

# Analysing the 'Special Relationship' between the US and UK in a Transatlantic Context

Written by Anna Pitts-Tucker

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## Analysing the 'Special Relationship' between the US and UK in a Transatlantic Context

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The term 'Special Relationship' publicly emerged in Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech of 1946 (Dumbrell, 7:2001), and has subsequently been used to describe the supposedly unique alliance between America and the UK. Ultimately, this relationship is a socially constructed identity based on the shared values, language, and history of these two powers (Dumbrell, 65:2009). As such, the construction and mutual use of the term 'Special Relationship' indicates that each actor identifies the other as a unique and dominant ally. It can therefore be said that rhetorically, the US-UK alliance does dominate all other Transatlantic relationships. Indeed, the mutual uptake and largely enduring use of the term through the years has resulted in a relatively normalised and accepted perception of the US-UK relationship as 'special'. The discursive power fostered within the phrase itself has therefore translated into the social world through repetition, socialisation, and practice. As such, the supremacy of this relationship does not merely exist in the linguistic realm. For instance, the superiority of the alliance exists in the social world through the practical pursuit of shared values, as well as through the medium of defence and intelligence sharing (Dumbrell, 64:2009). However, the 'Special Relationship' is a fluid, unfixed, and fluctuating identity, which has proved itself to be malleable through different contexts and trials.

While the relationship may possess rhetorical dominance, there is a fluctuating degree of practical superiority, which suggests that the 'relationship can be no stronger than the contemporary common interest it serves' (Gompert, 44:2003). As other Transatlantic relationships can sometimes appear more useful, it can be said that the alliance's supremacy is largely contingent on self-interest, context, and from whose perspective one is looking. Ultimately, the rhetorical power of the term has created a veneer of dominance that cannot always be practically substantiated. Thus, while the US-UK partnership is stronger in many ways than most other alliances, it is not accurate to assume that the 'Special Relationship' consistently dominates all other Transatlantic partnerships. It does not account for contextual changes or varying strengths and weaknesses through different trials and contexts.

This essay will specifically explore the UK-US alliance and the ways in which it can, and cannot be seen to dominate other relationships. It will firstly explore the term 'Special Relationship' itself, and the power that this phrase both embodies and projects. Following this, the 'Special Relationship' will be discussed as a form of identity, which will subsequently be used to justify the supremacy of the alliance. The essay will then turn to explore the ways in which America and the UK are tied together in a unique fashion, with specific focus on intelligence and defence based features of the partnership. Following this, the alternate angle of the strains and weaknesses of the 'Special Relationship' will be looked at. This will firstly entail an analysis of the differing perceptions of the alliance itself, and will be followed by an exploration of the fluid and fluctuating nature of the relationship through various trials and contexts.

In order to assess the dominance of US-UK relations, one must analyse the discourse used to describe the alliance. Through the lens of critical constructivism, language is a form of power (Hopf, 177:1998), and as such, the term 'Special Relationship' itself is instilled with a degree of significance. As Jennifer Milliken argues, 'discourses can operate as background capacities for persons to differentiate and identify things...and [relate] them to other objects' (231:1999). The use of the word 'special' is therefore inherently suggestive of importance, and helps to socially construct the dominance of the US-UK relationship. The word 'special' is also rarely used to describe any other

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Transatlantic relations, which subsequently lends degree of superiority to the US-UK alliance that other relationships are not afforded. However, one cannot simply take the word 'special' at face value; the meaning and subsequent power behind such wording must be explored, and therefore attention must be paid to the constructors of such language (Epstein 327:2010). In this instance, it is the Special Relationship's subjects who created the term, which had been previously used in private communications, but became publicly used after Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech in 1946 (Dumbrell 7:2001). The existence of shared language, history and values, as well as the war experience (Dumbrell 65:2009) impregnated the word 'special' with a significance grounded in reality. As 'language imbues events and actions with meaning' (Goddard & Krebs 70:2018), the phrase 'Special Relationship' embodies the creators' perception that the UK-US alliance is both unique and dominant. Thus, the language used is a social product formed by background knowledge and the circumstances in which Britain and America found themselves, and therefore the use of the word 'special' must be seen as an indicator of the dominance of the US-UK alliance.

This dominance is therefore derived from the identity that is created by the use of such a term. As Charlotte Epstein argues, states 'position themselves in relation to other states by adopting certain discourses and not others' (341:2010). Discourses can construct perceptions of international hierarchies, whereby some actors are identified as higher in the global 'pecking order' than others, based on a range of both hard and soft power capabilities (Pouliot, 11:2016). As such, Britain and America may perceive each other as particularly high up in the international hierarchy, and therefore view their bilateral relationship as one that is imbued with this superiority. Moreover, this 'special' form of identification stipulates the existence of a collective identity between the two states. The collective 'Self' of the US and the UK within the 'Special Relationship' sets them apart from the 'Others' who are not involved in the alliance (Buzan, 18:2004). This separation of 'Self' from 'Other' suggests the self-perception of the dominance of the US-UK relationship in comparison to other Transatlantic alliances. As Alex Danchev notes, the relationship between the UK and America has become an 'unusually self-conscious one' (190:2007), thus indicating that the two actors are mutually aware of the unique alliance and identity that they share. Therefore, the 'Special Relationship' between Britain and America can be seen to dominate all other Transatlantic alliances, because the participants have identified each other as unique allies.

Moreover, the use of the phrase has helped to translate the linguistic power of the term into a form of dominance in the social world. This has occurred through the endurance and repetition of the phrase through the years. Indeed, despite its inception in 1946, the term has continually been used by multiple Prime Ministers and Presidents within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Dumbrell, 2009). As Nicholas Onuf argues, repetition of language or a particular discourse can create a degree of significance, as it helps to construct socially accepted norms within reality (66:1998). The language of the 'Special Relationship' has therefore cultivated a degree of supremacy in the social world. Socially constructed knowledge and meaning, which is comprised of the shared values and experiences that impregnated the word 'special' with its significance, have created a reality of dominance (Guzzini 499:2005). This view is corroborated by Douglas Stuart, who argues that the discursive existence of a so-called 'Special Relationship' has resulted in a 'deeply ingrained... habit of cooperation' between the two powers (Stuart, 204:2006). Consequently, a process of socialisation has occurred, which has been aided by the repetition of language and practice, thereby causing the 'Special Relationship' to become somewhat normalised (Ramos, 119:2018). As such, language should be seen as a 'productive of power' (Goddard & Krebs, 71:2018), as it can help to build social reality, and bring concepts into material being. Thus, the enduring narrative of the term 'Special Relationship' has helped to translate linguistic power into a form of superiority in the social world by socialising America and Britain into this assumption about reality. As such, the discourse surrounding the alliance does mean that the 'Special Relationship' between America and the UK dominates all others in the context of the Transatlantic.

The translation of power from the linguistic realm into the social world can be demonstrated by the ways in which the 'Special Relationship' exists in practice, and has, in many ways, been institutionalised. The phrase was historically imbued with the understanding that Britain and America share language, history and values (Dumbrell, 65:2009), and as they still maintain similar perceptions of the world and how it should be (Dobson & Marsh, 689:2014), the rhetoric of their 'shared values' has been translated into practice. For instance, the 2015 UK Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) highlighted how the two nations provide joint global leadership to promote international stability, and some of their key shared interests (51:2015). These include working to combat terrorism, as well as 'promoting the rule of law and free trade' (51:2015). For example, in October 2019, Britain and America signed the first ever bilateral

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agreement to allow greater and faster access to each other's data regarding crimes such as terrorism, known as the Bilateral Data Access Agreement (BDAA) (Department of Justice, 2019). This demonstrates how shared values are being transformed into unique practical realities, which can also be exemplified by the promotion of free trade, which is another vital shared interest. In practice, America is the UK's largest single export partner (Ministry of Defence, 51:2015). This suggests that for the UK, the 'Special Relationship' does not just dominate other Transatlantic relations, but can also be superior on a global scale. These two nations also invest \$1 trillion in each other's economies, making the 'Special Relationship' the closest investment alliance in the world (Fox, 2018), therefore reinforcing the Transatlantic, and indeed global, superiority of this alliance. Therefore, the Transatlantic dominance of the 'Special Relationship' does not merely exist in the linguistic realm, as it also permeates some facets of reality.

Furthermore, throughout the existence of the 'Special Relationship', intelligence sharing has been a key practical way in which the UK-US alliance dominates all other Transatlantic relations (Dumbrell, 64:2009). The UKUSA Agreement of March 1946, which was initially formed as a bilateral vehicle for intelligence sharing on the eve of the Cold War (Tossini, 2017), not only 'consolidated the Special Relationship between Britain and the United States' (2017) in its early years, but also continues to be in existence today. While its scope has somewhat broadened to include Australia, Canada and New Zealand to create the 'Five Eyes Alliance' (Pfluke 302:2019), this relationship is unmatched in the context of the Transatlantic. Indeed, in 2010 the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee highlighted US-UK intelligence sharing as a key feature of the partnership, noting that 'the field of intelligence cooperation is one of the areas where the UK-US relationship can be rightly described as "special"' (Foreign Affairs Committee, 42:2010). This perspective was more recently corroborated in the 2015 SDSR, which described the US-UK intelligence sharing relationship as 'unparalleled' (51:2015). As well as the aforementioned BDAA, this can be exemplified by the expansion of intelligence sharing on information regarding terrorism in August 2019 (Ministry of Defence, 30:2019), thus further extending this already unique and vital relationship. Moreover, UK and US based intelligence agencies have been continually proven to work exceptionally close with one another. For instance, in 2013, it emerged that the US National Security Agency had given around £100 million to the UK's GCHQ within a three-year period to secure both access and influence to some of the UK's key intelligence collecting programmes (Hopkins & Borger, 2013). This displays the significant degree to which British and American agencies are involved with each other's intelligence gathering, as well as suggesting that the intelligence relationship also has close financial underpinnings. Therefore, the 'Special Relationship' between the UK and America can be seen to dominate all other Transatlantic relations because it enjoys an unparalleled alliance in terms of intelligence sharing. This feature has effectively institutionalised the partnership, giving it a grounded superiority over other Transatlantic alliances.

Following on from this, the relationship has both contemporarily and historically been the most comprehensive, dominant, and unique in the realm of defence (Bartlett 178:1992). This defensive relationship has endured since the Second World War, with the 2019 SDSR update claiming that the UK and US still 'have a unique, strong and enduring partnership with the US, in foreign, defence and security policy' (28:2019). This 'unique' alliance was most evidently demonstrated by the 2003 Iraq War, where the UK's support for US action has been interpreted as a core example of the defensive nature of the 'Special Relationship' (Rees, 42:2011). Wyn Rees has argued that during this period, UK loyalty almost solely lay with Washington, largely to the detriment of some of the UK's European relationships (42:2011). This view is corroborated by Jane Sharp, who posits that the UK prioritised its alliance with America over relationships with some of its most vital European allies (59:2004). As such, the Iraq War demonstrated the dominance of the UK-US 'Special Relationship' over others in the Transatlantic, as the UK and US stood by each other despite facing criticism from other European powers (Rees, 42:2011). Furthermore, nuclear cooperation has long been assessed as a unique feature of the 'Special Relationship'. The Mutual Defence Agreement of 1958 allowed for unparalleled cooperation on nuclear technologies (Foreign Affairs Committee, 46:2010), and this agreement was reinstated in 2014 for a further ten years (Norton-Taylor, 2014). Additionally, the 'unique' defensive relationship can also be seen with regard to the use of joint forces and collaboration on defensive programmes (Oliver & Williams, 6:2017). For instance, the UK is the only 'Tier 1' partner to the US on the Joint Strike Fighter Programme, which is one of the largest defence equipment programmes (HM Government, 28:2019), and this has subsequently allowed the UK unique status in purchasing US defensive equipment (Rees, 41:2011). Moreover, the 'Special Relationship' has proved itself to be a key part of NATO. A House of Commons Defence Committee report in June 2018 concluded that the US-UK alliance was 'fundamental for the functioning of NATO' (27:2018), citing the

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relationship's leadership within the organisation, superior ability to deploy troops, financial involvement, and largely complementary policy goals as key reasons for this (27:2018). Other powerful European nations, such as Germany, have been more reluctant to contribute in such a way to NATO, and do not, for example, pay 2% of their GDP to the organisation (Knuckey, 2019). This reinforces the Special Relationship's Transatlantic dominance not just in bilateral terms, but also within multilateral institutions.

However, the 'Special Relationship' is ultimately a socially constructed identity which is consequently subject to change based on a number of contextual and nation-specific factors. As such, the dominance of the relationship can vary based on whose perspective one is looking from. Historically, the UK has often been painted as the more dependent of the two allies (Bartlett, 110:1992). As David Reynolds argues, from the early 1960s to 1970s, the UK experienced a decline in its 'Great Power' status, and subsequently its importance as an ally to the US (13:1985). During this period, the UK was somewhat dependent on American economic aid which, as C. J. Bartlett argues, exposed the UK to notable levels of US influence (110:1992). This period is an example of how the UK has historically been more reliant on the 'Special Relationship' than America. Due to this, one must question whether the alliance can be evaluated as dominating all other relationships in the Transatlantic when it seems imbalanced, and far more important from the UK's perspective than America's. As John Dumbrell has noted, the 'Special Relationship' is 'spoken of largely in British accents' (65:2009), which denotes the disparity in perception of the importance of the partnership. Indeed, this imbalance of superiority is not merely historical. While defence and nuclear capability is often described to be a central feature of the Special Relationship's unique character (178:1992), one-sided dependencies even exist within these core features. For example, the UK's nuclear deterrent is significantly dependent on Washington (Wallis-Simons, 2015). While the UK retains full operational control of its nuclear weapons (Allison, 2019), the UK's nuclear submarines are essentially maintained and designed by the US, with their nuclear missiles being leased from America (Wallis-Simons, 2015). As Jake Wallis-Simons argues, 'Trident cuts to the heart of the US-UK Special Relationship, and its contrasting significance for London and Washington' (2015). This supports the House of Commons Defence Committee's 2018 conclusion that the UK was 'over-reliant' on the US as an ally, particularly in defensive terms (22:2018). Furthermore, with the 2020 British exit from the European Union (Brexit), there is cause to believe that the UK will place even greater emphasis on the 'Special Relationship'. Ex-Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox MP suggested in 2018 that Brexit would provide the UK with the 'opportunity to raise [the Special Relationship] to a new level' (Fox, 2018). Negotiating a trade deal with the US, as well as with the EU, now forms a key part of the UK's post-Brexit strategy, highlighting re-emerging dependencies on the 'Special Relationship' from the British point of view. As such, from the UK's perspective, the dominance of the US-UK 'Special Relationship' somewhat derives from a state of dependency. Therefore, for Britain, this degree of dependency means that the 'Special Relationship' does not dominate all other relationships in the context of the Transatlantic, as the UK is more reliant on the US than it is on many other relationships.

This state of dependency, however, is not wholly mirrored by the more globally, militarily, and economically powerful US. As such, rather than dependency, the dominance of the 'Special Relationship' from the American perspective is more contingent on a state of convenience and self-interest. As previously mentioned, the 1960s and 1970s saw a decline in the UK's value to America, which coincided with the decline of the UK as a 'Great Power' (Reynolds, 13:1985). This suggests that the 'Special Relationship' is only dominant from the US perspective when the UK is able to contribute to the alliance as a capable power. One must therefore question Britain's current value to the US. The UK has traditionally acted as a 'bridge' between the US and Europe, and has advocated for policies within Europe that align with American stances (Oliver & Williams, 554:2016). As such, Brexit may damage this important position that the UK has held, and thereby lead to a decline in the perceived value of the UK as a 'special' US ally. Regarding Brexit, in 2016 President Obama warned that the UK would be at the 'back of the queue' for a trade deal with the US if it left the EU (BBC, 2016). This suggests that the UK alliance does not hold a consistent position of superiority, and that for America, the dominance of the 'Special Relationship' is dependent on context and self-interest. As such, the nature of imbalance within the US-UK alliance implies that assessing the 'Special Relationship' as dominating all others in the context of the Transatlantic is too much of a blanket interpretation. It is more dominant from UK perspective, and fluctuates based on convenience and context from the US point of view. This means that the relationship can sometimes be dominant, but it attests to the argument that the alliance is ultimately a socially constructed identity that is subject to change.

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Moreover, this perception of convenience from the US perspective has led America to shift its focus to other European powers on occasion. Particularly under Obama, Germany's status as an ally to the US was significantly raised (Oreskes, 2016). Germany's European leadership over a number of issues such as the refugee crisis, as well as its strong promotion of US-EU sanctions against Vladimir Putin after the Crimean annexation in 2014 (Oreskes, 2016) enhanced Germany's value as a US ally. Furthermore, post-Brexit, France will be the only nation that is part of the EU, has a permanent UN Security Council membership, and has nuclear capabilities (Riley-Smith, 2019). Due to this, France has the potential to become a particularly valuable US ally, perhaps even more so than Britain in some regards. Indeed, France has also previously acted as a strong military partner to the US. It was the first American ally to support and join US air strikes against the Islamic State in 2014 (BBC, 2014), thus undercutting the assumption that Britain is defensively always America's closest partner. Moreover, while shared history and values are often seen to lie at the heart of the US-UK alliance, it is not only Britain that shares such things with America. From the American War of Independence to the modern day, France has consistently been a steadfast US ally (Riley-Smith, 2019). This fact prompted President Macron to describe the US-France partnership as a 'very special relationship' in a visit to Washington in 2018 (Riley-Smith, 2019). The use of this language suggests that the 'Special Relationship' does not dominate all Transatlantic relations because other nations regard themselves as having similar partnerships. This makes the role of perspective important because it suggests that other countries do not necessarily view the US-UK relationship as superior, and proves that the rhetoric of the 'Special Relationship' has created a veneer of supremacy that is not wholly reflected in reality. Thus, while Britain may see the relationship as superior, overall the assessment of dominance is largely subjective.

Furthermore, this analysis of perception contributes to the overarching argument that the 'Special Relationship's' dominance is dictated by context and the trials that it faces. This means that the relationship cannot be consistently superior, as there are some issues over which Britain and America align themselves more closely with other powers, or indeed fundamentally disagree. This argument is significantly demonstrated by the Suez Crisis of 1956 (Dumbrell, 46:2001). British support for military action over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal was significantly opposed by America, which subsequently facilitated a degree of tension and mistrust within the alliance (47:2011). As such, this situation has been seen as one of the most vital crises of the 'Special Relationship', and demonstrates how the alliance has not been consistently superior. Such instances of disagreement can subsequently lead to greater emphasis being placed on other Transatlantic alliances. One of the most recent demonstrations of this is the Transatlantic rift over Iran. While the UK continues to be an advocate of the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal along with other countries such as France and Germany, the US withdrew from the deal in May 2018 (Landler, 2018). Trump's America held a distinctly different attitude to the deal than the UK and other European allies, with US withdrawal drawing criticism and opposition from several European countries, including Britain (Landler, 2018). Indeed, the UK also warned against Trump's escalation of hostilities with Iran after the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani in January 2020 (Bienkov, 2020). Most significantly, it has been reported that Prime Minister Boris Johnson was not informed of the air strikes that killed General Soleimani (BBC, 2020). This calls into question the proximity of the two powers over this issue, and suggests a degree of secrecy and mistrust that allegedly should not exist in a 'Special Relationship'. Indeed, this corroborates the argument that the rhetorical dominance of the relationship has created a veneer of supremacy that cannot always be practically substantiated. As such, the case of Iran, as well as other historical instances of the weakened Anglo-American partnership, can demonstrate how the 'Special Relationship' does not always dominate all other Transatlantic alliances. Other relationships can be more superior in times of US-UK disagreement, and therefore the alliance only dominates others when it is mutually beneficial for it to do so.

Additionally, as previously alluded to, varying contextual levels of self-interest can also hugely influence the 'Special Relationship's' degree of dominance. As explored above, the Iran crisis has demonstrated how even defensively, the 'Special Relationship' is not dominant enough to pull the UK away from other relationships, such as those with other countries that support the Iran Nuclear Deal. This reinforces the idea that each actor will prioritise relationships that are contextually within its own interest, rather than placing the 'Special Relationship' automatically at the top of the pile. Indeed, self-interest can even emaciate the most dominant aspects of the US-UK alliance. America threatening to end intelligence sharing with the UK if Britain allowed Huawei to help build its 5G network, due to US fears of Chinese espionage (Gaskarth, 2020) is a key example of this. The impact of self-interest on the dominance of the US-UK alliance was also demonstrated in the early 1970s during Britain's petition for entry into the European Economic Community. British distancing from America was regarded as a necessary requirement for entry, as other European

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powers did not want the UK acting as an American puppet within the organisation (Bartlett, 130:1992). These examples show that America and Britain can, and will, prioritise other Transatlantic alliances and distance themselves from each other at times when their self-interest dictates that it should. Furthermore, self-interest can also lead the subjects of the 'Special Relationship' to form key institutionalised partnerships with other nations when it is deemed necessary to do so. The British-French defence agreement of 2010 attests to this (Wintour, 2010). This treaty agreed to the joint use of forces and aircraft equipment, as well as greater levels of nuclear cooperation, which was arguably mutually beneficial due to the declining military budgets of both nations (Wintour, 2010). This shows how circumstance and self-interest dictates which alliances are important at certain times, thus proving that the 'Special Relationship' is not consistently dominant within the Transatlantic. This corroborates Barry Buzan's analysis of the instability of identity, as he argues that 'capabilities change relatively slowly, while intentions can change overnight' (25:2004). The socially constructed identity of the 'Special Relationship' is therefore subject to change based on intention, interest, and context, which contributes to its fluctuating level of superiority. This fluidity is a key reason why the 'Special Relationship' has been described as 'the Lazarus of international relations' (Marsh & Baylis, 173:2006). The alliance has a tendency to contextually disintegrate and become less significant due to personal relations or certain circumstances, but it re-emerges under more opportune conditions (Oliver & Williams, 6:2017).

The 'Lazarus' hypothesis clearly exemplifies why the 'Special Relationship' cannot be seen to dominate all other alliances in the context of the Transatlantic, as the relationship's importance has a tendency to waiver depending on the circumstances. Another important factor which contributes to the changing importance of the relationship is leadership dynamics. The alliance has been seen to fluctuate in strength based on who the leaders of each nation are, as well as the public perception of them. For instance, the relationship has been perceived to be particularly strong under the leadership of President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair, as displayed by their joint action in Iraq after 2003 (Rees 124:2011). However, this particularly close relationship resulted in 'distancing' measures under the subsequent Brown administration (Dumbrell, 66:2009). Public opinion in the UK was decisively anti-American in the years after the Iraq War, which was subsequently reflected by a mutual 'cooling' of the relationship from 2008 to 2010 (Marsh, 182:2012), and the Brown administration's reluctance to use 'Special Relationship' rhetoric (Dumbrell, 67:2009). Moreover, during this period, there was an increase in pro-Americanism of French and German leadership, which garnered a positive reaction from the US (Dunn, 1131:2008). France and Germany's subsequent increase in importance to America suggests that leadership dynamics can be instrumental in dictating the dominance of the 'Special Relationship'.

Furthermore, the increasing distance under Brown was, in some ways, remedied by the election of Barack Obama. This arguably brought an end to the conservative unilateralism of the US, and a return to the original shared values of the 'Special Relationship' (Wallace & Phillips, 263:2009). However, Obama has also been perceived to be one of the least Anglophile Presidents in recent times, which Marsh argues may have been due to his need to politically distance himself from the previous Bush administration (191:2012). Obama's decision to hold his keynote European address in Berlin rather than London during his election campaign has been argued to be a distancing from the previously unpopular Anglo-American proximity (Marsh 190:2012). This reinforces how perceptions of different leaders can dictate the strength of US-UK relations, and contribute to the alliance's shifting dominance. Indeed, under the Trump presidency, a conflicting amalgamation of British support for the US has been witnessed. While there has been hostile public opinion towards Trump, as demonstrated by the 75,000 protesters who gathered in London in June 2019 to protest his state visit (Roache, 2019), the current political status of the 'Special Relationship' under Trump and Johnson seems relatively strong (Lippman & Toosi, 2019). For instance, the President publicly demonstrated his support for Boris Johnson's December 2019 electoral win both before and after the election (Elbaum, 2019). It is important to note that it is currently within British interest to foster a strong relationship with the US in order to secure a favourable post-Brexit free trade deal. This, again, underpins the argument that context and self-interest are instrumental in constructing the dominance of the partnership. Leadership dynamics are consequently part of the wider contextual framework of the alliance, and can therefore be used as a key indicator of the changing Transatlantic superiority of the 'Special Relationship'. The fluid nature of the partnership as a socially constructed identity explains why the alliances' importance is subject to change. The dominance of the relationship is constructed by the actors who are part of it, and therefore leadership dynamics are instrumental in dictating the relationship's power. Thus, one cannot definitively say that the alliance dominates all other Transatlantic relations because this is not a consistent reality.

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In conclusion, the US-UK relationship certainly has some key dominant features within the context of the Transatlantic. The discourse used to describe the alliance is one of the most fundamental examples of this. Not only does the term 'Special Relationship' embody a degree of superiority, but the repetition of the term since the Second World War has helped to translate this rhetorical power into a social reality. As such, Britain and America have been largely socialised into the assumption that their relationship is indeed 'special'. Furthermore, the dominance of the alliance does not merely exist in the linguistic realm. Shared values and interests have been transformed into practical realities, and defence and intelligence sharing are significant ways in which the US-UK bilateral partnership does dominate all Transatlantic relations. However, the 'Special Relationship' is ultimately a socially constructed identity that is subsequently not fixed, and is subject to change. As such, the narrative of dominance that has been rhetorically constructed overshadows fluctuations in the alliance's practical superiority. The dominance of the relationship changes in strength depending on whose perspective one is looking from, and is certainly more dominant from the British perspective as it is the more dependent of the two allies. From America's point of view, the alliance is only dominant at times when Britain appears to be a capable and useful partner. Furthermore, the superiority of the relationship is largely contingent on convenience and context, meaning that various issues, leaders, and levels of self-interest can undercut the importance of the partnership. Therefore, to assess the alliance as dominating all others in the context of the Transatlantic is too much of a blanket interpretation, and does not account for the fluid and changing nature of the 'Special Relationship'.

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