endured during the operation<sup>326</sup>: “*Perhaps my biggest frustration, however, lay with the resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.*”<sup>327</sup> Obama appeared to be more friendly in Cameron’s face after his failure “*Sometimes we’ve got to remind ourselves that we volunteer for these jobs. ... OK, brother. All you need to do is hunker down for a while and you will be fine*”<sup>328</sup> The US press was less accepting of his loss, with the *New York Times* arguing that Cameron was weakened severely at home and abroad by a self-made debacle. This view was proposed by editor Roger Cohen, subsequently expressing doubts about the consequences it would have for the special relationship:

marks a watershed moment that leaves the “special relationship” in search of meaning and Britain in search of its role in the world ... there is little or nothing special left. Rather than standing shoulder-to-shoulder with its ally, Britain has turned its back.<sup>329</sup>

---

<sup>324</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 124.

<sup>325</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 367-69.

<sup>326</sup> David Cameron, *For the Record* (London: Harper Collins UK, 2020), 453.

<sup>327</sup> David Cameron, *For the Record*, 471.

<sup>328</sup> Martin Farr, “Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship,” 369.

<sup>329</sup> Roger Cohen, “Britain has turned its back,” *New York Times*, September 2013.

Obama doesn't mention the incident in his memoirs. Cameron would later call the whole effort a disaster: To make matters worse, the UK had become increasingly less valuable to the US in Afghanistan and Iraq with Obama taking an increasingly dominant position. Yet, a new opportunity arose for Cameron to restore his dignity: the rise of ISIS.<sup>330</sup> ISIS had emerged from a severely weakened Iraq and a fragmented Syria, expressing a self-proclaimed purpose to establish a strong Caliphate in the region.<sup>331</sup> However, Obama did not wait for the UK to take action, launching airstrikes himself in September 2014. This time Cameron did receive approval parliament and could assist in US efforts. This eventually led to an established joint task force, which was aimed to formalize clear military response, indicating a restored trust in one another.<sup>332</sup>

Yet, Max Boot argues that bilateral cooperation between the UK and the US was entirely non-existent in all military operations after the Syria debacle. UK was mainly involved through the EU and NATO. Furthermore, he argues that in the fight against ISIS, the US wanted to protect Iraq, while the UK wanted to help their Arab trade partners.<sup>333</sup> The now-familiar divergence in interests became visible again. This was made possible by a returning disinterest in the thoughts of the UK by the US after Cameron's earlier failures in the eyes of Obama in which the attention to British opinion seemingly had returned. This trend continued when another familiar aspect of this trend, a threatening rise of a potentially threatening nation, in this case Russia, occurred once more. This rise was exemplified by the Crimea intervention, which was part of Russia's earlier desire to restore the old Soviet borders. The US conducted a clear response, in which it deployed severe economic sanctions. EU's reaction was more mild, due to their interest in East-European markets and their reliance on exports of natural gas coming from Russia.<sup>334</sup> The UK reportedly wanted stronger action, indicated by the fact that they did send 75 troops to Ukraine, the British response nevertheless remained weak, mainly due to the defence cuts it had made during the Cameron administration.<sup>335</sup> Despite the many tensions, throughout their relationship, Cameron and Obama did seem very comfortable with each other, resulting in them appearing in a way

---

<sup>330</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 369-71.

<sup>331</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 124.

<sup>332</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 371.

<sup>333</sup> Max Boot, "The U.S. strategy against the Islamic State must be retooled," *Washington Post*, 14 November 2014.

<sup>334</sup> McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941*, 125.

<sup>335</sup> Brian James Cooper McKercher, *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London: Routledge, 2017), 125.

characterized by a high extent of informality.<sup>336</sup>

This is important to mention, as Obama had so far not come across as a big fan of personal diplomacy, but with Cameron it seemed that he truly did have a warm relationship, more than he did with other leaders, with Obama often referring to him as brother. For instance, Obama played 306 rounds of golf during his presidency. Only one was outside the US: In the UK with Cameron. Cameron slept in his presidential bed in the air force one, where Obama even tucked him in. Cameron and Obama lost to kids while playing ping-pong, and the former visited the latter in 2012 to watch a basketball game, with Cameron being completely unaware what the rules of the game were. Obama praised Cameron on his impressive command of the issues, a facility with language and his easy confidence. Close colleagues of both sides confirmed that the apparent close relationship both leaders had, was indeed real. Comparisons were made with the close relationship between Blair and Clinton. The next important question about the relationship, rose quickly after Cameron's re-election with regards to Cameron's reported desire for a Brexit. Obama opposed this idea by presenting himself as a clear proponent of the UK in a strong European Union, which he regarded as a necessity for strong-trans Atlantic relations.<sup>337</sup>

However, it could be doubted whether Cameron truly wanted a Brexit, as Thomas Sampson argues that he was convinced that the UK's population would vote no in the referendum, while Cameron merely supported the Brexit to receive right-wing support for the conservative party. This however, did not happen. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016, 52% of the population voted to leave the EU. The day after this result, Cameron resigned, which consequently meant the end of his tenure with Obama.<sup>338</sup> Despite all the positive signs throughout their tenure, maybe less than with Bush and Blair, still shows that the inequality resurfaced when the relationship was tested the most, during their grand project, and also told another story than their apparent friendship did. Either way, as they both admitted, both individual tenures ended in disappointment. Cameron domestically never recovered from the Syria debacle, while Obama's administration too was forced to deal with numerous domestic pressures.<sup>339</sup> Yet, this quote when Cameron had already resigned, and Obama was preparing for his last foreign trip is both telling and painful: *"I'll visit with Chancellor Merkel who has probably been my closest international partner these last eight years"*<sup>340</sup> Obama and Cameron proved both to be skilful in projecting a persona, which hid any

---

<sup>336</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 351.

<sup>337</sup> Martin Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 371-72, 376-77, 379.

<sup>338</sup> Thomas Sampson, "Brexit: The Economics of International Disintegration," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 4 (2017): 175, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3057922>.

<sup>339</sup> Farr, "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship," 379-81.

<sup>340</sup> Barack Obama, "Press Conference by the President," *Office of the Press Secretary*, 14 November 2016.

potential disagreement.<sup>341</sup> Both displayed the significant extent of their skill, and the little value their continuing display of informality had for what their relationship appeared to be in reality; an apparent friendly one, but, especially from Obama's side, cold and meaningless when it mattered most.

---

<sup>341</sup> Gill Bennett, "Conclusion," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, ed. Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 450.

## 5. Conclusion

Within applying the introduced method, the biographies were used and compared. Reports from those close to the leaders in question, media assessments on the events, in addition to secondary literature, formed a fact-checking framework enabling this thesis to properly use and process the information provided by the content of the biographies. To eventually be able to assess the general development, the concept of friendship was used to test these relationships on the before described five components.

Before assessing the general development, a reconsideration regarding the significance of the separate components of friendship is required. This reconsideration is based on the findings in this thesis. These findings showed that the earlier assessment of altruistic reciprocity being a difficult measurement to assess political friendship, proved to be valid. Apart from some potential exceptions, which would solely include Clinton's aid in Blair's endeavours in Northern Ireland and Obama's informal gestures with Cameron. While Obama and Cameron's informality proved to be especially insignificant, Clinton's acts too aren't substantial enough to provide any useful addition for the general analysis on their degree of friendship. Altruistic reciprocity therefore proved to be incompatible within the context of this thesis. This also correlated to its weight, as the presence of altruistic reciprocity appeared certain merely in minor events. When significance grew, ensuring it actually was an act for the sake of friendship alone, proved rather difficult.

Moral obligations proved, on occasion, a useful addition in terms of analysis. On itself, moral obligations have the potential to break or make relationships. However, within the findings, instances where these obligations appeared, turned out to be inconclusive with regards to providing sufficient information for drawing meaningful conclusions. Both outcomes of a moral obligation, however decisive in theory, were difficult to determine in practice. Chances are very likely that Blair & Bush would not have even started their relationship if Blair hadn't supported him from the beginning. More significantly, it is extremely plausible to assume Bush would have ended his relationship with Blair if he refused to join him in Iraq, like he did with Schroeder and Chirac. Yet it is impossible to know for sure. Even in the strongest cases, they proved inconclusive. In case of Blair during the Kosovo campaign with Clinton, the moral obligation clearly pressured the relationship, but did not have the chance to explicitly manifest itself. When Obama demanded Cameron to increase his defence budget, a British refusal would probably have been at least damaging for their relationship. Yet again, this alone doesn't provide certainty, merely plausible assumptions. The concept in itself, is valuable, yet the specific manner in which these presidencies unfolded reduced its value considerably.

Affect provided a great basis for assessing the relationship, yet proved to become irrelevant when the grand project and the emergence of the inequality of the relationship became apparent. The only relationship completely lacking mutual affect, was between Gordon Brown and Barack Obama. This could have very well been the main reason for them not having a grand project at all. Yet other

circumstances were involved, as Obama's initial, seemingly pre-determined stance against the Anglo-American relationship, or them being preoccupied with the economic crisis. Blaming the lack of a grand project solely on an absence of mutual affect would therefore be rather oversimplified. The other leaders showed a various degree of affect towards each other, yet this became either irrelevant in the grand projects, or wasn't tested due to the lack of a grand project.

In correspondence, inequality and the grand projects proved to be most important, and correlated on a regular basis, as inequality proved to become continuously evident in the leader's grand projects. As previously discussed, a distinction within the latter was necessary. The difference between regular projects and grand projects lies within the suggestion that the latter is long-lasting and continuously demanding for the leaders both domestically, and on a bilateral level, leading to severe pressure on the relationship. Clinton and Blair did not have a true grand project, as Kosovo arguably ended outside of their doing, More importantly: The project ended before their disagreements could materialize in substantial breaks in their relationship. As this test was evaded, the project could therefore not be labelled as a grand project.

Bush and Blair had two grand projects; Afghanistan and Iraq. While the first one was significant, Iraq proved to be more pressuring on the relationship. Their eventually failed project seemed, on the surface, a display of sincere friendship between the.. Yet when thoroughly assessing the details and specifics surrounding the preparation, the invasion itself, but especially those surrounding the aftermath, the relationship showed a significant degree of inequality. Blair sacrificed almost everything for his 'friend Bush,' while the latter gave nothing of significance in return, even though Blair had defined clear hopes with regards to a potential reward. The analysis of these details furthermore show that any potential personal affect the two might have had, became completely insignificant during their most pressurizing second grand project. Obama made sure he and Brown did not even have a grand project, as Brown was eventually excluded from Afghanistan talks by Obama, showcasing the power of the US to simply exclude the UK when deemed appropriate, a more telling case of inequality within not solely the individual, but mainly within the institutional sense.

Cameron and Obama had two grand projects: Libya, but especially Syria tested their relationship. In Libya, Cameron desperately attempted to move away from Blair's image of US servitude, but did end up moving away from the alliance Cameron himself admitted the UK needed in global affairs: The one with the US. This became even more evident in the aftermath. Yet, Syria proved to be more significant, when Cameron failed to gain domestic support to Obama's disappointment. Yet in the days leading up to Cameron's failure, Obama did not turn out to be the friend the informality that dominated the public image of their relationship, appeared to suggest. He made Cameron's domestic assignment extremely difficult by ignoring Cameron for days. He made this even more telling by repeatedly and publicly expressing his disappointment in Cameron, to further aggravate Cameron's major political blow.



Therefore, Obama and Cameron appeared to have affect for each other, which, yet again, became insignificant once the relationship was tested by a grand project.

Admittedly, it is unrealistic to expect presidents or prime minister to jeopardize their own position solely for the sake of friendship. Yet the degree of ability to independently decide this is inherently related to the power distribution. For the British prime minister, jeopardizing their own position in favour of the far more powerful American president can prove more beneficial. Yet, the US presidents were aware of their position, and most importantly, did not actively attempt to evade the institutional inequality inherently present in the relationship. Obama and Bush displayed a full disregard for their counterparts domestic situation when not calling back on Syria, or pressuring for Iraq support, while not giving any concrete appreciation or reward. Concerning the latter, Bush repeatedly chose solely serving American interests over obliging to any of Blair's political requests.

This translates to the conclusion with regards to the development in its general sense: The development of the relationship can be explained through on the surface, a natural development. The closeness of the relationship is based on the leader's degree of personal affect for each other. When leaders like each other personally, cooperation is more close and frequent. However, when assessing the way the relationship develops more thoroughly, it appears that even when the relationship is close, it appears to be inseparably bound to the institutional inequality defining the relationship. An unequal that definitively resurfaces whenever there is a major foreign threat. During these threats, the UK instantly becomes the junior partner. Whenever there is a good personal relationship between the two leaders, it becomes insignificant when joint action is required. The only way the UK could escape this is by forming alliances with other countries, like it did with France during the Libya campaign. But through this alternative alliance seeking it actually hurts the 'special relationship' as it moves away from their relationship with the US, and does nothing to restore the equality. And even then, they still need the US to pick up the pieces, as was the case in Libya. So the way in which the relationship develops will always be marked by inequality, only differing in when, and to what extent it becomes visible. The only exception being a good relationship between the two leaders, while not having to face a major grand project: Like Clinton and Blair. Yet, this lack of a grand project makes their friendship significantly less valuable, as their close relationship did not translate to a meaningful impact on a global stage.

In order to achieve this joint, global impact, overcoming a breaking point during the grand project is required. This breaking point emerges once the institutional and the individual collide. This consequently marks the moment in which the relationship is under the most pressure. In this breaking point, one individual has the power to influence the outcome, while the other is fully dependent on the decision made by his counterpart. The US presidents regularly chose to employ their institutional dominance rather than at least considering the interest of their British colleague. The institutional inequality is therefore defining, as the presidents assessed in this context, made little attempt to evade the

institutional inequality.

An additional, very important aspect to mention, is the trends in which significant policy convergence emerged. It could be argued that during these trends, the institutional significance completely overshadowed the individual aspect of the relationship. These trends emerged every time a shift in global political power occurred, testing the relationship on numerous occasions: during the 90's, after the Second World War, and the first years after Bush. During these shifts, which were characterized by a multipolar world order in which the US continuously tried to solidify its position, the UK often came 2nd in the US interests. When the UK wasn't of any value in this pursuit, the relationship was non-existent, further exemplified by the fact that within these trends, the UK pursued their economic interests, rather than strategic interests the US was pursuing. In the years after the cold war, further policy divergence occurred, mainly because of the rise of countries in East-Asia; which demanded attention of the US. Meanwhile, the now fully developed EU demanded the attention of the UK. These additional factors further increased the divergence. So during this alarmingly often returning trend, the strategic aspect of the relationship seemed no longer necessary, and was only maintained by expressing emotional and sentimental suggestions of its continuing existence. Yet, these suggestions were contradicted by the clear evidence of non-existent outcomes of a diplomatic, let alone military relationship.

Recent developments, such as the continuing rise of China, and Russia's increasingly troubling neglect of other states sovereignty, forces the US to focus on different issues. The UK meanwhile, is still finding its place on the global stage after the Brexit. Yet, considering the findings in this thesis, a return of a common threat would likely still mean a return of the unequal relationship between the UK and the US. Despite the undisputed presence of institutional inequality, friendship between the leaders of the nations is possible. Yet its significance depends on whether a grand project emerges; its durability depends on the outcome of the grand project. Roosevelt and Churchill were the best example of a friendship that survived and got closer through a successful grand project: The Second World War. Yet, considering all the discussed elements combined, there appears to be little hope of the special relationship returning to the glory it once emerged from.

## Bibliography

- Ahmed, Shamila. *The War on Terror, State Crime & Radicalization*. Springer International Publishing, 2020.
- Aurangzeb, Qureshi. "Flawed US Foreign Policy Encourages Russia-China Alliance." *Foreign Policy Journal*, 29 May 2014. <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/05/29/flawed-us-foreign-policy-encourages-russia-china-alliance/>.
- Bar-Siman-Tov, Yaacov. "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?" *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 2 (1998): 231–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7709.00115>.
- Brams, Steven J., and Jeffrey M. Togman. "Cooperation through Threats: The Northern Ireland Case." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31, no. 1 (March 1998): 32–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/420430>.
- Bennett, Gill. "Conclusion." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, edited by Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr, 439-51. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Blair, Tony. *A Journey: A Political Life*. London: Random House, 2011.
- Blair, Tony. "Doctrine of the International Community." Chicago Economic Club, Chicago, IL, April 22, 1999.
- Boot, Max. "The U.S. strategy against the Islamic State must be retooled." *Washington Post*, 14 November 2014.
- Bray, Caroline, and Roger Morgan. *Partners and Rivals in Western Europe: Britain, France, and Germany*. England: Blackmore Press, 1986.
- Brown, Gordon. *My Life, Our Times*. London: Random House, 2018.
- Burk, Kathleen. "Presidents and Prime Ministers." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, edited by Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr, 7-35. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. New York, NY: Crown Publ., 2010.
- Cameron, David. *For the Record*. London: Harper Collins UK, 2020.
- Calingaert, Michael. "THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP — ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS ASPECTS: AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE." In *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY* edited by Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, 17-33. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006.
- Cheney, Dick, and Liz Cheney. *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*. New York: Threshold Editions, 2011.
- Cohen, Roger. "Britain has turned its back." *New York Times*, September 2013.

- Clinton, Bill. *My Life*. London: Arrow, 2005.
- Cullinane, Michael Patrick, and Martin Farr. *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Daddow, Oliver, and Pauline Schnapper. "Liberal Intervention in the Foreign Policy Thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (2013): 330–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.737763>.
- Davidson, Jason W. "France, Britain and the Intervention in Libya: An Integrated Analysis." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (2013): 310–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.784573>.
- Dickey, Christopher. "Jacques Chirac Stood Up to George W. Bush on Iraq, and Made Paris Shine." Published September 2019 at the Daily Beast. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/jacques-chirac-stood-up-to-george-w-bush-on-iraq-and-made-paris-shine>.
- Digeser, P. E. "Friendship between States." *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 2 (April 2009): 323–44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123408000525>.
- Dobson, Alan, and Steven Marsh. *Anglo-American Relations*. Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013.
- Dumbrell, John. "Personal diplomacy: Relations between prime ministers and presidents." In *Anglo-American Relations*, edited by Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh, 82-105. Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013.
- Dunne, Tim, and Jess Gifkins. "Libya and the State of Intervention." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 5 (November 2011): 515–29. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199467501.003.0008>.
- Edelman, Eric. "A special relationship in jeopardy." *The American Interest*. Accessed March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2010/07/01/a-special-relationship-in-jeopardy/>.
- Edlin, Douglas E. "The Anxiety of Sovereignty: Britain, the United States, and the International Criminal Court." In *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY* edited by Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, 55-76. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006.
- Ellison, James. "Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Tony Blair: The Search for Order." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, edited by Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr, 319-47. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Elkatawneh, Hassan H. "Bridging Theory and Practice Leadership/Barack Obama." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (2016): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2867772>.

- Farr, Martin. "Barack Obama and David Cameron: The Ostensible Relationship." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Cleveland and Salisbury to Trump and Johnson*, edited by Michael Patrick Cullinane and Martin Farr, 347-83. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Friedman, Uri. "America has no stronger ally than [fill in the blank]". Accessed March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/11/17/america-has-no-stronger-ally-than-fill-in-theblank/>
- Garran, Robert. *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush, and the American Alliance*. Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2004.
- Gazit, Mordechai. "Israeli Military Procurement from the United States." *Dynamics of Dependence: U.S.-Israeli Relations*, (March 13, 2019): 83–123. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429040443-4>.
- Giacomello, Giampiero, Federica Ferrari, and Alessandro Amadori. "With Friends like These: Foreign Policy as Personal Relationship." *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 2 (May 2009): 247–64.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13569770902858202>.
- Gilbert, Mark. "Stranded between Two Receding Shorelines? The Anglo-American Special Relationship after the May 5, 2005, Elections." In *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY* edited by Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, 77-93. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006.
- Gomart, Thomas. "La Relation Bilatérale : Un Genre De L'histoire Des Relations Internationales." *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 65, no. 1 (January 2002): 65–68. <https://doi.org/10.3406/mat.2002.403316>.
- Green, Michael J. "U.S.-Japanese Relations after Koizumi: Convergence or Cooling?" *Global Powers in the 21st Century*, (2008): 424–34. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262622189.003.0024>.
- Greenstein, Fred I. "The Qualities of Effective Presidents: An Overview from FDR to Bill Clinton." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2000): 178–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0360-4918.2000.00104.x>.
- Haglund, David. "Is there a 'strategic culture' of the special relationship? Contingency, identity, and the transformation of Anglo-American relations." In *Anglo-American Relations*, edited by Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh, 26-52. Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013.
- Hendershot, Robert. " 'Affection is the cement which binds us' Understanding the cultural sinews of the Anglo-American special relationship." In *Anglo-American Relations*, edited by Alan Dobson, and Steven Marsh, 52-82. Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 2013.
- Hennessy, Peter. *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders since 1945*. London: Penguin, 2002.
- Heppell, Tim. "The Conservative Party Leadership of David Cameron: Heresthetics and the Realignment of British Politics." *British Politics* 8, no. 3 (2013): 260–84. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2013.6>.

- Holland, Jack, and Mike Aaronson. "Dominance through Coercion: Strategic Rhetorical Balancing and the Tactics of Justification in Afghanistan and Libya." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 1 (2014): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2013.856126>.
- Hopkins, Michael F. "The British Embassy in Washington and Anglo–American Relations during the Blair Governments, 1997–2007." In *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair* edited by John W. Young, Effie G. H. Pedaliu and Michael D. Kandiah, 198–218. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Hordiienko, L. & Khamula, S. "Special relationship between the United Kingdom and the USA: current state and future prospects", *Political Science and Security Studies Journal* 1 (2020): 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4395111>.
- Immelman, Aubrey. "The Political Personality of U.S. President George W. Bush ." In *Political Leadership for the New Century: Personality and Behavior among American Leaders*, edited by Linda O. Valenty and Ofer Feldman, 81–103. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.
- Mather, Yassamine. "The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and Current Conflict in the Middle East." *Critique* 42, no. 3 (November 26, 2014): 471–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2014.972151>.
- McKercher, Brian James Cooper. *Britain, America and the Special Relationship since 1941*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Korolev, Alexander. "Measuring Strategic Cooperation in China-Russia Relations." *The United States and Contemporary China-Russia Relations* (2022): 29–53. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93982-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93982-3_2).
- Korolev, Alexander. "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China–Russia Relations." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 4 (September 2016): 375–97. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pow013>.
- Kumaraswamy, P. R. "Redefining 'Strategic' Cooperation." *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 4 (2017): 355–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1330451>.
- Kryshtanovskaya, Ol'ga, and Stephen White. "Inside the Putin Court: A Research Note." *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 7 (2005): 1065–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130500302830>.
- Lakoff, George. "Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf." *Cognitive Semiotics* 4, no. 2 (1992): 463–81. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cogsem.2009.4.2.5>.
- MTI. "The alliance between Poland and Hungary is a historic one." Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://miniszterelnok.hu/the-alliance-between-poland-and-hungary-is-a-historic-one/>.
- Obama, Barack. *A Promised Land*. New York: Penquin Random House, 2020.
- Obama, Barack. "Press Conference by the President." *Office of the Press Secretary*. 14 November 2016.

- Pannier, Alice. "Bilateral Relations." *Global Diplomacy*, (September 2019): 19–33.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28786-3_2).
- Porter, Andrew. "Barack Obama rebuffs Gordon Brown as 'special relationship' sinks to new low." *The Telegraph*, September 23, 2009.
- Prati, Annamaria. "Cost Cooperation: How Authoritarian Regimes Can Make Credible Commitments." *Committee on International Relations, The University of Chicago* (August 2013): 1-37.
- Raymond, Ray. "THE U.S.-UK SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: LESSONS OF THE PAST." In *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY*, edited by Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, 1-15. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006.
- Russo, Alessandra and Stoddard, Edward. "Why do Authoritarian Leaders do Regionalism? Ontological Security and Eurasian Regional Cooperation." *The International Spectator* 53, no 3 (July 2018): 20-37.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2018.1488404>.
- Sampson, Thomas. "Brexit: The Economics of International Disintegration." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 4 (2017): 163–84. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3057922>.
- Seitz, Raymond. *Over Here*. London: Phoenix, 1999.
- Scott-Smith, Giles. *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?* Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012.
- Scott-Smith, Giles, and Aaron Winter. "'Race, Empire and the British-American 'Special Relationship' in the Obama Era." In *Obama, US Politics, and Transatlantic Relations: Change or Continuity?*, 229–46. Brussels: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012.
- Seldon, Anthony, Peter Snowdon, and Daniel Collings. *Blair Unbound*. London: Pocket Books, 2008.
- Sharp, Jane M. "Tony Blair, Iraq and the Special Relationship: Poodle or Partner?" *International Journal* 59, no. 1 (2003): 59–86. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40203903>.
- Stuart, Douglas T. "'Well, Isn't That Special?' Concluding Remarks on U.S.-UK Relations at the Start of the 21st Century." In *U.S.-UK RELATIONS AT THE START OF THE 21st CENTURY* edited by Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, 203-11. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2006.
- Tannam, Etain. "Explaining the Good Friday Agreement: A Learning Process." *Government and Opposition* 36, no. 4 (2001): 493–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-7053.00078>.
- The Times. "Barack Obama and David Cameron, 'Not Just Special, but an Essential Relationship.'" Accessed March 2, 2022.  
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/not-just-special-but-an-essential-relationship-pk6vqnptj2d>

- The Wall Street Journal. "David Cameron, 'A Staunch and Self-Confident Ally.'" Accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704913304575371292186815992>.
- The White House. "The Executive Branch." Accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-executive-branch/>
- Theakston, Kevin. "Gordon Brown as Prime Minister: Political Skills and Leadership Style." *British Politics* 6, no. 1 (2011): 78–100. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2010.19>.
- Tillman, Seth P. *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983.
- Times of India. "India-Bangladesh ties 'special' and 'unique', not comparable with relationship with other countries: Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla." Accessed May 2nd, 2022. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-bangladesh-ties-special-and-unique-not-comparable-with-relationship-with-other-countries-foreign-secretary-harsh-varadhan-shringla/articleshow/88305727.cms>.
- Tyler, Patrick. *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East, from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.
- Valenty, Linda O., and Ofer Feldman. *Political Leadership for the New Century: Personality and Behavior among American Leaders*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.
- van Hoef, Yuri. "Leadership through Friendship: The Dangers and Advantages of State Leaders Establishing Close Personal Relations," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): 70-72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21631>.
- Van Hoef, Yuri. "Positive Peace through Personal Friendship: Franco-German Reconciliation (1974–1995)," *The Palgrave Handbook of Positive Peace* (2021): 1-19. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3\\_54-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3877-3_54-1).
- Vickers, Rhiannon. "Blair's Kosovo Campaign Political Communications, the Battle for Public Opinion and Foreign Policy." *Civil Wars* 3, no. 1 (2000): 55–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240008402431>.
- Wallace, Helen. "The Conduct of Bilateral Relationships by Governments." In *Partners and Rivals in Western Europe: Britain, France, and Germany*, edited by Caroline Bray and Roger Morgan, 136-156. England: Blackmore Press, 1986.
- Waxman, Dov. "From Jerusalem to Baghdad? Israel and the War in Iraq." *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (February 2009): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2008.00354.x>.
- Winter, David G. "Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama." *Political Psychology* 32, no. 6 (2011): 1059–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00852.x>.



Wright, Steven. *United States and Persian Gulf Security, the Foundations of the War on Terror*. Reading: Garnet Publishing (UK) Ltd, 2007.

Woodward, Bob. *Bush at War*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2008.

Young, John, Effie G. H. Pedaliu, and Michael D. Kandiah. *Britain in Global Politics: From Churchill to Blair*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.