

U.S. – UK ‘Special Relationship’ – A Bond that has Endured for Decades

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Abstract

United States and United Kingdom have based their relations on common cultural and historical links and, as Winston Churchill first articulated the notion of a ‘special relationship’, both countries share traditions, values, interests, and institutions of national and international nature. Although the basic elements were important in formulation of the special relationship, there have been a lot of disagreements between the two countries. The aim of this paper is to analyze the ups and downs of the ‘special relationship’. There are arguments that this relationship is not so special and many say that it is in jeopardy and this relationship has been the subject of much mockery and criticism, as UK power and capacity has diminished and the U.S. has become more dominant, particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This paper argues that, in spite of what analysts maintain, this ‘special relationship’ should continue, because America and Britain need each other. This paper is written in the historical comparative method aiming at giving a general overview of this relationship. Different from other countries in the world, with which America is looking for other special relationships, Britain has the same commitment to peace, freedom and democracy, and it is willing to fight and stand for these values. America needs companions in its mission of the world leadership, as the only superpower and Britain has a unique role in Europe, being tied to the U.S. by conviction, but also belonging to Europe by necessity.

Keywords: *United States, United Kingdom, Special Relationship, trans-Atlantic Alliance.*

1. Introduction

1.1 The research question and method used

The relationship between U.S. and the countries of Europe has not been easy. There have been tensions and disagreements between America and the nations of Europe. But Britain and America share their history, language, traditions, values and their commitment to democracy and liberal world order. Although these basic elements were important in formulation of the special relationship, there have been a lot of disagreements between the two countries. Despite their differences, the two countries cooperated more closely than any other Great Powers in modern history.

Despite divergences between the American presidents and British Prime Ministers concerning the past strategic issues and the present challenges that both countries are facing, how have the leaders of both countries viewed this ‘special relationship’? Another question that arises is: How special is the ‘special relationship’? These are the main questions in this paper which seek to understand the durability, character and the nature of this relation starting from its inception till today, in three different historical periods, starting with the inception and the development of this special relationship during the cold war period, continuing with the description of the main events that affected this relationship after the fall of the Berlin wall and concluding with the present state and what the future holds.

This paper is written in the comparative historical method giving a chronological exploration of the strategic and political culture due to values, personalities and institutions, and a historical contemporary viewpoint concerning the past and present events in the relations of English speaking countries, in particular the UK-U.S. relationship. It furthermore examines the way this relationship has changed according to the policies, priorities and personalities of the UK Prime Ministers and American Presidents.

1.1.1 Problems and Hypothesis of the Study

The main problems that this paper will deal with are a) Why was the special relationship was first incepted and was it a fiction or a fact? b) What was its role in the European and global security matters? Who stands at the heart of this special relationship (interests, traditions, personalities, alliances)?

The Special Relationship is and will remain of great importance because UK and U.S. share the same interests, culture and values and they are important partners to the trans-Atlantic alliance. Hence, both countries will continue to be cooperative and maintain a special relationship. There is no doubt that there are negative aspects in this relationship as this study will explore, and one is well aware of the fact that there are cases where interests diverge despite the common values and traditions. Hence, what holds two countries together is stronger than what separates them and despite the new threats and challenges of the future, this relationship will remain intact.

Apart from the strategic decisions and official attitudes of U.S. and UK governments, this paper will give an importance to the role of the leaders in decision making and how it has affected the special relationship.

1.1.2 Importance of the study and contribution

It was Winston Churchill who coined the term 'special relationship' in his famous address *Sinews of Peace* where he "called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States of America" (Churchill, 1946).

The U.S. and the UK have cooperated and collaborated since then to organize a Europe which has the same interests and common values. Recently both countries are engaged in resolving conflicts beyond European and North American borders. Not only their common history and culture have linked these two countries together, as Winston Churchill indicated, but also their shared values, interests and national and international institutions. They do not only support the liberal order but they cooperate in nuclear and intelligence issues, defense and security matters in a particular way, which makes their relation really special. This is the reason this relation has endured in a unique manner, despite the ups and downs in the passage of the decades.

Thus, an analysis is required to bring forward the strains and the stresses of the past and those of the last decade. It's also important to say that this relationship is lively due to both countries participation in the important international organizations such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and United Nations (UN). This is crucial to realize the connection between national values and politics, and International organizations concerning defense and security matters. Hence, it's worth paying attention to the events of the last decade in particular in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and the operations undertaken by the trans-Atlantic alliance. What's important here is to observe the strategic and political culture of both countries and how the common interests and values are important for UK and U.S. It's also significant to observe why this relationship is going to endure from the policy perspective of both countries. As the crisis-driven century continues, it is crucial to count on the persistence of the most special relationship that the history has ever seen.

1.1.3 Literature Review and sources

The literature used in this paper reflects in a balanced way the academic views of some of the major leaders of academic and political thought on both sides of the Atlantic. The special relationship is explored primarily in a historical treatment from the works of the most prominent scholars in the international relations. The key authors include John Dumbrell, Fraser J. Harbutt, Richard Ullman Mark Curtis, etc. Fraser J. Harbutt, in the book titled *The Iron Curtain: Churchill, America and the Origins of the Cold War* gives a fascinating description of Churchill's life as the most important leading figure in the special relationship and the two countries military and political block against the Soviets. It also penetrates into the re- assessment of the U.S., UK and Soviet diplomatic relations between in the years after World War II.

John Dumbrell, author and professor of foreign relations, in his book *A Special Relationship. Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq* evaluates how the special relationship survived while Tony Blair was the British Prime Minister and the way the UK recurrently preferred to select America as its partner in its foreign policy decisions and not Europe. Furthermore, other important books, monographs and articles of prominent scholars, along with the major books cited above, have helped in writing this thesis. It's worth mentioning Henry Kissinger, Mix E. Derek, Saki Dockrill, David Hastings Dunn, Nile Gardiner, Alison Holmes, Gerald R. Hughes, and Thomas Robb, Geir Lundestad, Steve Marsh, Jeffrey D. McCausland and Douglas T. Stuart, John O'Sullivan, Patrick Porter, Richard Ullman, William Wallace, and Christopher Phillips, Geoffrey Warner, Geoffrey Wheatcroft, and Stephen Wilkinson.

Similarly, influential magazines and journals like *The National Interest*, *Cambridge Review Of International Affairs*, *British Journal Of Politics & International Relations*, *International Affairs*, *World Affairs*, *Journal Of Transatlantic Studies (Routledge)*, *Diplomatic History*, *New Criterion*, *National Review*, *The American Interest*, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, have had a great importance in selecting information and analyzing the developments and debates.

2. The Evolution of the U.S. – UK

2.1 *The inception of Special Relationship*

There has been no 'special relationship' before the Second World War. This term was coined after the Second World War where Britain and America worked closely together. The relationship became special when it was clear that America was superior to Britain in the World stage.

Diplomats and domestic officials from the two countries together negotiated the shape of postwar international institutions, intended to secure a lasting peace. A close personal relationship between the two national leaders, Churchill and Roosevelt, gave this partnership legitimacy and strategic direction (Wallace & Phillips, 2009, p. 264).

It was Churchill who in his 'iron curtain' famous speech called on the U.S. to turn back to protect Europe from the emerging threats of Soviet led Communism. Churchill produced the concept of Anglo-American special relationship, a 'fraternal association' to lead the free world:

"I come to the crux of what I have traveled here to say. Neither the sure prevention of war, nor the continuous rise of world organization will be gained without what I have called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States of America. [...] Fraternal association requires not only the growing friendship and mutual understanding between our two vast but kindred systems of society,..." (Churchill, 1946)

This speech, as Fraser Harbutt, writer and International Relations history professor maintained, "was the pivot on which the whole transformation eventually turned". Harbutt's assertion is that it was this discourse that enabled the U.S. to move away from neutrality and that was very much of Churchill's pressure for such a move (Harbutt, 1985, p. 280-281).

2.1.1 *Special Relationship in the Cold War Period.*

As we have learned from history, U.S. – UK relations have been very good during World War II while their common enemy was the Nazi – Fascist axis. But these relationships became more special after the war for several key reasons. The major reason was the perception that the two countries had for the threat that the Soviet Union constituted. Also, the fact that the Great Britain lost its role as an empire which had dictated the fate of the world in past centuries is another reason that these two countries entered into a special relationship after World War II. Britain was badly damaged by the World War II, its economy was completely ruined and its military force was greatly weakened. The enlightened leaders of Great Britain, well represented by Churchill and Bevin realized that their country had lost the previous role and were found in a new reality. They also realized that the only way to maintain their influence in international relations was joining an "Empire" as United States was. And these leaders invited this "Empire" to contribute to the military stabilization and economic recovery of Britain and Western Europe.

It was the struggle against Hitler that the two governments became more intimate with each-other and this intimacy might had ended in the "aftermath of the 1939-45 war had not Stalin's Russia sustained it. Now, four decades later, there is a possibility that the relationship will be substantially altered because of differences over the Soviet threat"(Ullman, 1986, p. 103).

At that time, Britain was not capable of safeguarding its interests against the most likely aggressor, the Soviet Union, and the necessity for Britain's special relationship with the U.S. arose from the awareness for its declining strength in the postwar world (Warner, 1989, p. 479).

It is generally accepted by many scholars that during the first decades after the Second World War the relationship between Britain and America was really special. In 1947 USA and UK (together with Canada, Australia and New Zealand) pooled their intelligence assets through UK-U.S. Agreements. In 1948-49 British diplomacy worked to establish the Atlantic alliance which brought the U.S. and UK as external guarantor for the weak states of the Western Europe. Britain confirmed the leading position as America's European ally with its important leading role in the negotiations in 1954-5 which permitted the return of formal sovereignty to Western Germany (Wallace & Phillips, 2009, p. 265).

Churchill was the great architect of the special relationship, but he did not know that 10 years after his famous speech, the special relationship would deteriorate.

The Suez crises marked the greatest rift in the special relationship since the end of the Second World War. Americans were angry that the British distracted the world attention from Russia's invasion of Hungary and the British

were furious that their most faithful friends stabbed them in the back at the time when that felt that their vital interests were at stake (Warner, 1989, p. 486). Even though the Suez crisis represented a major break in the development of the 'special relationship', it actually had very little immediate effect on British strategic thinking (Dockrill, 2002, p. 25). Suez crises revealed that Britain was no longer an Empire that shaped the pillar of global politics. It underlined the fragility of the relationship and confirmed how quickly Britain could be eclipsed and overruled. The reality demonstrated the need of Britain to strengthen its hand via America (Porter, 2010, p. 359).

Thus the Suez crises stimulated both annoyance at Washington's alleged unfaithfulness and an awareness of British weakness. At this time there were anti-American feelings in Britain and the U.S. embassy in London recorded on 23 November 1956 that this feeling in the UK was 'at a very high pitch' (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 54).

Before Suez, Great Britain had already become well aware of its dependence on the United States although had continued to conduct itself as a Great Power. After Suez, it interpreted the "special relationship" with America as a means of gaining maximum influence over decision which were essentially made in Washington (Kissinger, 1994, p. 548).

So it is obvious that the only British future was to act as a junior partner, in the hope of mentoring the Americans and perhaps sharing some of their glory (Wheatcroft, 2010, p. 38).

In fact, the 1956 Suez crisis had rocked the relationship so much that Prime Minister Harold Macmillan realized the need to restore harmony by signing a "Declaration of Common Purpose" with Eisenhower in 1957. The idea that the Britain had a "special relationship" with the United States was encouraged mainly in London and also as a means for Britain to justify its increasing inferiority to its transatlantic ally (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 293).

Macmillan tried to extend the notion of the special relationship into a more inclusive Atlantic Community. The era of President John Kennedy and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (the years 1961–3) began a period of Anglo-American closeness which lasted, although in a weakened form, into the post-Cold War years (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 5).

Nuclear defense collaboration was the essence of Kennedy-Macmillan alliance. It defined the Cold War 'special relationship'. The Polaris deal was the cornerstone of this relationship.

The Berlin Wall crises and Cuban crises indicated two subsequent divergences between Washington and London. The former revealed that London and Washington differed on the issue of how to react to a peace treaty. Macmillan and British diplomats pressed Washington to favor political over military responses. Some success was achieved in persuading Washington that the central issue must be one of access to West Berlin, rather than the peace treaty itself (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 56 - 60).

It was only in the wake of Cuban crisis that the tensions over Berlin diminished. The Cuban case is a clear example of how the "special relationship" has limits. It also showed where the perceived interests of the partners do not coincide. The case also provides an example of how sanction policies are unsuccessful when partners cannot be harnessed to back them (Wilkinson 2009: 292). During the Cuban missile crisis it became excruciatingly clear how little the White House cared about London. Wheatcroft describes that over those dramatic days, when at one point U.S. Air Force Boeings loaded with nuclear bombs skirted the Arctic Circle on the second level of alert beneath war itself, and then when Robert Kennedy came into a secret pact with the Soviets by approving to remove American missiles from Turkey, the Greeks in Downing Street were not so much as informed, let alone consulted (Wheatcroft, 2010, p. 36).

Although London was aware of Washington supremacy over Cuba issue, it has always aimed at pursuing a policy of its own. Both countries shared the goal of giving an end to communism, but Britain ironically opposed this objective. It is paradoxical how Britain, Washington closest ally never completely agreed to the U.S. embargo.

Concerning the war in Vietnam, Britain was limited in its support to the U.S.. Britain's government led by Wilson supported the U.S. government in its fight against communism, in the Far East, but Wilson was determined to keep Britain out of the conflict in Vietnam. (Dumbrell 2006:82) and the support it gave was limited for three main arguments. First, Britain was already involved in a conflict of its own in the region where it supported Malaysia in the confrontation with Indonesia, in turn backed by China. Second, Britain had its own economic problems at home. Third, as Britain was the co-chairman of the 1954 Geneva conference, it felt it had a strong and continued responsibility to look for possible peaceful solutions to the conflict in Southeast Asia. But although no troops were forthcoming, the American pressure generally made Britain refrain from publicly criticizing America's policy in Vietnam. On some critical occasions London even openly supported the American role, although rather reluctantly (Lundestad, 2003, p. 158).

After Britain's departure from the Far East, Washington was concerned that Britain's global military withdrawal was an indication that the 'ramparts' of the Free World would have to be defended solely by the United States (Hughes & Robb, 2013, p. 871).

The limits of the special relationship were demonstrated in the American involvement in Vietnam War. Washington could not make the British participate in that conflict. Nonetheless, Britain did fight the jungle-war of Confrontation, in the

defense of Malaysia against Indonesia for two years until 1966. It could be said this final security obligation of the Empire in the Far East helped to save Britain from involvement in the U.S. South Asian imbroglio (Rossbach, 2009, p. 15).

In the late '60s, Britain led by Edward Heath, wanted to abandon the 'special relationship' as he always mentioned the reorientation of U.S. intentions, away from Europe towards East Asia. In this way, Heath orientated United Kingdom on the way to be integrated into the European Community in 1973. Britain wanted to help EC to advance the European foreign policy cooperation. However, the rooted structures of Anglo-American cooperation continued. Intelligence cooperation was sustained, as were military exchanges—though reduced by the more limited overlap in military tasks (Wallace & Philips, 2009, p. 266). Edward Heath, though he maintained a formal veneer of good relations with the Nixon White House he distrusted and disliked U.S. policy. He did his best to encourage the emergence of a common European Community foreign policy in opposition to that of the United States (Gilbert, 2006, p. 77).

The paradox was that now, when the United States finally took a strong interest in the "special relationship," Britain was not really interested. Prime Minister Edward Heath was more strongly committed to British membership in the EC than any of his predecessors and was ready to accept the EC pretty much as it stood. His strategy to accomplish membership for Britain included putting some distance between the U.S. and the UK, and, largely for this reason, the Nixon–Heath relationship remained somewhat distant (Lundestad, 2003, p. 181).

But the fences of the relationship which were damaged by Heath, wanted to be repaired by Harold Wilson (as prime minister in the years 1974–6) and his Labour Party successor, James Callaghan (1976–9) (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 94).

Callaghan was, in his own words, 'a strong advocate of Anglo- American cooperation when crises developed'. In Callaghan's conduct both at the Foreign Office and as premier, and despite the various rifts with Washington, we can detect a clear aspiration to the role of Atlantic intermediary: explainer of America's ways to Europe and of Europe's way to America. This role had been desired by Wilson, but rejected by Heath. Callaghan consciously put himself forward as a diffuser of potential U.S.-European misunderstandings on the intertwined issues of disarmament and détente (Lane, 2004, p. 163). As developed by Callaghan, however, the role of Atlantic intermediary raised some acute difficulties. One of the problems was that its role might be taken for granted by the U.S. With Britain following a clear 'Atlantic intermediary' strategy, Washington might be desirous to concentrate its attention either on France (NATO bad boy) or possibly on West Germany (key to NATO modernization and security, and probable leader of an integrated Europe). Even more damaging was the simple issue of Britain's credibility in Europe (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 98).

A great influence on the U.S. foreign policy was exerted by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She had very close personal relations with Reagan and they were described as soul mates. Margaret Thatcher, like Churchill with Roosevelt, played expertly to Reagan's whims.

Although there were times when the relations between the two leaders were tense, (for example Reagan's overdue support in the Falkland War, the U.S. intervention in the commonwealth island of Grenada without consultation, U.S.–Soviet nuclear heads of agreement in Reykjavik to eliminate all ballistic nuclear weapons, etc), the British government was supportive of the United States when necessary. Britain accepted the U.S. cruise missiles in the teeth of popular demonstrations, it refrained from criticizing the 'Star Wars' initiative in spite of misgivings within Whitehall, and (in contrast to France and Spain) permitting U.S. aircraft to operate from bases in Britain to bomb Libya in 1986 (Wallace & Philips, 2009, p. 266). Thatcher believed in the role of America as an indispensable guarantor of Europe's defense. This was the real driver for Reagan's support .

Reagan and Thatcher chose the strategy of reconstruction. They shared an undeniably unified approach which they called 'conviction politics'. They led their respective countries at times of great change by holding firm to their faith in individual responsibility and their national Universalist missions (Holmes, 2010, p. 265-259).

2.1.2 *Special Relationship in the Post-Cold War Period.*

With the passing of the Cold War the special relationship waned although both countries cooperated on many issues. They had an intense cooperation in the Gulf war and in this war Britain remained the most valuable partner. The Gulf war was a strong assertion of the 'special relationship'.

After the Gulf war, Bosnia crises evidenced a lot of misunderstandings between the two governments. Major's understanding of U.S.–UK relations was different from that of James Callaghan and other supporters of the 'Atlantic intermediary' role. Major asserted that "We straddled the divide between the United States and Europe". The U.S. wanted a strong ally in Europe and not 'a fifty-first state' (Major, 1999, p. 578).

The engagement of President Clinton in solving the North Irish issue brought divergences between the two countries. As Dumbrell (2004) noted, President Clinton's Northern Irish activism was profoundly resented by the

government of John Major (p. 439).

With Blair coming as prime minister in the elections of 1997, the partnership between the two nations was named unique. Clinton and Blair were 'kindred spirits' and their agendas were very similar. Unlike Major, Blair welcomed USA engagement to give a solution for the Northern Irish issue. Anglo-American nearness, after 1997, was partly attributed to Blair's positive welcoming of U.S. engagement in Ireland (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 142).

The Blair-Clinton outlook on European development was more harmonious and coordinated than that of Major - Clinton. In May 1997 (at a joint press conference) Blair declared that he and Clinton had agreed "that Britain does not need to choose between being strong in Europe and being close to the United States". Rather, "by being strong in Europe we will further strengthen our relationships with the US" (cited in Dumbrell, 2006, p. 144).

But the partnership with America is very important for the UK. In its National Security Strategy of 2008 Britain describes as central to the national security the partnership with America. That is why, Prime Minister Tony Blair uttered this ideology very clearly in taking Britain to war alongside the U.S. in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo in 1999. If America was the new guardian of world order, Britain's role was to align itself "not as a superpower but as a pivotal power" (Porter, 2010, p. 359).

Although a degree of tension was seen between U.S. - Britain policy during the Kosovo war, where the disorganized air campaign demonstrated Washington's unilateralism in the operations, London and Washington were brought closer and Kosovo served as 'Atlantic bridge' for the special relationship. From Blair's viewpoint, Kosovo demonstrated the potency of the 'Atlantic bridge' and of the U.S.-UK alliance (Dumbrell, 2006, p. 147). Blair was convinced for the obligations of the UK-U.S. alliance, as well as for the proper international response to 9/11—as of any structural inclination of London to follow Washington (Dumbrell, 2009, p. 65).

When responding to the new anti-terror global coalition, Blair was dynamic, inspired and impulsive. Shortly before the conflict in Afghanistan the *Wall Street Journal* described Blair as America's "chief foreign ambassador to members of the emerging coalition" against terrorism. (Curtis 2003: 113). There were a variety of reasons why Toni Blair took a largely unwilling country into Iraq war, but most importantly was the belief that he ought to support the United States in all its actions (Wheatcroft, 2010, p. 32).

There has been a lot of debate on both sides of the Atlantic in relation to the degree to which the UK influenced U.S. policy choices in the war on terrorism, Iraq, and other. Some observers contend that Blair's role in convincing the Bush administration, with regard to Iraq, to initially work through the United Nations, was crucial; that Bush administration kept the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the radar screen because Blair's priority was the resolution of this issue; and that the UK was influential in pressing for a meaningful international peacekeeping presence in Afghanistan, which led to in the formation of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)(Mix, 2013, p. 7).

As for the British Prime Minister James Gordon Brown it's worth noting that he continually referred to the bonds between Europe and America and not those of U.S. - UK. Whatever the intention, the signals were interpreted by Washington as an attempt to create distance. While in office Brown depicted the UK-U.S. relations not as a 'special relationship', but as a bilateral relationship. Unlike Blair, Brown decided to make his separation from U.S. apparent in other ways. For him, Britain can be more than a bridge between Europe and America. The symbolism was that Britain could be something to stand up and shine like a beacon, and not something lie down and walk over i.e. a bridge. A major problem in Brown-Bush diplomacy was the policy to be pursued in Iraq. Britain remained in Iraq but its mandate and role was reduced to neither fully withdrawn nor fully engaged, it was there but not there.

At the strategic level, Britain found itself self-struggling and it was confused in performing its domestic and strategic objectives. It was unsuccessful in attempting to be anti-Bush and pro-American (Dunn, 2008, p. 1136-1137).

2.1.3 The special relation under Obama presidency

Different from its predecessors, Obama followed a different policy towards the so called U.S.-UK special relationship. As Steve Marsh noted "It's interesting that there are parallels in the history of the Anglo-American relations. These parallels cast light in the initial neglect of Obama towards the 'special relationship'". Let's take the transition between Reagan and George H. W. Bush. During Reagan years the U.S. - UK partnership was strong and there were a lot of transatlantic tensions. Bush called for a New World Order and wanted to distinguish his policies from those of Reagan. Part of that exercise involved downplaying the bilateral special relationship within U.S. foreign policy (Marsh, 2012, p. 190)

On Obama's election as the new American President, Brown was the first European leader to meet with him. They confirmed and renewed the significance of the 'special relationship'. Brown said that "I have come here to renew our special relationship for new times. It is a partnership of purpose born out of shared value". The U.S. president declared

"Great Britain is one of our closest and strongest allies and there is a link and bond there that will not break" (BBC, 2009).

Despite the declaration of the U.S. President, in reality the relationship between the two leaders was strained. There were times when they were barely on speaking terms. Brown struggled to build up a repartee with his American counterpart and the British press commented his first visit to Washington as a disaster. In March 2010, the Labor - dominated House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, declared the "special relationship" to be dead (Gardiner, 2011, p. 37).

The relationship was given another blow by the support of Hillary Clinton for Argentina's call for negotiations concerning the Falkland Islands call for sovereignty. What's more Obama's reaction towards BP episode made the British feel irritated and as Gardiner (2011) continues the perception across the Atlantic was that American President Obama was anti-British.

The analyst in European affairs Derek Mix points out that Obama is the first post-war U.S. President with no sentimental attachments to Europe. Some observers argue that with U.S. increasingly focused on the Middle East and Asia, Europe, including the UK, is facing a struggle as to whether remain a main partner in the eyes of the U.S. (Mix, 2010, p. 8)

On his election as Prime minister, Cameron was faced with a challenge to mend the 'special relationship'. Directly after he took office, President Obama telephoned him and confirmed their countries commitment to the 'special relationship'. Obama said, "the United States has no closer friend and ally than the United Kingdom, and I reiterated my deep and personal commitment to the special relationship between our two countries - a bond that has endured for generations and across party lines" According to Obama, the relationship is "essential to the security and prosperity of our two countries, and the world" (The telegraph, 2010).

In June 2010, during G8 and G20 summits in Canada Obama asserted that the Special Relationship was "built on a rock solid foundation and would only get stronger". Cameron and Obama agreed that Afghanistan war must show progress in a 'critical stage' and Obama pointed out that operations were entering a "critical" period while Cameron said: "Making progress this year, putting everything we have into getting it right this year is vitally important." The two leaders discussed their priorities in Afghanistan and concluded that this issue should be addressed in the national and international level (BBC, 2010)

The conflict in Libya reaffirmed the strength of the special relationship. It evidenced the importance that this relationship has in facing the crises. The Libyan case, unlike the war in Iraq, showed that UK and the U.S. were willing to act in multilateral level under the United Nations and NATO.

The analysts and scholars across both sides of the Atlantic take the stand that the U.S. - UK relations are superficial and the relationship is not strong and believe that America does not see Britain as a special partner. As Scheinmann and Cohen (2014) write in an article in The American Interest magazine "American and Brits will likely never wake up one day to find that the 'special relationship' has suddenly collapsed, but like the British Empire it may drift slowly into the sunset".

John O' Sullivan (2010) takes the same stands as he points out that "superficial (but not wrong) view of the special relationship explains its perennial usefulness as follows: Born in World War II and strengthened during the Cold War, the Anglo-American alliance is a unique example of military, diplomatic, and intelligence cooperation that goes very deep in the governing institutions of both countries". He continues in his view to say that "Britain drifts towards an illiberal European future and away from the U.S." (O'Sullivan, 2010, p. 22).

3. Concluding Remarks

It was recognized since the Second World War that Britain was no longer a superpower and could not stay by itself as such. Winston Churchill recognized that Britain could remain of great influence in the world through a moral partnership with the United States. Britain made itself very indispensable in the relationship and its role was implicit (Kissinger, 2014, p.14).

According to Kissinger (2014) the meaning of the special relationship is the ability within the Atlantic reach to form common objectives and to shape the future in a period which the U.S. has to be clear on how to deal with the emergent Asia, with the problems in the middle East and more importantly about the future of the Atlantic relationship.

It is true that the relationship has had troubles and this study demonstrates the evolution of the special relationship and the policy changes it has undergone according to the international context. Nowadays the relationship is in trouble because of British military power is an image of its former strength. The special relationship is threatened by the new wave of British defense cuts, which may ultimately weaken the UK's ability to fight alongside the United States in future

conflicts (Gardiner, 2011).

The U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressed his concern about the cut of capabilities and he was worried that "the more people will look to the U.S. to cover whatever gaps are created. At a time when we are facing stringencies of our own" (Gardiner, 2011, p. 43).

In the longer picture UK – U.S. 'special relationship' is suffering from the U.S. shift of focus. Analysts from both sides of the Atlantic observe that nowadays U.S. has called for many special relationships, like one with China, France, Israel Japan, Canada etc. And as Scheinmann and Cohen (2014) note "American interests were shifting and too were the American alliances".

But the special relationship faces significant challenges in the second decade of the new millennium, from planned British defense cuts to the rise of a European superstate. And in Washington, the Obama administration has been distinctly lukewarm toward Britain, with a foreign policy that has looked more toward Asia and the Middle East than Europe and the UK (Gardiner, 2011, p.36).

America and Britain need each other. Britain is considered as one of the largest suppliers of the U.S. imports. It also is the largest market for U.S. exports. More significantly, the UK and the United States are one another's largest foreign investors. It's obvious that many analysts have characterized UK as a "junior" partner. That is because the U.S. military and economic preponderance in this relation and it is noted that the relationship often appears to be more "special" to the UK than it is to the United States (Mix, 2010, p. 1).

But the question is will the relation continue to be as special as it used to be? I believe that this 'special relationship' will continue, despite its troubles. This special relationship is in need of renewal. Many have predicted its death, but this is exaggerated. It has lasted for seventy years and it had been the core of the West's defense of the free world against the forces of fascism, Communism, and now Islamist extremism.

As the latest conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and the War on Radical Islamism and terror have demonstrated, the United States and Great Britain always look to each other in times of war and adversity. This situation is unlikely to change in the coming decades, provided there is firm leadership on both sides of the Atlantic committed to ensuring the partnership's success.

United States and United Kingdom 'special relationship' is based on shared values, traditions and common culture. This relationship will continue as the main bilateral partnership in the world for many years to come. In spite of what analysts argue this 'special relationship' must continue, because America needs companions in its mission of the world leadership, as the only superpower. Different from other countries in the world, with which America is looking for other special relationships, Britain has the same commitment to peace, freedom and democracy, and it is willing to fight and stand for these values.

It is important to keep in mind Churchill's dictum: "Never be separated from the Americans".

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