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This submission is written from a distinctive perspective, as I am an American who in a long British university career has undertaken sustained research on the American presidency as well as Britain, Europe and further afield.

I A UNIQUE BUT ASYMMETRICAL RELATIONSHIP

My Oxford DPhil was on the foreign policy of the 1945-51 Labour government. A lot has changed since then, especially:

1.1 The UK continues to treat its relationship with Washington as special and equal in importance to that with the Commonwealth and Europe.

However, the US now has many special relationships, e.g. with Japan, China and Germany. Immigration and differential birth rates make Latin American and Asian groups in the American population increasingly important politically. Among Americans claiming ties with Europe, a shrinking minority looks to England.

*Ergo, the UK needs a comparative advantage in order to get attention in the crowded and competitive field of Washington politics.

1.2 Since 9/11, American policy has given priority to ad hoc coalitions of the willing rather than building long-term alliances. Foreign countries individually have limited influence in competition with pressures from inside the Washington Beltway and from domestic US politics.

*Ergo, the UK government often faces a choice between following an American lead or appearing unwilling. Which choice is made should be heavily dependent on the specifics of the situation.

1.3. The most relevant political event for Anglo-American relations in the past five years has not been the change of government in Britain but the election and re-election of President Obama and a reduced priority given to American engagement with Europe.

*Ergo, the UK government should not expect the President taking office in 2017 to differ substantially from President Obama in the attention given US-UK relations.

II LESSONS FOR SECURITY FROM POST-2001 INTERVENTIONS

2.1 INTELLIGENCE. Threats to security involve information about what is happening on the ground in other countries; the evaluation of that information; and the choice of a response. The UK and the US have common interests in monitoring threats to their national security from third countries and from non-state terrorist organisations.

*Ergo, there are positive incentives to maintain the long tradition of collaboration between UK and US security agencies.

2.2 The UK is distinctive in the size and diversity of its population that has active links with countries where terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda operate and in having British-based Islamists who recruit British citizens to collaborate with such organisations. Moreover, these terrorists sometimes plan actions directed against American targets.

*Ergo the trans-national nature of many terrorist activities today gives both the United States and the UK an incentive to maintain intelligence cooperation. These incentives do not depend on agreement in taking actions based on intelligence information.

2.4 The evaluation of intelligence requires the interpretation of bits and pieces of information, the validity of which is not always certain, and assumptions that fill in gaps in information.

Interpretation based on imperfect information is subject to speculation reflecting beliefs that are open to dispute. Both information and assumptions were misleading in the evaluation of Iraq.

*Ergo, it is the British interest that the interpretation given intelligence information be determined in London and then compared with the outcome of a parallel process in Washington, where American beliefs and opinions are unlikely to be identical.

2.5 There are always choices between acting or not acting and between different forms of action. The logic of a coalition of the willing is that a country may be unwilling to participate in an action that the US government has decided to take. The Vietnam War is an example of the UK opting out of an American military commitment. The information used by the Prime Minister to justify the choice of going to war in Iraq paid more attention to Washington than to scrutiny in Cabinet and Parliament.

*Ergo, it is in the British interest that the full Cabinet and Parliament treat security information as an object for scrutiny and debate before any major security intervention is taken.

3.1 MILITARY STRENGTH. The United States views military operations globally and the break up of the Soviet Union has reduced the military threat of Russia in Europe. The United Kingdom lacks the population resources to be a major power on other continents.

*Ergo, the UK's major contribution to military action is political, confirming its commitment to alliances such as NATO and providing multi-national support for decisions made in Washington.

3.2 The limited military contribution that Britain can make to American-led military operations gives it limited influence on operations in the field. According to accounts by retired officers in charge of British operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, this has resulted in friction or worse for British forces.

*Ergo, the UK government must recognise that once it commits forces in association with the United States its power to dictate their effective use is limited by decisions of American generals in the field and in Washington.

3.3 The limited American attention to trouble spots within Europe such as the Western Balkans creates a vacuum in which the UK has resources and political standing. The collective European interest in such problems makes it appropriate to act with other European countries.

*Ergo, it is in the UK interest to promote political and military cooperation within the European region.

III OUTSIDE THE TRANS-ATLANTIC AREA

4.1 In the United States, ASIA is now the primary referent, a marked shift away from the European focus of the Cold War era. America approaches Asia by heading west to China. In Britain the approach is to head east to the Indian sub-continent. In each country, immigration re-enforces these contrasting approaches.

*Ergo, policymakers should be explicit about which "Asia" is being referred to.

4.2 CHINA is a military power that the United States has forces to counter that the UK lacks. Moreover, Washington has special relationships that the UK cannot match with Asian countries immediately concerned with China such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

*Ergo, Washington looks first to Asian allies when dealing with China.

4.3 HONG KONG gives the UK a distinctive diplomatic position vis a vis Beijing that the United States lacks. Beijing also recognises that it is in the interest of the PRC to treat Hong Kong distinctively.

*Ergo, the UK should give priority to maintaining a strong presence in Hong Kong that, among other things, gives it a comparative advantage in discussing China in the United States.

4.4 HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE and its links with the City of London and English law give the UK an advantage in the RMB area that American economic actors lack. Something similar is true of Singapore and commodity exports to China are significant for Australia.

*Ergo, the UK should cultivate links with economically significant countries in Asia where it has historic ties that the United States does not.

4.5 TRADE agreements with China and Japan are substantially governed by the UK's membership of the European Union. The Single Europe Market is of far more importance to Beijing and Tokyo than the British market on its own.

*Ergo, there are spillover benefits with the USA if the UK can positively influence EU trade negotiations with China and other Asian countries.

4.6 INDIA AND PAKISTAN. Each country not only has unique legacy ties with the UK but also immigrant populations that are much more important in the UK than in the United States. Moreover, each country perceives its relation with the United States differently than its relations with the UK.

*Ergo, the UK should give a high priority to India and to Pakistan, where it has the capacity to undertake independent initiatives from Washington or even lead it.

4.7 INDIA. The priority of the UK here is the long-term economic potential of links with a country with 20 times the population of the UK. By contrast, the United States has an immediate concern with India's relation with China and its nuclear capability.

*Ergo, the UK government should give priority to supporting ongoing market-driven measures affecting investment and trade with India to mutual benefit and keep a low profile on diplomatic and military matters.

4.8 PAKISTAN. The UK and the US both have security concerns about activities in Pakistan, but they are not identical. The UK is much more vulnerable to domestic terrorist activities supported from Pakistan while the US is much more concerned with Pakistan-based support for terrorist activities in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

*Ergo, the UK and US governments should co-operate regularly in such fields as military intelligence and try to complement what each does in other fields.

IV CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The UK should not expect special relationships between American and British political leaders born in the 19th century (eg, FDR, Eisenhower, Churchill and Macmillan) to persist in the 21st century.

5.2 British public opinion sees significant attractions in being a small, prosperous country such as Sweden or Switzerland rather than a global political force. While friendly toward Americans and many American products this is not translated into a readiness to follow Washington's political lead to the extent true in the aftermath of the Second World War.

5.3 Instead of trying to punch above its weight in Washington, the UK government must identify its real but limited comparative advantages in exerting influence in a city in which many countries compete.

5.4 In a world in which EFL (English as a Foreign Language) has become the standard for communication across nations and continents, the “E” gives the UK soft power different from that of the United States (e.g. the BBC World Service and textbooks on learning English and certificates on proficiency in English. Not having the unilateral power of the United States makes dialogue with other countries an advantage. In taking initiatives requiring multi-national support, being independent of Washington may be an advantage.

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