

# **Bush and Blair: the impact of a special relationship on national interests**

Written by John Laidlaw

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## **Bush and Blair: the impact of a special relationship on national interests**

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JOHN LAIDLAW, JUL 26 2011

**It has been said that George W Bush and Tony Blair enjoyed a close and somewhat "special" relationship whilst in power in their respective states. Did this close relationship have an effect on their pursuit of separate national interests?**

The 'special' relationship shared between Tony Blair and George W Bush while they presided over their respective countries' had a greater effect on their own individual pursuit of national interests than conventionally acknowledged.

Several different variables also influenced both Tony Blair and George W Bush's pursuit of separate national interests however. These included things like 9/11 and forces from within their own administrations, but the pivotal role the 'special' relationship played was a constant feature throughout their time in power together. Differences existed between the pair but as the relationship grew it became apparent that both men possessed the same passion and burning desire to progress in foreign affairs.

### **Introduction**

This piece will seek to explore the different dimensions to the unique relationship between the leaders of two of the western world's great allies. Tony Blair and George W Bush presided over Britain and the United States from 2001 until Tony Blair stepped down as British Prime Minister in 2007. The two ultimately embarked upon a system of military intervention which both men advocated in their own Doctrines. This was not a principle that Bush initially believed in but several different events ultimately contributed to Bush growing closer to Blair's position. Blair's position was always very a determined one when dealing with intervention and these will be discussed in depth.

The opening chapter will explore the first meeting of the two and how they viewed foreign policy. Tony Blair had been involved in several military interventions prior to Bush's election so he already had the foundation for his foreign policy for the foreseeable future. Bush however was an unknown commodity and after Clinton had been highly criticized over his use of the military in the years previous, it was unknown how he would deal with foreign affairs. It was unknown how Bush would deal with foreign policy. Also, as the Bush administration was of a Neo-conservative ideological standing it was thought to be unlikely Bush would hold the same ideals as Blair and 'New Labour'. Fundamentally the two were different; Neo-Conservatives want to cut back on big government and try to leave the public to pursue their own goals with minimal government interference. New Labour however was far more liberal and believed in helping those who were in need and growing the welfare state. This greatly deviated from the Neo-Conservative model of governance as they generally tried to shrink the welfare state and its importance. This chapter will also outline the problems the pair faced in forming this 'special' relationship. Many senior members of the British Labour party including the man who would ultimately become Tony Blair's successor. Gordon Brown had a close relationship with the democratic run for Presidential election in the 2000 election. He was not the only one, many of Labours back benchers seemed to show favour to the Democratic candidate, Al Gore. These among others will be explored in the opening chapter.

The second chapter will discuss the Blair and Bush doctrines respectively and the impact they both had on one another. The Blair Doctrine came first emphasising the need for the global powers to step up and take some

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responsibility for humanitarian issues around the world. He felt that preventative action may be needed when diplomatic or even sanctions failed; the term preventative action refers to action that may be used to change a regime when there are problems in a state. It is fundamentally different from pre-emptive action as this is taken when it is felt an attack is imminent. Preventative action on the other hand does not mean an attack is imminent but it is felt action needs to be taken. This can be more common when dealing with interventions on humanitarian grounds. George W Bush later produced, but only after 9/11 a similar Doctrine to deal with what he saw as the 'axis of evil'. Bush's doctrine in particular had certain similarities to the Wolfowitz Doctrine of the 1990's. George W Bush's Neo-Conservative stance ultimately leads to differences between his and a more liberal Blair doctrine. The Blair doctrine was given during a speech in Chicago in April 1999 where by he suggested that the international community could embark upon a war in another country without their own national interests being a factor. This already deviates away from the argument that the 'special' relationship had an effect on Blair's pursuit of national interests as he states in his doctrine his national interests were not the main factor when considering intervention. This came in the midst of the Kosovo conflict which was fought on humanitarian grounds. The Bush Doctrine however came in the wake of 9/11. In the immediate period after the attacks on the World Trade Centre, the Bush administration embarked upon a system of pre-emptive foreign policy. Both doctrines emphasised the need to deal with rogue states was great, however the methods and rationale the two used to come to the conclusion that preventative or pre-emptive action was the adequate response was very different. The similarities and differences will help us gauge just how special this 'special relationship' between Blair and Bush was to become. The effectiveness of the Doctrines and the responsibility the US and UK took on and the effectiveness to which they dealt with the issues will be explored.

Next we will explore the ways in which Bush along with Blair dealt with foreign policy in the wake of September 11. Domestically both tightened their belts and internationally this date changed everything. As previously stated, Bush was reluctant to engage in minatory combat, perhaps in part because of the embarrassment suffered by US troops in Somalia some years before. But 9/11 gave Bush and his administration a mandate to change the way the US engaged overseas. Blair however had less trouble gaining a mandate as he had already intervened in both Sierra Leone and Kosovo to relative success in his short time in office. It was later that Blair came up against serious resistance. The two men during this period openly supported each other in the media as they embarked upon their first pre-emptive military intervention together, Afghanistan.

We shall then move on to discuss the ways in which the 'war on terror' was being viewed by the public on both sides of the Atlantic. The Americans believed it was for a just cause but the British were becoming disillusioned by Blair and the pre-emptive tactics being used. These differed from preventative measure Blair initially discussed in his 1999 Chicago address as a pre-emptive strike is one in which it is felt that invasion is unavoidable. It was felt in these instances that if action was not taken then they themselves are at risk. Up to an estimated two million people marched in protest of the Iraq war in 2003 showing their unwillingness to be involved. The media meanwhile were giving Blair a hard time in the press. Blair at this time was busy trying to persuade the Bush administration to seek another UN resolution before invading Iraq and trying to displace Saddam Hussein. All of these among other issues relating to the chapter heading will be discussed throughout this chapter

The final chapter will then analyse what the 'special' relationship has achieved and draw adequate conclusions on each topic covered throughout this piece. Comparisons will also be drawn on contemporary issues within the area selected for discussion previously. Has the two man crusade to rid the world of rogue states been successful? Has the use of Preventative and Pre-Emptive military tactics been beneficial to the circumstance or merely hindered any progress in the fight on terror? Or have they just scratched the surface? The 'war on terror' was clearly the last thing on George W Bush's mind when he came to power but was this changed by Tony Blair in anyway? Or was it purely a product of September the 11<sup>th</sup>. We will also cover whether or not the Blair and Bush doctrines' still hold any relevance in contemporary foreign affairs. Where is the credibility of the two now? The Chilcot Inquiry of course, has investigated the mandate for invasion of Iraq and many feel this has left Blair's reputation in tatters. Is this the same as the relationship between the two? Is their reputation forever going to be known for the invasion of Iraq with little or no mandate to do so despite everything else they achieved? This will be discussed in depth in the final chapter.

## **Chapter One**

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## **Events leading to Bush and Blair's first meeting. First impressions.**

In this opening chapter we will seek to explore the strengthening of this perceived 'special relationship' between The United Kingdom and the United States of America which found its foundations in the Second World War. For the purpose of this piece we will look more specifically at the origins of the 'special' relationship that emerged between Tony Blair and George W Bush. We will explore the origins of the pairs' foreign policy and their experience in this field prior to coming to power, the first meeting, initial impressions the two made on each other, their own ideas on how they saw this relationship as developing and also some of the obstacles that the pair initially faced in forming what turned out to be a strong alliance and indeed, friendship.

After George W Bush and the Republican party gained office after the 2000 US election a meeting was scheduled to be held between the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair and the New US President George W Bush at Camp David. Prior to this meeting however there was much speculation about the extent to which the two would connect and find common ground. Part of this reason was because of Tony Blair's quite obvious liberal background and George W Bush's Neo-conservative background. Other obstacles were there for all to see before the pair had even met. The way in which Bush eventually came to power after a Supreme Court ruling gave Bush little credibility in Britain as many on the ideological left felt because of this he had little legitimacy to be President. Gordon Brown, Tony Blair's long time companion and colleague had pledged his allegiance firmly with the Democrat candidate Al Gore. He was said to keep in regular contact with Bob Shrum, one of Gore's campaign advisors. Having said this, the Blair camp was careful not to show too much favour to one candidate or the other in the run-up before the election for fear of repeating the follies of the Major government in 1992 when they openly backed the campaign of republican George H W Bush. When the Democrat nomination Bill Clinton won the election it made it more difficult to create a lasting relationship[1]. There were also slight concerns over Bush's foreign policy intentions. To say he was inexperienced in global foreign policy was an understatement.

To Bush's credit however he is noted to have rarely missed or cancelled briefings on matters of a global significance. Unlike his predecessor Bill Clinton, who cancelled CIA briefings on a frequent basis. He was said to be 'an eager student with much to learn about global affairs' and in his first two weeks in office, made direct contact with no less than nineteen countries' leaders to discuss matters of global importance. It appeared that Bush was after all going to take a more hands on approach in foreign policy than many had expected. This in part paved the way for a strong relationship with an already active Tony Blair on an international scale. George W Bush was not the first US President to have a very limited experience in foreign policy however. In 1945 Harry Truman was thrust into the Presidency after Franklin Roosevelt's untimely passing. He had only stood as senator for Missouri and as Vice President for 82 days before becoming President and had very limited knowledge on foreign policy, including America's development of the atomic bomb. Despite this, Truman was re-elected for a second term so there was some reason for optimism despite Bush's lack of experience[2].

It can be said that many commentators exaggerate the role of the US President, while he is commander and chief, a lot of a President's ideas and philosophies come from those below. George W Bush's position on foreign policy could not be judged by just his own discretion, while saying this, opinion could not be influenced by Blair either to a point. Instead Bush placed great trust and belief in his cabinet. Of course people like Donald Rumsfeld were greatly responsible for Bush's position on foreign policy but one in particular can be said to have been the most influential person who held his post in US history. The role of Vice President had been a position of limited influence prior to the Bush administration but Richard or 'Dick' Cheney became the most influential Vice President in US history, influencing many of Bush's foreign policy agendas. It was not just the more high profile positions which influenced Bush however, Bush was open to input from all parts of his administration even one who was merely an underling but was referred to as 'the most influential underling in Washington'. Paul D Wolfowitz served as deputy secretary of defence between 2001 and 2005 and his influence for his rank was great;

'Although Wolfowitz's low keyed personality and reflective, unpretentious style made him the perfect candidate for an academic dean, they did not fit easily into Washington's standards for how a cabinet secretary should look and behave; Wolfowitz was not as tough and decisive as Rumsfeld, or as skilled a manager as Colin Powell, or as politically attuned as Condoleezza Rice. As a result, even as Wolfowitz neared the age of sixty and his once black

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hair turned to grey, he was still an underling-yet, given his innovative intellect, the most influential underling in Washington'[3]. Much before Bush's election to office in 2000, Wolfowitz had already recognized the scale of the issues the US faced on a global scale and the role he believed America would need to play in the coming years as the world's one remaining superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union in years previous. What was referred to as the 'Wolfowitz doctrine' outlined these feelings and one such feeling he portrayed was that preventative military action should be used in the future to safe guard US lives and global interests. This was to be one such feature found in both the Blair and Bush doctrines years later, but the exact relevance of this will be covered in the coming chapters as we explore the Blair and Bush doctrines.

Tony Blair similarly had limited experience in foreign affairs when he was elected British Prime Minister. The role of Prime Minister was and would turn out however to be the only senior position he would hold in any government, but by the time Bush joined him as President of the US after the 2000 election he had considerable expertise in foreign affairs. When Blair took office in 1997 he described the conservative model on foreign policy to be 'a doctrine of benign inactivity' and had been like this since the fall of the Berlin wall. Blair can be said to have little experience in this field but had a determination to find new and practical solutions to old problems. Before Blair even met Bush he was involved in several military interventions, some with US support from then president; Bill Clinton. Conflicts in places like Sierra Leone and Kosovo gave Blair the opportunity to intervene in these states affairs on humanitarian grounds. This would prove to be the key difference between Bush and Blair, as they both believed in intervention, primarily preventative intervention but the rational for doing so was slightly different. There was a fundamental difference between the two at the outset of their separate administrations as Blair felt 'soft power' was just as powerful a tool when trying to change the world for the better. He said:

'It is by furthering our values that we further our interests in this modern era of globalisation and interdependence'[4]. Using this we can see that Blair was prepared to try new and innovative ways to deal with global problems despite his relative inexperience in the field. This contrasts with Bush however as he initially adopted a more isolationist position and felt it was only acceptable to intervene when the US interests were high.

When both were elected into office, they had similarities in their limited knowledge and experience of foreign affairs so would this mean they would hit it off when they had their first meeting in February 2001, Blair was notably much more experienced by the time the pair met for the first time, however he had been in a similar position to Bush years earlier. The two were scheduled to meet at Camp David and both sides had carefully organised the meeting and dubbed it as 'informal' and simply a chance for the two to get better acquainted.

Despite this being dubbed as an informal meeting between the two, there were many pressing issues that were said to be on the agenda. These included;

'Serious political issues including the situation in Iraq, the EU defence force, and US missile defence shield'. This was to be far more than just an informal meeting for the two to get better acquainted, with such important global issues being discussed at just their first meeting[5]. Despite this, and all of the expectations of the meeting Blair notes in his own book that Bush was not overly distracted with global affairs, he was more focussed on the welfare state, education and cutting down on 'big government' which is not particularly surprising as Bush and his administration were Neo-conservatives. He also says that 9/11 is the spark that thrusts Blair and Bush into taking a more active role in global affairs but this again will be covered in the following chapter's.[6].

Ideological labels were not relevant to Blair when it came to forming relationships with other heads of state. He found it far more appropriate to try and gauge whether or not the leader in question had the same burning desire to make a difference that he had and it can be said that he identified this quality in George W Bush at an early stage, other circumstances came into effect like 9/11 but this will be covered later. Blair himself was very difficult to give an ideological label, as was Bush it turns out when dealing with foreign affairs. Despite Bush's attention on domestic policies, the Blair government still had great interest in this area as Jonathan Powell, chief of staff at number 10 and John Sawers; the then main foreign policy advisor had both worked in the Washington embassy in the past.

During the two day visit to Camp David, many things were discussed in an informal way, Weapons of Mass

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Destruction were discussed, the problem of rogue states such as Iraq and North Korea among other pressing issues of international interest. The Bush administration gave off a very clear message to Blair and his cabinet, all but Bush himself and Colin Powell. This was that they would have no easy ride out of them like the Prime Minister had while Clinton was President in the past. It seemed that the Bush administration initially took great delight in ignoring the views and ideas of not just Blair who represented one of their closest allies, but others as well[7]. It appeared that Blair would have a difficult job in continuing the international community building he had been partly responsible for in the years previous. Blair acknowledges Bush's lack of knowledge or perhaps even interest in the global issues they would ultimately have to embark upon together as he notes;

'At my first meeting with him – Camp David in February of the same year – his priorities were about education, welfare and cutting down on 'big government' as he saw it'[8]. Despite this, Blair thought he would be able to work with Bush in the long term and the informal meeting was dubbed a success as Blair and Bush both got on well.

There was much speculation as to how the pair would fare before and after their first meeting in February of 2001. Outside factors like what the British public, media and government thought of Bush and his highly contested rise to power, the way the majority of Bush's cabinet viewed Blair and the 'easy ride' he got out of Clinton in years gone by although it must be said that Blair and Clinton did differ quite strongly on some contentious issues but the Bush administration felt on the whole Clinton had given Blair an 'easy ride'. But for all the differences between the two camps, the two men in the middle had similarities to draw upon. Blair could empathize with Bush's situation as he too had no experience in foreign affairs when he became Prime Minister in 1997. The similarities would continue to be evident as the two men's doctrines are explored.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Blair and Bush Doctrines explored.**

We will now compare and contrast the respective doctrines of both Tony Blair and George W Bush and what they represented. These will be discussed in the context of the 'special relationship' and how it affected this relationship. Furthermore, we will explore how it set out to deal with the growing problems faced by states like the United Kingdom and United States of America in the modern era. Tony Blair's doctrine comes first, as he outlined what actions he felt should be taken by the international community against these problems. Bush is initially sceptical about committing to this type of doctrine, maybe partly due to his relative inexperience in the field but the impact that 9/11 had thrust Bush into the same ideological boat when it came to foreign policy as Blair.

In April 1999 during his now infamous speech to the Chicago council, Tony Blair outlined what was called a doctrine of international community. In which he stated:

'I set out what I described as a doctrine of international community that sought to justify intervention, including if necessary military intervention, not only when a nation's interests are directly engaged; but also where there exists a humanitarian crisis or gross oppression of a civilian population'. Blair by his own admission said that many felt this speech was incredibly idealistic maybe even dangerous to be openly supporting military action against states who had not opposed those who were going to be intervening. Kosovo was the topic of the day, where Muslims were being ethnically cleansed by the Milosevic regime in Serbia. This predates the relationship between Blair and Bush but a similar relationship existed between Blair and Bush's predecessor – Bill Clinton. With US support Milosevic's regime was intervened and the people of Kosovo spared. Sierra Leone was another time where Blair's doctrine was implemented and intervened, this time without US support. Under Blair's doctrine he dispatched UK troops to stop what he called the 'gangsters' tiring to displace the democratically elected government, to great success. Tony Blair holds hero-like status in Sierra Leone to this day.[9] It is clear from this that Blair was advocating that preventative action may be warranted because as he stated, a countries national security does not need to be an issue to intervene. This fundamentally differs from the neo-conservative model of which the Bush administration were said to be a part of. Blair felt strongly and passionately that the wider international community should stand up to things that are morally wrong rather than taking an isolationist view, again this conflicts with the Bush administration as they were said to be isolationist until 9/11. Blair plays on the humanitarian issue in this speech as the conflict in Kosovo

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was going on at the time where Blair had said on several occasions that the international community must be prepared to intervene militarily if the situation escalated to such a point where diplomacy and sanctions failed, which it ultimately did.

Blair had a problem however; The United Nations felt this was a dangerous way to act. They felt that the UN security council should be the body responsible for identifying threats or breaches of peace around the world, and through deliberation amongst the members of the security council – of which the UK and US are a part of, determine what the adequate response was. If either the UK or US were to take the law into their own hands, an intervention may be seen as unlawful. This was not as contentious an issue pre 9/11. Post 9/11 it can be seen that the Blair doctrine changes, where before it was just about humanitarian issues and doing what was morally and ethically right but now it was changing into something different. The problem really surfaced in the aftermath of 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq[10]. It could be argued that this almost disregard for international law explains just how 'special' this relationship had become that Blair and likewise Bush were willing to disobey the United Nations for the sake of their separate agendas. The Bush doctrine by comparison to Blair's came about under far different circumstances.

In the early Bush years legality over intervention was not an issue as they had little intention of following the Blair doctrine and getting involved in matters that did not have ramifications for their national interest. For almost half a century before George W Bush took office, the United States had operated on a foreign policy of containment and deterrence; this had been true of all presidents from Eisenhower up to and including Bill Clinton. George W also set out to operate this way. Allowing institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, United Nations and Organisation of American States delegate amongst themselves with US input how to deal with any international situation that might arise[11].

September 11 2001 changed the direction of the United State's foreign policy and thrust George W Bush and Tony Blair together. It could be argued that the 'special relationship' between the two men meant they were willing to abandon their national interests to achieve their foreign goals, but this was only true after 9/11.

George W Bush openly condemned the theory of containment and deterrence that the US had followed for decades previous in his west point speech on the first of June 2002. This speech was made in the midst of a 'war on terror' that Bush along with Blair was embarking upon. This was made just months after the pair had invaded Afghanistan, he said:

"We must take the battle to the enemy...and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act"[12]. It is clear from this that Bush's isolationist stance did not last long. The events of 9/11 were undoubtedly the key catalyst, and with Blair waiting in the wings left the 'special relationship' space to grow. This speech in particular shows a fundamental difference between Blair and Bush however. As explored previously, Blair was in favour of preventative action to change a regime for matters like humanitarian threats to the population like in Kosovo. Bush on the other hand talks as if something must be done before these forces attack America – Pre-emptive action.

The policy of the Bush doctrine was somewhat divided however, as unlike Blair who very much had his own desires and visions for foreign policy by now, Bush was heavily reliant upon his advisors. There were said to be two camps over which direction the Bush doctrine should take and the issue of the Middle East. The first of these groups was the Neo-conservatives. This group contained people like Paul D Wolfowitz who had his own doctrine in the 1990's which the Bush doctrine had many similarities to. This side of the argument believed that America should use its position as the world's only remaining superpower following the demise of the Soviet Union, to impose forcefully or otherwise, American values and spread democracy to other states. In particular, states throughout the Middle East. The other side were the 'assertive nationalists' who were lead by the then Vice President Dick Cheney and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld. This side is made up of hard line politicians who believe that America should use its power to intimidate rival nations and crush potential threats to American security before they surface[13]. From this it is clear there was division among the elites in the US but inevitably the nationalists would prevail as they were lead by the people who were in the positions of power. In Particular Dick Cheney who could be described as the most influential Vice President in US history. As George W Bush was considered a Neo-Conservative just emphasises Cheney's

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authority that his vision was the one more suitable to describe what the Bush doctrine turned out to be about. Having said this, the effect 9/11 had on Bush and the need for him to act certainly made a difference. It can also be said that the growing relationship between Tony Blair and George W Bush may have swung it in the interventionist direction.

When taking both doctrines into consideration it can be said they have many similarities. For example they both set out to deal with problems that will at one stage or another, have to be dealt with in the modern era. These problems are new and unique and cannot be dealt with by conventional means that have proved ineffective in the past. Blair's international community doctrine came at a time when humanitarian issues in Kosovo were important as the world looked from the outside as the Serb's moved in. Blair's doctrine held absolute relevance then as this was exactly the type of thing he was talking about. However by contrast, the Bush doctrine was not produced in the same period or under the same circumstances. When the Bush doctrine was devised it was part of a wider retaliation to one thing and on thing alone, 9/11. Many differences exist between the pairs' motivation and justifications for their doctrines. Bush had a mandate from the population of America to take a stand against the 'axes of evil' that had thrown the superpower that is America, into a state of emergency. Blair on the other hand had no such mandate from the people and as time wore on and the 'special relationship' grew, this pushed Tony Blair to the brink of his government collapsing. All for the sake of his principles and the relationship he now had with George W Bush. One of the greatest contributing factors to the 'special relationship' was what happened on September 11 2001, this was a day that changed the world forever.

## **Chapter Three**

### **9/11: sparking a changing policy on both sides of the Atlantic.**

We will now seek to explore the changes 9/11 made to Blair and Bush's policy, relationship and national interests. Not just in terms of foreign policy, but how they changed the way in which they conducted themselves domestically as well. Blair already had a fundamental belief in intervention and 9/11 does not change much in that respect for him. 9/11 does however undoubtedly strengthen the 'special' relationship between the pair. 9/11 changed Bush and his administrations' feeling toward intervention. As previously the administration had no clear mandate to intervene in other countries' affairs. 9/11 gave the Bush administration a clear mandate to intervene from not only the population of the United States, but the congress and senate as well. It can be said that 9/11 had a more drastic effect on Blair and Bush's pursuit of national interests than the 'special' relationship as although this was the event that brought the pair together, 9/11 pushed the US into intervention rather than the 'special' relationship doing so. The 'special' relationship grew throughout the immediate period after 9/11 as Blair and Bush publicly supported each other as well as the obvious empathy Tony Blair expressed towards America.

Tony Blair first heard of 9/11 just moments before he made a speech in Brighton. Alastair Campbell, then director of communications to Tony Blair turned the television on and showed the Prime Minister. From that moment on it was almost as if Blair had nailed his colours to the mast:

"It was not America alone who was the target, but all of us who shared the same values. We had to stand together. We had to understand the scale of the challenge and rise to meet it. We could not give up until it was done"[14]. It is clear that from this point onwards, Blair would grow closer and closer to the US and Bush as he saw a threat against them as a threat against the whole of the western world. This holds certain similarities to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation which states an attack on one of their members is an attack on them all[15], of which the United Kingdom and United States are both a part of. It is obvious that the events of 9/11 were one of the leading influences behind the 'special' relationship's progression.

Blair's shock to 9/11 was described to be as great as that of George W Bush as he immediately showed his support to the US. Many commentators at the time believed that 9/11 would be world changing in the sense that America's reaction would change it. However Blair felt that it was the attack itself that would change the world as he felt it clearly challenged the western world or 'international community' he had talked about a few years earlier. Blair felt the

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challenge to the western world was simple; step up and deal with the problem, and he for one was in it for the 'long haul'[16].

George W Bush's position before the 9/11 attacks were quite a strong one politically, taking everything into account. He had appointed Vice President Cheney as head of a task force to ascertain how likely a terrorist attack on the US was and what their potential response to an attack would be. This project had not gotten off the ground by the time of the attacks however[17]. The Bush administration was far different from Blair's in the UK. Blair's contained a lot of youth and new forward thinking people who were all part of the 'new labour' movement. The Bush administration however was made up of people like Rumsfeld, Cheney and Wolfowitz who were vastly experienced hard line politicians. When the Bush administration came to power it was full of experienced individuals who had seen the US recover from things like the Vietnam War, presided over the demise of the Soviet Union and won the Gulf War. The Bush camp was brimming with confidence, but they were to be caught cold by 9/11[18]. After the attacks of 9/11 everything changed. Bush addressed the people of America on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September to try and reassure them and give assurances that those responsible will be caught and brought to justice. He thanked congress for their support along with world leaders who had contacted him. However there was one quote in particular that we should draw our attention to:

"America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war against terrorism." [19] This indicates a clear shift from Bush's previous isolationist ideological stance towards and perhaps ultimately beyond Blair's international community. As he talked about his friends and allies and moving for peace in the world – Tony Blair fits this description perfectly as he already advocated peace via intervention. This is yet another indication of the 'special' relationship growing into something more meaningful. It also demonstrates how America's national interest was changing and the problem of rogue states in the Middle East in particular was at the top of the agenda.

The response that Bush spoke of was to be great, but not just militarily as many had anticipated. Domestically the US changed policy to adequately deal with the modern day terrorist threat. The Patriot Act, which was passed through congress in October 2001, just a month after the attacks. The act gave the US sweeping new powers on all sorts of issues. This act made changes to powers the authorities in the US had. The authorities could for example: raid people's homes without their knowledge or permission, intercept voicemail messages or even e-mails. The authority and ability the President had to react swiftly in times of terrorism were extended, along with a host of different things in the Patriot Act to try and ensure nothing like the atrocity of 9/11 happened again[20]. It has often been asked since, why the Patriot Act ever came into existence with such wide spread changes to American freedoms. The answer is fear. Fear of this happening again led the American people to place great trust into George W Bush and his judgment of what the best responses were, in exchange for some of their civil liberties. Bush in theory could have done whatever he wanted at that point as his approval rating was around 90%, and public opinion plays a huge role in American politics. As one can imagine, there would have been quite extensive discussions between Blair and Bush over possible reactions to 9/11, shortly after the patriot act came the UK's domestic changes.

The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act was introduced in December 2001 and like the Patriot Act in the US, tried to deal with pressing issues over potential terrorist activity. While not as controversial or as far reaching as the Patriot Act, some aspects of it were met with fierce opposition in the UK. Among the most contentious pieces of legislation that appeared in the act was the period of time suspects of international terrorism could be held by the police for. This period was for questioning, no charge had to be brought against a suspect and minimal evidence to detain them in the first place. Previously a non-UK citizen could be held for up to seven days for questioning but the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act doubled that to fourteen. Tony Blair and later Gordon Brown lobbied to try and get this period up to twenty eight days to detain a terror suspect without charge but the fourteen days had become problematic in itself for the British government as it was disputed by the European Convention of Human Rights.[21]. Although both had committed to making the necessary domestic changes to safeguard their states from terrorist activity, it was clearly less problematic for Bush.

The reaction that the world expected did come however. The watching world expected a military response against those responsible for September 11. As Bush had promised in his address the day after the attacks, the US along



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with friends and allies would do all in their power to bring those to justice; those who were determined to be responsible were Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. Immediately after 9/11 George W Bush was busy creating a task force to discuss what the response would be. This force contained himself, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Andrew Card, George Tenet, and General Hugh Shelton, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who would be replaced by his deputy, General Richard Myers, on his retirement at the end of September. This group contained vastly experienced individuals who Bush had enormous trust in. Bush by this point had developed his understanding of foreign affairs and had become much more assertive and demanding during discussions with his cabinet. He did not want to waste resources or time by dropping a 'mission dollar missile on a five dollar tent'[22]. Blair had also made clear of his intention to support the US through every eventuality. He sent a five page memo to Bush on September 12 outlining that they should demand they give up Bin Laden or suffer the consequences, again outlining how committed Blair was to the US cause and his own doctrine to promote peace across the world through any means necessary[23]. The 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2001 signaled the official start of the war in Afghanistan, a pre-emptive military engagement to try and stop the terrorist activity that had been based in Afghanistan for years.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 changed many things for both the United States and Britain. Firstly, the 'special relationship' had developed as Blair showed Bush the way toward intervention when Bush becomes ever more willing to use the military when pre 9/11 he was unwilling to do so. 9/11 also changed domestic policy in the two states; both introduced anti-terror legislation within a few months of each other, both aimed at preventing and dealing with potential terrorist threats in the future. And the effect 9/11 had that everyone expected was of course, the military invasion of Afghanistan in an attempt to disrupt the terrorist activities of Al-Qaeda so that something like 9/11 was never to happen again. The 'war on terror' had officially begun.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The 'war on Terror' – growing tensions**

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was relatively clean cut in terms of why the decision was taken and it had a clear objective; to disrupt the terrorist activity within Afghanistan. By 2003 the Afghan war was still rife, and Afghanistan was still a very volatile place for allied forces to be. Loss of life was still an almost regular occurrence. Pressure was building on Blair at home to take a step back as it was widely believed that Britain's national interests were not at stake. Blair was said to be sacrificing these interests for the sake of those of the US. Bush had problems as well though; on the global scale his 'axis of evil' speech came under scrutiny. It was felt the Bush administration were out of sync with contemporary affairs. The 'war on terror' was also building as the Bush administration felt it was the time to invade Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein. People within the Bush administration felt that the US made a mistake leaving the Gulf before dealing with Hussein the first time. Most notably people like Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney continuously pushed Blair to disregard things like UN resolutions in favour of Pre-Emptive action. This put the 'special' relationship under some strain. The British public and media did not take kindly to the potential invasion of Iraq. This chapter will include discussions of all of, but not limited to these subjects.

The phrase 'axis of evil' can be said to best define the direction of the Bush administration's foreign policy in the post 9/11 era. Where many commentators in Europe criticized it was out of sync with the rest of the western world's ideological position, it adequately described how the US saw the terrorist organisations and rogue states in the Middle East. The Bush doctrine overlapped somewhat with Blair's international community doctrine to deal with problems of rogue states in the modern era, this was vital in bringing the two together over discussions about Iraq and Saddam Hussein in 2002-03[24]. The similarities between the two men's doctrines brought the 'special' relationship more relevance and gave the pair common ground to move forward from.

The fight against these 'axis of evil' of which Bush spoke, lead them to Iraq. People on the far right like Rumsfeld and Cheney were not big on the nation building exercise that would be needed after the deposing of Hussein. People like Colin Powell however felt that this was needed and the allied forces would have to implement democracy before leaving. This contrasts with the realist argument that democracy cannot be imposed on a state, it must instead happen naturally[25]. Blair's position on Iraq was made clear after a private meeting with Bush in April 2002, after

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which he was clear the US shared his burning desire to right the wrongs in the Middle East. Blair outlines his dedication to the US cause by committing 40,000 troops to any potential intervention of Iraq that would surface. The British media and public were not happy about the legitimacy of such an intervention as the main reason for the intervention was to rid Iraq of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Blair pushed for UN resolutions to try and bring the International community of which he was so fond together to try and give it legitimacy but the United States were unwilling[26].

While it can be said that the 'special' relationship had developed to a point where Blair and Bush could relate to each other's objectives, they were by no means the same. Where it could be said Blair was deeply concerned with the issue of Hussein and his potential for Weapons of Mass Destruction, he was also deeply concerned with the moral justifications for the invasion of Iraq as he had previous experience with places like Sierra Leone and Kosovo where humanitarian issues were at the forefront of Blair's mind prior to intervening.. The Bush administration on the other hand showed far less consideration for this side and felt that they needed to strike pre-emptively to defend themselves against the potential threat Iraq and Saddam Hussein posed. In Blair's memoirs, he discusses from his own prospective why the invasion of Iraq was for a just cause and displacement of Saddam Hussein was vital. He notes:

"One statistic above all tells us what Saddam's Iraq was like. According to the UN, by 2002 the number of deaths of children under the age of five was 130 per 1000, a figure worse than that of the Congo." [27] This emphasises again Blair's humanitarian rationale behind intervention.

In 2002, Colin Powell went to the UN Security Council to seek a resolution over Iraq and its potential disarming. It was thought that had this resolution not been put in place then the American's, with British support, would do so anyway. With close contact with the French, a resolution was reached with both sides making concessions. It was now down to interpretation whether or not the US could invade Iraq lawfully. If Saddam Hussein did not disarm then he was to face sanctions and be in breach of the 91 cease fire, and would give the US a perceived mandate to invade Iraq.[28]

The Bush administration had made a complete shift in the post 9/11 era from isolationist to unilateralism. The term unilateralism refers to the one sided Pre-Emptive action that the US were now willing to take, primarily in the case of Iraq for nuclear disarmament. The Neo-Conservative Bush administration had come full circle. They had acknowledged that the spread of democracy was needed throughout the Middle East. This directly contradicted the Neo-Conservative of the 1970's who condemned the actions of the Carter administration for trying to invoke the spread of a more open and democratic system in Iran. People like Jeane Kirkpatrick had made very clear their unwillingness to push this kind of foreign policy, but by 2002 the emphasis had changed[29]. Could this be attributed to the 'special' relationship with a liberal Blair?

By 2002 tensions were building as Blair jostled for position with the Bush administration over whether or not to try and get another UN resolution before an invasion of Iraq. Blair was coming under increasing pressure from his own political party back home amidst worries over national interests However there remained a certain fondness between Blair and Bush. While in Texas in 2002 attending a joint conference with the American President, the pair emphasised the need for Iraq to be dealt with. The point was made by both Bush and Blair that the potential for Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq had an effect on everyone's national interests[30]. Despite the obvious tension between members of the Bush administration and Blair, there was fondness shown towards him. Most notably by Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell and Bush himself, who referred to him as 'Our Guy Tony'[31]. Bush also showed how far the 'special' relationship had come since 9/11 as he said Blair:

"Does not need a focus group to convince him of the difference between right and wrong"[32]. Despite all the hostility that existed between the two camps over Iraq, a 'special' relationship still existed between the pair.

In late 2002 it was said by a UN representative that nothing constituted an invasion of Iraq as the UN and US had interpreted the resolution differently and both felt they had legality. Things with regard to an invasion in Iraq seemed to be on hold[33]. In early 2003 however, the pressure was really beginning to show on the 'special' relationship. A

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secret meeting was called between Blair and Bush at the White House at the end of January to discuss what actions to take. Blair had publicly stated, and still has to this day that they were giving Saddam Hussein one last opportunity to disarm and as far as Blair was concerned that matter would resolve itself if he disarmed. This meeting however was speculated to have taken a different course. A memo was unearthed in 2006 which had notes taken from the meeting between the two men on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003. In this George W Bush is paraphrased as saying that the US would 'twist arms' and perhaps even 'threaten' the UN to get another resolution but believed that no matter the outcome, an invasion was inevitable[34]. This shows that the relationship between the pair was a strong one as Bush was prepared to seek another resolution, despite the opposition he was facing from his own administration, as Blair felt it was the right thing to do. Blair felt it would be beneficial to do this and try and get international backing before an invasion, though ultimately Blair's 'international community' broke down.

After this secret meeting in January, the British media along with much of the British population became hostile towards Blair as he came under increasing pressure to distance himself from Bush and the US as they felt that the UK's national interests were not in Iraq. On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February, close to two million people took part in a three and a half mile march in London to protest against the potential war in Iraq. Blair himself addressed the crowd saying there would be 'bloody consequences' if Iraq was not tackled now[35]. Many popular figures turned out to show their support for the cause. It is said that this is the largest public demonstration in UK history. Two other demonstrations took place in Glasgow and Belfast[36]. The message was clear; the British people did not want to go to war in Iraq and Blair knew it.

Despite this clear unwillingness from the British public, it was revealed later by the Chilcot inquiry that Blair had already given assurances to Bush that Britain would be a part of any military intervention in Iraq. Alastair Campbell, Blair's then chief spokesman told the inquiry of Blair's 'secret' notes to Bush in the run up to invasion of Iraq. By February 2003, Bush had realised the severity of Blair's situation back home and even told the Prime Minister not to risk his government collapsing over going to Iraq. Campbell shows the strength of the 'special' relationship as he told in Chilcot Inquiry in 2010:

"The Prime Minister wrote quite a lot of notes to the President," he said. "I would say the tenor of them was that . . . we share the analysis, we share the concern, we are going to be with you in making sure that Saddam Hussein is faced up to his obligations and that Iraq is disarmed. If that cannot be done diplomatically and it is to be done militarily, Britain will be there. That would be the tenor of the communication to the President." [37] This does not just show the strength of the relationship between the pair, but that Blair still believes his doctrine has relevance. His doctrine states that intervention can be used if diplomacy fails. Were many feel Blair abandoned his own doctrine to keep close to Bush, the opposite can be argued.

Tony Blair and George W Bush remained determined to achieve their goals set out in their separate doctrines upon the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Both have been heavily criticized since. The invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq have had their criticisms but both men remain assured of themselves and their position that no action at all meant a potential national security risk in the future. The pair continuously supported each other, most notably after 9/11. Despite the obvious obstacles Blair faced in going to Iraq, he still persisted; such was the bond he had developed with George W Bush.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Reflecting on the 'special' relationship: Conclusions and Contemporary issues**

We will now reflect on the 'special' relationship and analyse just how 'special' this relationship was. We will explore how it affected the US and UK's pursuit of national interest under George W Bush and Tony Blair. What was the nature of the relationship when Blair stepped down as Prime Minister in 2007? We will also reflect on the relevance of the first meeting and what problems were initially faced such as the obvious division on both sides about how a transatlantic relationship would operate. The doctrines' will be discussed further and where they both stand in contemporary foreign policy. David Cameron is now British Prime Minister alongside Barack Obama as US President. Is the relationship between these two as 'special' as the one that existed before them? If not, why not?

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The impact of 9/11 will also be concluded upon. The domestic issues that surfaced as a direct consequence were important to national interests on both sides of the Atlantic as well as the foreign implications. And finally, the 'war on terror' will be revisited. By briefly reflecting on the key issues that lead to tensions between both the Blair and Bush camps' on both sides of the Atlantic and what ultimately lead to an illegal war in Iraq that neither have recovered from.

The hostilities between the Labour government in Westminster and the new Republican Bush administration in Washington were obvious before the two met for the first time in 2001. This was amidst the Supreme Court ruling that gave Bush the legitimacy to be President that many of the political elite in Britain felt was unwarranted. Blair and Bush still got off to a relatively good start, not quite a 'special' relationship yet, but progress was undoubtedly made. Blair was already active on the international stage and it was thought that a Neo-Conservative Bush would have little interest in abandoning the recent isolationist programme that previous presidents' had operated under. By this point, Blair was busy trying to construct an international community that could deal with matters of a global importance, therefore valued the opinions and views of the US in an attempt to get them on board in the future.

This contrasts with his predecessor Gordon Brown, who supported Al Gore in the 2001 election. It was said that when he took over in 2007, he would try and distance himself from the US and Bush. Brown did however say:

"It is firmly in the British national interest that we have a strong relationship with the US, our single most important bilateral relationship."<sup>[38]</sup> By saying this, Brown acknowledges the importance of the 'special' relationship and the positive effect it had on Britain's national interest. A foreign minister at the time did say however that Britain would no longer be 'joined at the hip' with the US when it came to foreign policy under Brown<sup>[39]</sup>. This contrasts with Blair's position to the US as he felt it was important for the UK national interest to stay close to our closest ally. The inexperience of Bush is also a factor discussed in the opening chapter, which Blair could relate to having been relatively inexperienced in foreign policy when he came to 10 Downing Street.

The next issue covered was to explore the different dimensions of the Blair and Bush doctrines. Both had relevance and some legitimacy when it came to intervention. As well as having many similarities. Tony Blair's doctrine came first during an address to the Chicago council in 1999 while Bill Clinton was President. This doctrine stated that it was important for an 'international community' to step forward and deal with problems around the world. It was said by Blair that when diplomacy or sanctions failed, then preventative intervention was warranted. This was made in the midst of the Kosovo crisis where humanitarian issues were at the heart of worries. The Bush doctrine was different in a few ways. Like the Blair doctrine it did say intervention was desirable when dealing with a rogue state, but this was to be done by Pre-Emptive action. This was fundamentally different from preventative action as the Bush model was based on crushing a potential threat to their national security. Bush was only prepared to take a more active role in global issues after 9/11 however, as he received a mandate to do so from the US population.

Both doctrines can be said to have had relative success as both were implemented on more than one occasion. Many commentators have argued that Blair's position changed after 9/11 and moved closer to the Bush doctrine as he embarked upon Pre-Emptive attacks in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Ironically, the Blair doctrine has had more staying power than Bush's doctrine. The current conflict in Libya has been dealt with by using the very same methods Blair suggested in 1999. This has been shown by Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron. While talking about how the matter of Libya should be dealt with, he said that the international community should speak with 'one voice' and impose its will together. This has close comparisons with Blair as he also wanted to use UN resolutions to impose sanctions on countries like Iraq before invading. And if intervention was the answer, he felt it was desirable to have international backing. Both Cameron and Obama are said to have been interested in this route like Blair, but unlike Bush and his administration.<sup>[40]</sup>

We then discussed the importance 9/11 played in the 'special' relationship. The role of 9/11 cannot be overstated. It changed not only Bush's position, but Blair's as well. As a direct consequence of 9/11, Bush was now prepared to engage in military conflict where before he was unwilling. Blair also changed his position as previously he was involved in interventions that were not made in retaliation. Instead they tended to be humanitarian interventions based upon a moral judgment he made based on the facts available to him. This was the point in time many began to

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believe Blair was moving from preventative to Pre-Emptive action to create a stronger bond between himself and Bush.

Domestically things changed as a direct consequence of 9/11. Bush and Blair introduced tough new legislation to deal with terror threats in their respective states and to ensure the national interest. The US anti-terror legislation was particularly controversial. The Patriot Act, introduced in late 2001 gave the state all types of powers. Telephone calls could be intercepted or homes raided with little evidence to name a couple. Since George W Bush left office over a year ago, many have asked what will become of the Patriot Act. This act defined the Bush attitude post 9/11. The Patriot act has had several short term extensions as it is due to be replaced by the Anti-Terror bill. It is currently being debated in the House of Representatives and it is hoped it will be introduced in late May[41].

The UK equivalent of the Patriot Act was the Anti-Terrorism, crime and security act also passed in 2001. This at the time was an example of the unity between the UK and the US, Blair and Bush. Within four years of its introduction however, it was replaced. The prevention of terrorism act was introduced in 2005 to replace the now unworkable legislation that stood before. Unlike in the US, there was resistance to the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act. In particular, the detention issue. It came to a Law Lords' ruling that the detention of eight terror suspects with no charge brought against them was unlawful. New legislation was needed. This put a dent in the unity between the US and UK in principle anyway, as the American's civil liberties had almost been surrendered in favour of the national interest; to protect them from terror, but in the UK it was a different story[42].

Growing tensions between the two men and countries' was then covered over the issue of Iraq. Afghanistan had not gone well, members of the armed forces were still being killed and wounded, and Osama Bin Laden had not been found. The British public in particular were becoming disillusioned by this 'war on terror' of which they had heard so much about, and a war in Iraq for them held little legitimacy. Blair was determined however to be a part of the US efforts, whatever they may be. It was many of the hard line Neo-Conservatives who felt most strongly about Iraq however. Many of them felt that mistakes were made in the Gulf previously when leaving while Saddam Hussein was still in power. 9/11 and everything that went with it gave them the mandate to fulfil their ideological ambitions. Blair came under pressure at home with numerous protests against the potential war in Iraq and risked his government collapsing because of internal division. Never the less, it was alleged Blair gave Bush his word he would be a part of any action the US would take against Iraq, militarily or otherwise. Blair however did try and put pressure on the Bush administration to seek UN resolutions before an invasion. Although the American's felt that the first resolution gave them legitimacy to invade. The invasion began in March of 2003 and since has been riddled with problems.

Both the Iraq and Afghan conflicts have gone on longer than anticipated; loss of life is still common place. But many have disputed not just the legitimacy, but the carrying out of operations in Iraq. Scandals like the 'oil for food' scandal where bribes were taken by senior officials have left a sour taste in the mouth to name one[43]. The carrying out of operations has been ridiculed as well:

"The administration's intervention in Iraq, the mistakes made, and the cost yielded in dollars, blood and international legitimacy are emblematic of the systemic weaknesses that expanded across the American policy-making machinery"[44]. This feeling has been felt across much of America in recent years. The Bush administration has now been tarred with the brush of failure, throwing money at a problem that has not been resolved. Much of the international community now see America in this same light. Even the deposing and killing of Saddam Hussein has achieved little as Iraq remains very volatile.

Blair and his government have also been heavily criticized in recent months over the conflict in Iraq. Blair stuck to his guns and what his doctrine states. Intervention would only be used as a last resort, he said in the Chilcot inquiry:

"I remember specifically a conversation with President Bush in which I said if he complies than that's it"[45]. Blair to this day remains assured of his moral judgement to be a part of the efforts in Iraq, despite many believing it was not in our national interests. The Chilcot inquiry was held to ascertain whether or not Blair had lied to the British public, Government and media before going to Iraq with George W Bush. Blair's legacy is now marred by the failings in Iraq and the lack of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the existence of which were a pivotal in the allied forces invading in

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the first place.

The 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 marked the final public appearance of the two men together as President and Prime Minister. One of the key topics of the discussions was carbon omissions and meeting targets. Bush had never overly preoccupied himself with these kinds of matters but it can be argued that the fact Bush had committed to meeting 'international goals for omissions exemplified just how 'special' this relationship had become. Blair was very active on this issue, pushing for the G8 countries to commit to lowering omissions. Blair's powers of persuasion and close relationship with Bush inevitably lead to Bush agreeing as well[46]. This shows that the 'special' relationship was not just a relationship based entirely on the 'war on terror' and proves it had other dimensions.

There is no doubt that Tony Blair and George W Bush shared a 'special' relationship while in power in their respective states. This was influenced by many different situations that arose, none more so than 9/11 and the unity the pair showed throughout that period. The 'war on terror' that ensued after 9/11 can be said to have been problematic, as terrorism is still a very real threat to UK and US national security. We have discussed and analysed the many different aspects of this 'special' relationship and how it affected the US and UK's pursuit of separate national interests.

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*Date written: May 2011*