

Britain and America Beyond Empire: Neoliberalism, the 'Special Relationship' and the Search for Global Order

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What are we to make of the parallels between the largely separate discussions of the “special relationship” and its recent revival, the emergence of an “Anglo-American” model of capitalism, and the alleged Anglo-American character of the latest phase of globalization? Do these discourses on international relations, on the varieties of capitalism, and on international political economy, all very familiar to people here at this meeting, refer to the same larger phenomenon or at least to a set of developments that are in some fundamental sense linked? The argument here is that these debates all reflect the emergence over the past quarter century of something genuinely new and consequential and that is a neoliberalism which affects both domestic statecraft and the making of foreign policy in the US and the UK and defines the ideological content and the policy substance of the “special relationship”. Neoliberalism, or perhaps one should simply say liberalism given its political as well as economic dimensions and the emphasis upon rights and democracy as well as markets, is both a political philosophy and a policy paradigm whose foreign and domestic aspects reinforce one another and help to create the very reality whose interests it speaks for and whose virtues it celebrates. Equally important, it is a formula that appeared to meet with spectacular success with the ending of the Cold War and the collapse of communism. The effect was to ratify the new policy framework and to guarantee that it became deeply embedded in national and international institutions and practices after the Cold War. It has become almost reflexive and is therefore unlikely to be reversed or abandoned any time soon.

The new paradigm was not invented all at once, but its key principles were articulated and began to cohere in the decade after 1975.¹ The paradigm would come to have three planks:

1. A resolve to maintain, or even enhance, the military superiority of the U.S. and its most reliable ally by continued reliance on nuclear weapons and technologically sophisticated conventional weapons coupled with a very cautious stance on the exercise of military force. This seemingly contradictory position stemmed from a growing recognition that nuclear war was virtually unthinkable and that the US and its allies could not prevail militarily in wars of national liberation such as Vietnam.² What remained possible were minor, peripheral and harassing operations against the Soviet Union and its clients and, of course, the routine bullying that comes from having the biggest guns.³
2. Neoliberalism at home and abroad. This meant a radical turning *away* from Keynesian policies of demand management by national governments and from statist economic policies and *towards* world markets; *towards* policies designed to free up the movement of goods and

services, capital and even people, between and within nations and regions and worldwide; and *towards* growth through exports.

3. A new emphasis on human rights and democracy and a novel insistence on the market as precondition and guarantor of democracy.

To argue that liberalism – markets, rights, democracy promotion, and military restraint – has inspired the foreign policy of the recent past may seem counterintuitive at a moment when the most salient feature of international relations would seem to be the turn to military force, and its more or less unilateral use, and when the term most often used to describe the situation is empire or one of its synonyms. American power and, by implication, the Anglo-American alliance, are not unreasonably talked about in imperial terms – empire, *hyper-puissance*, *Überpower*, colossus, or the slightly less threatening hegemon.⁴ However alluring and evocative these metaphors, this paper argues that they are all to some extent ahistorical, for they fail to recognize that what the US and UK now exercise, or seek to exercise, is a distinctly post-imperial and liberal hegemony, and that while US or Anglo-American military predominance is a part of this project, it is but a part.⁵

In other words, the phenomena that dominate the news need context, specifically historical context, if they are to be better understood. The question implicitly posed here is what context, what time frame best explains the most recent era in international relations and international and comparative political economy. Historians, of which I am one, have an occupational tendency to stress continuity over change and to reach back and pick out antecedents and traditions that diminish most claims to novelty. Scholars of international relations would, if I understand their frameworks correctly, presumably look on the recent past either as a manifestation of the enduring character of states competing in the international system or, if they are of the school that stresses institutions, as a product of the most recent restructuring of the international system, presumably with the ending of the Cold War. The perspective offered here differs from these other approaches on methodological and empirical grounds. The former can perhaps best be left for another paper. The latter can be summarized straightforwardly: the

neoliberal policy framework was in fact not an inheritance but represented a clear and deliberate repudiation of the policies followed by both Britain and the United States, in alliance and separately, in the first quarter century after the Second World War. A product of cumulative and widely perceived failures during the 1970s, in economic policy and in foreign relations, it was crafted in response to crisis and failure and could perhaps only have emerged in such a situation. It was thus quite new and distinctive and not merely a manifestation of a recurring pattern. It was also a largely unproven formula in and through the 1980s. Crucially, however, it was in place before the ending of the Cold War and so it could be credited with that outcome.

In the beginning, then, were the multiple crises of the 1970s, when Britain's clout as a world power was becoming a memory, when America's postwar power confronted unprecedented challenges, and when the alliance between the two countries had largely ceased to matter. Rough superpower parity in nuclear weapons, defeat in Indochina, and the end of the postwar boom made US power less overwhelming and effective. The Watergate scandal, moreover, precluded an effective response to these challenges and put an end to the emerging "imperial presidency." America's ability to project power abroad and to control its allies had also weakened markedly, as its isolation during the 1973 Arab-Israel War and subsequent oil boycott demonstrated and as the Helsinki Final Act, which amounted to a de facto acquiescence to the "Brezhnev doctrine" and Soviet supremacy in eastern Europe, would register in more formal terms in 1975. Britain's earlier choice to join the Common Market, while no doubt entirely sensible as economic policy, signaled the end of even the pretension that Britain's residual world role could be the basis for anything more than gestures of goodwill. If any doubts remained on the issue, they were utterly dissipated by the need to seek a loan from the IMF in 1976 and in what was perceived to be a deep crisis of "governability".

Political and narrowly financial difficulties in both countries were intensified because they coincided with the end of the postwar war economic boom that had done so much to enhance America's predominant role and to cushion the impact of the end of empire for the U.K. The

juncture necessitated a break from foreign policies and military strategies that were now seen to have become counterproductive and from the social compromises and economic policies that had dominated postwar domestic politics. In fact, the crises of the early and mid-1970s utterly traumatized political elites and electorates and pushed them to query established beliefs and to repudiate existing traditions, both ancient and recent, as guides to policy. In Britain, whatever legacy of imperialism remained after the retreat from formal empire came to be seen as an impediment in a world of newly-independent nations and nostalgia for an imperial past was rightly regarded as part of the culture of decline. In the U.S., after Vietnam policies that looked or felt like imperialism, or that represented a continuation of practices associated with colonialism, were seen utterly and justifiably to have failed. There was also and at the same time a turning away in both countries from the economic policies that had proved so effective during the first quarter century after the war. The “postwar settlement” – typically a mix of Keynesian economic policy and more extensive welfare commitments – was subject to increasingly harsh criticism from the left and, especially, from the right, and its policy prescriptions no longer met with widespread assent. It was a context in which traditions, even those of recent vintage, mattered negatively, as something to be avoided, overcome and transcended. No doubt established beliefs and customs persisted despite this rejection, but more as a subtext or filter than as a beacon or ideal; and their lingering effects were not the key determinants of the responses of British and American policy-makers to the crises they faced.

Inevitably, alternatives to failed policies emerged only after a period of trial and error, confusion and further failure. Such was the shared fate of the governments whose bad luck it was to inherit these crises: the Labour governments of 1974-79 in Britain and the administration led by Jimmy Carter in the U.S. The Labour government was caught up in a “post-imperial crisis”, primarily manifest in the domestic economy, but a crisis that revealed systemic weaknesses in Britain’s economic strategy, in its position in the international economy, in the prevailing style of corporatist governance and policy-making as well as in the conventional wisdom guiding

domestic and foreign policy.⁶ Britain's postwar prosperity, such as it was, had been built on an unstable mix: its manufacturing sector was large but relatively unsophisticated, but it managed to sell its wares and keep people working because a modest level of internal demand was supplemented by the U.K.'s privileged role in supplying colonial or post-colonial markets; its service sector, particularly finance, brought in additional revenue and created more jobs because it also served both home and foreign, again especially colonial, markets; and the combination worked so long as competition in manufacturing and in financial services was limited. But competition from the US and Europe increased in both sectors, with British industry the biggest loser. The initial response by Labour and Conservative governments alike was a series of efforts to improve the competitiveness of domestic industry. For Labour this typically meant planning and public investment; for the Tories the formula was to control wages, to inject more competition by joining Europe and, in exceptional circumstances, to undertake public investment. But whatever party was in power, any strategy of industrial renewal had to cope with the role of the unions, whose members would bear the brunt of structural change and which wielded a *de facto* policy veto. Labour, for example, acceded to power in 1974 largely on the promise that it could better secure the cooperation of the unions. It was a dangerous proposition, however, for when the party's signature policy innovation – the “social contract” with the trade unions – was blown apart by the “winter of discontent” in 1979, the election of Margaret Thatcher was assured. With her victory the effort to modernize industry was downgraded, as was the need to work effectively with the unions, and a very different set of policies was put in place.

The Carter administration faced equally intractable problems at home and abroad. In foreign policy Carter made genuine and laudable departures. His administration adopted a policy that was basically the opposite of Vietnam and of what Vietnam was thought to represent: his was a policy of limiting overseas commitments and of reconciling existing strategic and geopolitical interests with efforts to promote human rights. To that end it required a reexamination of alliances to ensure that America's partners were not themselves guilty of human rights violations.

The new thrust built upon principles that were first articulated in the early postwar era in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.⁷ The United States had a long history of expressing support for these principles but exempting itself from their detailed application, and the promotion of human rights was often sacrificed to the perceived exigencies of the Cold War.⁸ Progress resumed in the 1960s, with debates over human rights in South Africa and Rhodesia and with the adoption of two further UN covenants in 1966: the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights.⁹ This renewed interest blossomed in the 1970s, partly as a result of the so-called Helsinki Process but also because of the choices made by Carter. A formal commitment to human rights became part of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and in this way at least indirectly reconnected Cold War politics to human rights.¹⁰ Carter's specific contribution during the late 1970s was rooted in the trauma of Vietnam and the emphasis given to human rights was intended to repair the damage done to US interests by Vietnam and in that sense represented an appropriate rhetorical accompaniment to a strategic policy of limits and constraints in military spending and in the use of force. The policy's practical application would soon be undermined by the US reaction to what were seen as a series of further setbacks: the triumph of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Islamist revolution in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The effect was to force Carter into a policy of renewed confrontation with the Soviet Union and into a *de facto* retreat on human rights. Nevertheless, the new focus on human rights would persist, and though it was used quite differently by the Reagan administration, it would become a more or less permanent feature of American foreign policy.

These parallel crises of the U.S. and the U.K. were accompanied by a near-crisis in the alliance. By the mid-1970s the "special relationship" forged by Roosevelt and Churchill to fight the Nazis and retooled to anchor the western alliance in the Cold War appeared spent. Indeed, as late as 1986 a major academic study conceded that "since the 1970s Anglo-American relations, considered entirely by themselves, have ceased to be very important or very interesting."¹¹ The

atrophy of the Anglo-American alliance in the 1960s and 1970s was in part a natural, and reasonably amicable, disengagement from a relationship that had been unusually intimate but whose original *raison d'être* no longer existed. It was made rather less amicable by disagreements over Suez and later over Vietnam. The lingering tensions would surface over the Arab-Israeli War in 1973 and the lack of shared response to the Arab oil boycott and push the two states further apart. America's subsequent disinclination to soften the terms of the IMF loan in 1976 showed just what it meant to get on the wrong side of the world's superpower and after that Carter and Callaghan did begin to restore the relationship in the late 1970s. It was not a top priority, however, for both governments were forced to focus on matters of domestic economic management.

Success was even more elusive on economic matters, however, and a record of parallel and cumulative failures would ensure that the further reorientation of policy, both foreign and domestic and including the Anglo-American relationship, would necessarily be carried out by others. The Carter administration's last days were almost as bad as the last days of Callaghan's government. Carter and his aides had sought to handle the economic crisis of the 1970s using Keynesian tools developed in the early postwar era and they had managed by the late 1970s to mitigate and contain the effects of the first oil shock with but a modest impact on unemployment. Unfortunately, the Iranian revolution in 1979 set off a second round of oil price increases that overwhelmed existing techniques for maintain steady growth and low unemployment while effectively combating inflation. In consequence, inflation would peak and unemployment would spike at the precise moment when Islamist militants held Americans hostage in Tehran, allowing Carter's opponents to connect failure at home with weakness abroad in a devastating critique. The outcome was the election of Ronald Reagan. Reagan and Thatcher between them proceeded to develop a very different set of responses to the crises affecting the two countries. What is perhaps most crucial for this study, and this story, is that Reagan and Thatcher inherited remarkably similar situations.¹³ And the fact that the common starting point was the perceived

failure not only of their immediate predecessors but also of the more long-term political consensus and style of governance that they represented meant that Reagan and Thatcher had a much greater opportunity to innovate, and to craft new strategies, than is normally the case.

The essence of the strategies adopted by both conservative leaders would be liberalism, or neoliberalism, which dictated a new commitment to markets and to market-based solutions to domestic and international issues alike. The term neoliberalism was typically used to refer to the preference for markets and market-based solutions and it was applied, uniquely at this moment, to domestic and international issues alike. The accompanying focus on rights and democracy echoed quite traditional goals of political liberalism, of course, but the combination of political and economic liberalism was new in its coherence and consistency. It also meant a sharp break with the recent past, in which anti-communism trumped rights in foreign policy and Keynesian policy-making and the social compromises of postwar had limited the writ of the market.

The most direct application of neoliberalism was, of course, in economic policy. At home this meant a sustained effort to cut spending and taxes and to push back the borders of the state in order to free up markets and capital. Thatcher and Reagan were not twins, of course, and the economic problems they had to deal with were not identical. Thatcher would prove in practice to be more resolute on reining in public spending, Reagan keener on tax cuts, although for both Reagan and Thatcher a primary concern was to defeat inflation. Both were also savvy tacticians who, despite their reputations for being “conviction politicians,” knew how and when to compromise. Still, their shared faith in the market provided guidance for both foreign and for domestic economic policy. A critical link was trade and foreign investment. Thatcher was convinced that the tendency of successive British governments to prop up ailing firms had only exacerbated their lack of competitiveness. The experience of the opposition Labour Party, which had been forced by the logic of its “alternative economic strategy” towards an almost autarchic vision and the advocacy of import controls to assist declining UK industries, was to Thatcher proof of this conviction.¹⁴ Instead, Thatcher was willing to see inefficient firms exposed to

foreign competition and, if they failed to perform, to let them die. The effect, when implemented, would be a massive rundown of inefficient industries and a decisive shift towards fields in which Britain held an edge. The Conservative government would further accelerate these trends by encouraging investment by leading foreign firms and by the deregulation of financial markets with the so-called “big bang” of 1986.¹⁵ It also formally committed itself to the achievement of the European “single market” and, with American backing, signed up for freer trade through and with the European Union.¹⁶

The Reagan administration was similarly committed to allowing the discipline of the world market to determine winners and losers, though it also grasped the need to appease domestic constituencies and so worked hard to expand American exports and open new markets. Under Reagan the US not only continued the policy of pressuring other countries to reduce tariffs, but also began efforts to eliminate non-tariff barriers to trade. And it did so despite enormous pressure from trade unions and their Democratic Party allies to protect domestic industry through tariffs or quotas or the adoption of a more interventionist “industrial policy” to cope with intensified global competition. Reagan was forced into occasional compromises, but was largely able to fend off domestic opposition by combining a policy of tough bargaining with Japan with continued support for open markets more broadly. In Reagan’s second term, the Plaza agreement of September 1985 initiated a sustained effort to lower the value of the dollar in order to stimulate exports; and a year later the Uruguay Round of GATT talks was begun with the explicit aim of reducing trade barriers in agriculture and services.¹⁷

Economic strategy was thus simultaneously and explicitly a matter of internal and external policy, and it was essentially neoliberal. It was also normative and prescriptive, for the US – again with support from the Thatcher government -- urged a turn to world markets and the freeing up of internal markets as the preferred alternative to the more state-centered strategy of import substitution industrialization (ISI) previously followed by many developing countries. This new “Washington consensus” was largely adopted and enforced by international economic

institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the OECD, within which the US and the UK exercised major influence.

The external dimension of neoliberalism was also taken further and in a new direction as the Reagan and Thatcher regimes argued that opening markets and encouraging trade would also bring peace and democracy. The heightened anti-Soviet rhetoric of Reagan and Thatcher was accompanied by a curiously simple formula in which free markets and human rights would effect an almost painless victory over communism. Thus when Ronald Reagan addressed Parliament in June, 1982, he called for a strategy of resisting totalitarianism by opening markets and by fostering “the infrastructure of democracy – the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities,” the exchange of ideas, and ultimately free elections. Underpinning this strategy was a curious and reassuringly determinist view that the defeat of socialism was inevitable. “In an ironic sense,” Reagan claimed, “Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis – a crisis where the demands of the economic order are colliding directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxism-Leninism, the Soviet Union.”¹⁸ As it happened, the 1980s did witness a turn towards democracy first in an array of developing countries, especially in Latin America, and later in eastern Europe, events that for the first time in living memory made it plausible to argue that markets and democracy were genuinely compatible and self-reinforcing.¹⁹ Surveying these developments, Reagan was able to claim that “These democratic and free-market revolutions are really the same revolution.”²⁰ Margaret Thatcher was equally prone to making such grand claims about capitalism, freedom and democracy. It was only fitting that she should remain close to Reagan throughout the 1980s, echoing and even exceeding his passionate advocacy of free markets, and seeking wherever possible to demonstrate Britain’s role as America’s best friend and ally in the promotion of markets and rights.

The political philosophies of Thatcher and Reagan involved a rejection of the fundamental assumptions of previous administrations.²¹ In at least one area, however, there was a

marked continuity. That was in human rights, which had been at the center of Carter's foreign policy. The Callaghan government's stance, as articulated by its Foreign Secretary, David Owen, largely backed the Carter administration's commitment to human rights, even if it displayed rather less enthusiasm. Neither Reagan nor Thatcher would seem to have shared the sentimental attachment to rights and democracy that lay behind Carter's discourse or the Labour Party's more internationalist tradition, and the Reagan campaign was eager to denounce the negative consequences that allegedly flowed from Carter's policies. But once in power Reagan and Thatcher found it useful to keep talking about rights and democracy, even as they added or substituted freedom and free markets in their particular formulations. What made it particularly attractive to continue this rhetoric was, of course, its effectiveness in criticizing the Soviet Union, particularly at a time when verbal criticism was much safer and easier than armed confrontation. Of course, support for human rights caused awkward moments when it was applied to southern Africa or the corrupt dictatorships of Marcos and Duvalier, places where the U.S. and U.K. were forced to acquiesce to the removal of regimes they had earlier supported. The rhetoric of rights thus had considerable real power once it had become embedded in the discourse of international relations and in the institutions of international governance.

While the commitment to markets, rights and democracy was the most novel feature of the new policy paradigm, military strategy also shifted decisively. The public face of international relations in the early 1980s was dominated by the heating up of Cold War rhetoric and loose talk about the real possibility of using nuclear weapons. Reality matched discourse in the realm of military spending, which increased substantially under Reagan and Thatcher, and with the decision to deploy a new generation of intermediate range weapons, specifically Pershing and Cruise missiles. The arms build-up would climax with the proposal in 1983 for a missile defense system popularly known as "Star Wars". The Strategic Defense Initiative, as it was officially called, was a more purely American than an Anglo-American initiative, and

Thatcher doubted its feasibility, Still, she muted her doubts and focused her attention upon making sure that British firms got their share of possible contracts.²²

Ironically, however, these aggressive rhetorical moves were to a considerable extent misleading, for they were not backed up by plans for major military interventions and actual engagements were marginal, short-term and relatively risk-free. Nor were existing arms agreements jettisoned.²³ The reluctance actually to use the massive arsenal at America's disposal would be termed the Weinberger doctrine after Reagan's Secretary of Defense and it would later become known as the Powell doctrine. For both of these architects of American strategy the experience of Vietnam was formative, a disaster never to be repeated. The lessons of Vietnam and, for Britain and the U.S., the lessons learned from the end of empire were to this extent the foundation for future military strategy and it was this new realism that insured that the rhetorical excesses of the 1980s were routinely held in check by cautious and pragmatic policies.

The adoption of a new policy framework also provided the occasion for a reassertion of the "special relationship" between Britain and America. This was in part due to the common vision of Thatcher and Reagan and to their obvious personal chemistry. But there was also a recognition of mutual need, a need made more pressing by the simple fact that only the US and the UK shared the new paradigm in all its dimensions, particularly its strong commitment to the market. Any lingering British aspiration for a world role required in any case that it be achieved in alliance with the United States, and the Thatcher government chose not only to renew the alliance but also to ignore slights and disagreements that might have disrupted it.²⁴ The Tories also chose to put the question of the Atlantic alliance, and the armaments that went with it, at the center of the election campaigns of 1983 and 1987. Labour had committed itself to a non-nuclear defense policy prior to the election of 1983. They were hammered for it and lost very badly. Four years later the new Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, tried to downplay the issue but again it surfaced and seriously damaged the party's chances. The elections were by no means referenda

on the “special relationship”, but their results certainly reinforced the choices made by the Thatcher government.

On the American side, and rather more surprisingly, the Reagan administration sensed that its policies were genuinely controversial and worked hard to defend them and to win allies – a marked contrast to the present Republican administration. In fact, at the height of the mass protests over nuclear weapons in 1982 Reagan undertook a tour of European capitals to argue for American policies and to shore up alliances. The solid support of Britain was in the context extremely welcome. Caspar Weinberger, the Defense Secretary, was especially grateful and he actively sought to coordinate military policy between the two nations. It was he who, on his own and prior to a formal decision by the President, ordered American forces and intelligence agencies to work with the UK over the Falklands crisis. And it was Weinberger who agreed to debate America’s world role with Edward Thompson at the Oxford Union in 1983. The effect of these efforts was to renew, by the mid-1980s, what had been a very troubled connection just a decade before.

Remarkably -- and perhaps only accidentally -- the policy mix adopted during the 1980s by the US and the UK was rewarded and seemingly ratified as grand strategy by the collapse of socialism and the end of the Cold War. Coming on top of a wave of democratization in southern Europe and then Latin America, and also in parts of Asia and Africa, a certain liberal triumphalism was predictable. It seemed that a well-armed but restrained military posture harnessed to a liberal or neoliberal agenda had won the Cold War and so, by implication, required only minor adjustment in its aftermath. In this outcome timing was everything: a more long-term view of how the Cold War was “won” might well have suggested that success depended first and foremost on the viability of the post-World War II settlements, with their commitments to expanded social provision and full employment, rather than upon the neoliberal turn of the 1980s.²⁵ If that were so, then a successful transition to a post-Cold War world order might likewise require something akin to a new Marshall Plan coupled with institutional innovations

comparable to those put in place in the 1940s.²⁶ But because the Cold War ended with this new and more muscular liberalism in place as economic and foreign policy, options of this sort were never taken seriously. In consequence, the agreements reached in Paris in 1990, which effectively ended the Cold War, stressed geopolitical stability, elections and rights, but were utterly lacking in a social and economic dimension.²⁷ Instead the American, or Anglo-American, vision of a new world order involved a continuation of existing security strategies with minimal adaptation, the continued advocacy of human rights, and an intensification of the push for open markets.²⁸

Stasis was especially evident in military affairs. As the threat of confrontation with the Soviet Union evaporated, defenders of the military and defense industries began to focus upon the dangers posed by “rogue” or “outlaw” states with regional ambitions and the problems of nuclear proliferation and the more general availability of “weapons of mass destruction”.²⁹ Absent a clear case, such arguments might not have prevailed against advocates of cuts in defense spending and their hopes of reaping a “peace dividend” for use in social programs, but Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 provided an almost irrefutable argument; and the successful marshalling of a UN-backed coalition encouraged an excessive confidence about how effectively international institutions like the United Nations could and would perform. There was an inevitable debate about NATO’s future, of course, but again stasis and continuity prevailed. The decision to expand NATO to the east was a distinctly unattractive prospect for the Russians, but its attractions for Russia’s neighbors were all the greater; and their support provide yet a further rationale for NATO’s existence.

The security regime thus remained largely intact. At the same time, the liberal regime of trade and exchange was further expanded. The Democrat Bill Clinton proved as eager as his Republican predecessors to extend the scope of trade liberalization. The fact that Clinton won election on economic issues predisposed his administration to put the economy first and, as the candidate put it at Georgetown University in December 1991, “to tear down the wall between

domestic and foreign policy.” Secretary of State Warren Christopher told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee much the same thing: the new administration would “not be bashful about linking our high diplomacy with our economic goals” and would seek to “advance America’s economic security with the same energy and resourcefulness we devoted to waging the Cold War.”³⁰ Clinton’s foreign policy would be framed rather inelegantly as a matter of “engagement and enlargement.”³¹ This could be achieved best by indirect and multilateral means that embedded states within international networks and eased the transition to democracy or, in hard cases, by intervening in “rogue” or “failed” states. In practice, the Clinton administration’s major and most successful efforts were directed into a policy of enlarging NATO and the European Union as a means of “locking in” the shift towards markets and democracy in central and eastern Europe and as part of a broader campaign “to expand and strengthen the world’s community of free-market democracies”.³²

Within this strategic framework it was therefore a matter of both economic policy and security strategy to undertake efforts to encourage exports, which meant continued hard bargaining with Japan, as well as to ratify the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and to “engage” with China economically as the most realistic strategy for reform and as part of a more long-term “engagement” with nations of the Pacific Rim. The Clinton administration also worked extremely hard to assure a successful outcome for the Uruguay Round of GATT talks that led to the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995. And, in one final push, Clinton convinced Congress and the Senate in 2000 to approve the grant to China of “Permanent Normal Trade Relations” (PNTR) status, the prerequisite to joining the WTO. Underpinning Clinton policy was the faith that capitalism and democracy were mutually reinforcing and that democracies did not go to war with each other.³³

British policy followed essentially the same paths, both on security and defence issues and on matters of trade liberalization. Despite the rise in Eurosceptic sentiment among his fellow Tories, John Major continued to support Britain’s further economic integration into Europe and

the further opening of its economy via that route. He successfully secured an “opt-out” from the sections of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty on social and labor issues and the inclusion of language reaffirming the “centrality of the American security relationship.”³⁴ These achievements did not silence Major’s critics, of course, and treaty approval would require a year and a half of bitter debate. Still, it was eventually won and the country signed up to further steps toward integration, if not towards the single currency. Britain also worked for and welcomed the creation of the WTO and expected great benefits from the liberalization of insurance and financial services, fields in which the UK enjoyed an acknowledged comparative edge. Michael Hesselntine, President of the Board of Trade, insisted in 1995 that “The UK’s reliance on export-led growth demands further steps towards liberal markets, not a move backwards to protectionism.” Inevitably, there were specific trade disputes with the U.S., and probably more because of British membership in the EU, but detailed disagreements on particular products and industries flow logically from, and constitute a kind of indirect confirmation of, a shared commitment to an economic strategy of growth through trade. Through and alongside the EU Britain sought to expand its continental market and to open world markets; while within the EU Britain pushed for more competition and flexible labor markets that, it was hoped, would disproportionately benefit British companies.

When New Labour came to power in 1997, it pursued fundamentally similar policies. New Labour did agree to adopt the “social chapter”, but in virtually the same breath Blair and Gordon Brown began lecturing their European counterparts on the virtues of openness and flexibility. The Amsterdam Treaty, agreed within weeks of New Labour’s accession to power, was appropriately a compromise that promised more integrated markets and procedures for enlarging the EU but eschewed grand projects for political integration. The Conservatives’ decision to oppose ratification served to make New Labour’s stance look more enlightened and pro-European, but the basic position was consistent with British policy since Thatcher. New Labour’s commitment to a more market-oriented future for Europe would be demonstrated yet

again in its advocacy of the “Lisbon agenda” adopted in 2000 and put more insistently by Tony Blair when he laid out an agenda for Britain’s presidency of the European Union in 2005.

Defence and foreign policies remained similar in the two countries as well, and they were increasingly coordinated. Thatcher had chosen to work closely with the US in the closing years of the Cold War and supported Gorbachev just enough to see him fall and the Soviet Union dissolve. The Conservative government, with and without Thatcher, had more hesitations over German reunification, but accepted the outcome and worked together with the US to create a new rationale and architecture for NATO.³⁵ The objective was to maintain NATO’s transatlantic orientation while encouraging its eastward extension so as to consolidate the geopolitical gains from the collapse of Soviet power. Britain’s own investment in defence would also remain substantial: the 1990 “Options for Change” review of defence policy had involved reductions in spending made necessary by the state’s finances and possible by the ending of the Cold War, but it did not envision an end to Britain’s purported world role, its status as a nuclear power and its alliance with the United States. The US and UK moved still closer during the Gulf War, when diplomacy and war merged. The coalition against Iraq was of course broader, but the basis of it was the Anglo-American alliance. Relations became a bit more strained after the war, as the Bush administration moved on its own in the Middle East and John Major’s attention was diverted elsewhere.³⁶ More serious differences would also emerge over whether to intervene in Yugoslavia. The Bush and Clinton administrations were cautious, the Major government quite resistant. The difference was not a matter of fundamental principle, however, and disagreement centered on the means and not the ends of policy. The United States insisted that the fate of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia was a European problem that Europeans should address and it was reluctant to commit its own forces or to support UN efforts. The problem for Major was the inability of the Europeans to agree on what should be done and hence the need for US to take a lead. That happened eventually, but by the time of the Dayton Accords in 1995 policymakers in

the U.S., in Britain and elsewhere, had concluded that the failure to act earlier had illustrated the ineffectiveness of both the European Union and the United Nations.

Failure and indecision were not confined to Europe. The early 1990s witnessed not only the bloody events in Yugoslavia but also the decision by the United States to pull out of Somalia under duress in 1993 and the broader failure of the international community to stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The post-Cold War promise of a “new world order” had by the mid-1990s therefore turned to disappointment.³⁷ As the broader vision became clouded, however, the importance of the Anglo-American alliance that had always been at its core became still more important. In the aftermath of its failed exercises in “assertive multilateralism” and the comparable disasters that had come from the absence of multilateral action, the U.S. perhaps inevitably became more reluctant to commit troops and money in places where it could not be confident of the outcome.³⁸ In this context the Clinton administration came to a greater appreciation of the value of British support.³⁹ The connection with Britain “stands above the rest; a model for the ties that should bind democracies,” Clinton argued in November 1995, and with the election of Tony Blair in 1997 the U.S. president now had a partner with whom he could deal.

British and American leaders and policies thus grew unusually close in the late 1990s; and collaboration was most marked over Iraq and Kosovo. In Iraq Saddam Hussein was beginning to resist further UN inspections while international support for the sanctions regime began to fray as its apparent impact on civilians became the subject of intense debate. The US and UK governments took a tough line, however, with the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook arguing in March 1998 that “Saddam Hussein is the clearest example of a leader who is also a terrorist.” When Iraq expelled inspectors the following December, Britain and the U.S. carried out joint air strikes, with little apparent effect. Attention turned elsewhere and shortly after a new crisis arose in which it appeared a decisive intervention might actually make a difference. Stymied in Bosnia, Serb forces were by 1999 applying pressure on Kosovo aimed at stifling the region’s autonomy. NATO was eager to prove its worth after its earlier embarrassment, but as

with the previous crises there was an intense debate over military options, in particular over the use of air power versus the deployment of ground forces. Blair took the lead in this case, arguing that both were needed, while Clinton remained wary of committing American troops. As the confrontation unfolded, Blair articulated his “doctrine of international community” laying out the rationale, and conditions, for humanitarian intervention.⁴⁰ Clinton was in the end forced to agree and the threat of invasion, coupled with the ongoing air campaign, compelled the Serbian leadership to capitulate. In the aftermath, the United Nations ratified the NATO campaign and undertook to supervise the peace.

Success in Kosovo was critical in three respects: first, it underlined the reality and potential usefulness of the “special relationship”; second, it provided a practical template for military intervention outside the control of the UN; and third, because intervention in Kosovo was judged to have been “illegal, but legitimate,” it in effect stretched the acceptable boundaries of international law so as to permit clear violations of sovereignty by *ad hoc* “coalitions of the willing”.⁴¹ Military action against Iraq and Serbia also provided a clear indication that while New Labour might claim to pursue an “ethical foreign policy,” it would not necessarily be a pacifist one.⁴² So, too, did the conclusions of the Defence Policy Review of 1998, which continued the gradual reduction in British military spending but reaffirmed the Labour Party’s conversion to maintaining both conventional and nuclear forces and added to the defence repertoire with the creation of a “rapid reaction force.”⁴³ Even before Kosovo, then, the search for a new world order had come to be defined as a largely Anglo-American concern. With success there it found a model and a formula. This reinforced both the US/UK connection and seemed to demonstrate its potential to serve as the foundation and inspiration for the creation of world order in the 21st century. Not only did the US and Britain together wield what appeared to be massive military clout -- although of course the United States exercised unchallenged military superiority all by itself -- but their collaboration was built upon a vision of common interests and a legacy of trust deriving from a history of joint ventures; and it was organized around a reasonably coherent and

at least plausible set of principles encompassing human rights, the rule of law, democratic governance and open markets.

The contrast with the weakness and discord that seemed the rule elsewhere reaffirmed this identification of British and American interests and strategic outlooks and their viability. So, too, did the evident prosperity that Britain and the United States enjoyed during the 1990s, again in contrast with others, including in this case former models like Germany and Japan. Not only did a period of sustained growth make it possible for both Britain and the United States to envision a future in which the two nations would be more involved in maintaining world order than other countries, but it also necessitated it. Growth for the two economies had become closely linked to the expansion of trade and investment, i.e. to globalization, and it came widely to be accepted that it could not be prolonged without sustained expansion of the world market. Economic success also served to confirm the policy choices of the past two decades. The turn to markets and trade and away from the state, begun in the 1980s, may or may not have produced the boom of the late 1990s, but it was not unreasonable to presume a connection. The “Anglo-American model,” itself only a recent creation made possible by Reagan and Thatcher, came to be seen as at least as successful as Japanese or German models of capitalism.⁴⁴ This “neoliberal” achievement had also, incidentally, created a much greater degree of practical integration between the British and American economies.⁴⁵ Britain and the US were major sources and recipients of investment from companies that increasingly defined themselves and operated as “Anglo-American.” This was not quite the “Anglosphere” of which the *Daily Telegraph* fantasized, nor was there any realistic prospect of Britain leaving the European Union and joining NAFTA, as the more extreme Tories and at least some conservative American politicians proposed.⁴⁶ But it did add a material underpinning, an infrastructure, to the convergence of interests, outlooks and policies. And, so long as prosperity lasted, so also would the shared confidence that both the Anglo-American model and the “special relationship” were useful for the two countries and for the world.

The fact that US primacy and the Anglo-American alliance in the 1990s were rooted not only in matters military and diplomatic and in the political culture, but also in the strength and the structure of their increasingly open and interrelated economies, imparted a robustness to both phenomena. Put differently, the choices and policies of the preceding and defining era ensured that the realities they left in place would now profit from institutional inertia, at least until they were seen obviously to have failed, and so would constitute the starting point for subsequent development as well as the measure against which alternatives would be judged.⁴⁷ By the turn of the millennium, therefore, Anglo-American power and a particular vision of how it should be deployed was a structural feature of the emerging world order. That vision was an elaboration and updating of the paradigm that began to emerge in the 1980s and as of the late 1990s it was embodied in the principles developed a decade before: first, the maintenance of US military strength and predominance, augmented at least marginally by the UK, combined with a convention strategic wisdom that severely constrained the use of this power; second, a shared commitment to open and opening markets; and third, the belief that peace and stability required the promotion of democracy and human rights. To these had been added two practical corollaries: first, that democracy and rights could best be promoted by “enlargement and engagement” through membership in organizations such as NATO, the EU and the WTO; and second, that “humanitarian intervention” might be necessary to deter or replace “rogue states” when engagement had otherwise failed. The last two principles put the emerging Anglo-American vision potentially at odds with more classically Wilsonian visions that vested the hope for world order in international law and in institutions such as the United Nations and its *de facto* multilateral approach to peace and stability.

This divergence was not entirely new, though it appeared so when the Bush administration made loud and explicit what had been mentioned only *sotto voce* and in the fine print of the policy pronouncements of earlier administrations. The United States has had a long tradition of unilateralism and “exceptionalism” that was much in evidence, and much criticized

abroad, even during the Clinton administration.⁴⁸ The tension between the global vision of the United States and Britain on the one hand and the hopes of others, including some traditional US or UK allies, for a more multipolar and multilateral world order, was thus deeply rooted. Resolving it would constitute the fundamental challenge of the emerging international system at the turn of the century. The election of George Bush and the adoption by his administration of a more unilateralist tone -- backed up by practical moves to reject the Kyoto Protocols, to “unsign” the commitment to the International Criminal Court, to resume research on missile defence and, as part of that, to renounce the ABM Treaty -- made the tension much more palpable and resolution less likely.⁴⁹ Even so, prior to 9/11 these unilateralist gestures were mostly symbolic; and because they were accompanied by a determination to avoid local entanglements, humanitarian ventures and nation-building, they did not portend any dramatic departures from the basic thrust of foreign policy as practiced by three successive administrations. But then came the attack on the World Trade Center, the U.S. declaration of a “war on terror,” and the decision to launch military action against Afghanistan. The effect of 9/11 was to reconcile competing emphases in US foreign policies – the Reagan/Bush insistence on military strength backed up by harsh and unilateralist rhetoric and the Carter/Clinton emphasis on human rights and democracy promotion -- by combining them. In the process, both traditions became more militarized and aggressive and, for that reason, more controversial internationally. The enormous military power of the U.S. would be used for interventions whose rationale was now not merely “humanitarian” but also a matter of security; and democracy would be promoted not merely by engagement but by force. What made this militarization so easy politically was that in fact these different emphases were just that, differences in emphasis but not over fundamentals. Not only had Clinton, for example, backed the use of force on more than one occasion, but Reagan and the first President Bush has used the rhetoric of human rights and democracy as a complement to arms. And central to all American policy since the 1980s was the neoliberal push towards open markets, freer trade and the global interconnectedness they brought about.⁵⁰

The shift to a more aggressive unilateralism was also made possible, indeed it was premised upon, two additional facts and their consequences. The first was the absence of any foe with the ability to check U.S. ambitions or take advantage of its missteps. The disappearance of the Soviet Union in 1991 had not immediately tempted the U.S. from its strategy of restraint, but it allowed US and UK policymakers to imagine possibilities that would have been unthinkable during the Cold War. The second major fact eroding the constraints upon military action was the so-called “revolution in military affairs” that had left the United States with a vast technological lead in the tools of war-making. The potential for more intelligent weaponry had been demonstrated in the first Gulf War and that experience convinced American policymakers to continue to build up and to rely upon more sophisticated weapons using advanced electronic controls and guidance systems in order to “project power” and achieve “primacy” and “full spectrum dominance” over potential opponents.⁵¹ Technical progress promised to make it possible for the United States to fight and win wars more quickly and cheaply, from a greater distance and with less risk than ever before, and therefore made the US more likely to fight them. Since Vietnam the US military, backed up by politicians of both parties, had been extremely conservative on the question of when to use force, insisting on unequivocal domestic support, overwhelming military superiority and clear objectives and exit strategies. Rapid and dramatic improvements in weapons technology, on display for the first time in the Gulf War, began to render this cautious approach unnecessary, at least in the minds of Pentagon planners and strategic thinkers identified as “neo-conservatives”. A second effect of the “revolution” was to make allies less useful, for most possible allies would have to fight with more backward equipment and the requirement to coordinate with such less well-equipped forces would in practice hamper US strategy, slowing it down and in effect neutralizing the advantages bestowed upon it by the latest technology. Hence the strictly military incentive for recruiting allies was diminished, leaving only the political need to legitimize US intervention and, even more

important, the need for assistance and legitimacy in the reconstruction that must inevitably follow military intervention.

The partial exception here was again Britain, whose investment in military hardware and prior close collaboration with the US military made the problem of “interoperability” between the two nation’s forces less severe than with other potential allies.⁵² Indeed, the infrastructure of US/UK cooperation in matters of intelligence, military planning and foreign policy made it possible to coordinate the response to crisis in a way that was impossible with and between most other potential allies and this was no doubt an underlying factor that made the “special relationship” of genuine if still limited practical utility. Military compatibility was by no means the only reason why Britain supported the US in its newly aggressive posture, of course. On the contrary, ready cooperation in war was but a reflection of the broader convergence between the US and UK on issues of foreign relations, defence and economic policy that had evolved over nearly a quarter century and that was by 2001 anchored in, or at least reinforced by, comparable political economies. It had been confirmed by repeated excursions in the making and maintenance of world order in which Britain and the United States found themselves more or less on the same side, arguing for much the same policy despite occasional differences, and often more or less alone in doing so. George Bush might have frightened those of a more internationalist persuasion with his open skepticism towards multilateral agreements and institutions, but it was after all Tony Blair who in his Chicago speech of 1999 had insisted that the United Nations required fundamental restructuring before it could be truly useful; and it was British exhortation that had convinced Clinton to commit US troops to Kosovo without formal UN approval. Thus the initial British reaction to Bush’s unilateralist pronouncements in early 2001 was muted, if not exactly sympathetic, and support for the US in the aftermath of 9/11 immediate and nearly spontaneous.

The invasions of Afghanistan and then Iraq complicated, then compromised and challenged, not only the “special relationship” but the role of the US and its British ally as

arbiters of global order. The toppling of the Taliban was widely applauded when it happened, but the military campaign that preceded it was genuinely controversial outside the United States. The decision to use force was widely considered precipitous and dangerous; and the determination of the US and UK to proceed began to erode wider diplomatic support. The choice to move on to a confrontation with Iraq elicited massive opposition in Europe and the Arab world and in Britain Blair just barely prevailed in his effort to win Parliamentary approval for the venture. When the rationale for war collapsed with the inability to find “weapons of mass destruction” and when the failure of reconstruction and the tenacity of the insurgency stripped away the argument from success, support for the US action and, in Britain, for continued close cooperation between the US and the UK, began to dissipate. “Democracy promotion,” the least self-interested and most attractive principle in the new paradigm, likewise began to seem more and more a fantasy and, as such, less and less compelling as a defense of policy.⁵³

At the very least, the difficulties the US and Britain encountered in and because of Iraq have probably served to make further actions of the sort harder to justify and presumably less likely. But have they, will they, fundamentally alter the connection and the policy framework that guides it? Will the record of apparent failure in Iraq lead either to an alteration in the Anglo-American vision of world order or an inability to pursue it? The logic of the argument made here would suggest, tentatively at least, a negative answer to both questions. The neoliberal, or liberal, paradigm has now been in place for well over two decades. Over that period it registered two enormous successes. The most important was the ending of the Cold War on terms highly favorable to the west and at a moment when the most aggressive and self-confident proponents of western interests were the US and the UK. That their particular take on how to define those interests should largely prevail in the aftermath was almost inevitable. The second and almost equally important achievement attributable – rightly or wrongly does not matter here – to the neoliberal paradigm was the ability of the US and the UK largely to overcome the economic crisis of the 1970s and to resume a pattern of growth, terribly uneven and unequal but real nonetheless,

which has lasted to the present. The conduct of US and UK foreign policy has surely had its share of failures in specific areas, but the balance would seem on the whole rather favorable. Moreover, the period of neoliberal ascendancy witnessed the elaboration of a network of institutions -- some long established but recently converted to the framework, some newly created or restructured -- that embody the new paradigm and can be expected to further it. So the record, while controversial, has sufficed to make the formula that produced it widely accepted. In addition, there is the fact that the Anglo-American relationship now rests on a congruence of outlook and policy that transcends calculations of short-term advantage and that reflects at least in part a common economic interest. Britain and the US now occupy similar positions in the world economy and the international system of states and their policy choices and economies have been increasingly brought into line with those positions.

Abandoning the neoliberal paradigm, or the “special relationship” that is its geopolitical expression, and reversing the policy choices and institutional developments that have flowed from it, would therefore seem very difficult. It is of course not difficult to imagine shifts in tactics and specific political choices, but again the prospects are that these will be coordinated and that they will not constitute a decisive turn away from recent policy. The Iraq adventure has already disabused American leaders of some of their wilder fantasies about reshaping the world and forced the US to reconsider the unilateralism it so forcefully embraced in the National Security Strategy announced in 2002.⁵⁴ The need for allies and for more multilateral efforts has been reestablished in theory and in practice and in that effort British assistance -- as bridge, surrogate, or broker -- will be at least as important as it was in waging war. Two of the most distinctive features of the landscape of international relations as of the turn of the millennium -- the primacy of US power (augmented minimally by the UK) and the close relationship between the US and the UK -- thus remain very much in place even after, and perhaps in part because of, 9/11. So, too, do the policies that have animated that alliance, and so does the enormous influence it commands. There are, of course, other key features of this landscape -- the rapid

increase in the economic power of Asia, the widespread resistance to further moves towards freer trade and to the very process of globalization, as well as continued instability in the Middle East and the likelihood that the Islamist challenge there and elsewhere is far from spent. These will no doubt combine to make prospects for global order very complicated. The potency of the “special relationship” – and its capacity to produce good and bad outcomes – nevertheless remains formidable and ought not to be discounted. Its rhetoric may be vapid, its rituals off-putting, its arrogance a provocation to outrage and its policies often wrong in practice, but none of this renders it unimportant.

Notes

¹ David Harvey locates the turning point more precisely in 1978-80. See his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

² On the most recent iterations of the “lessons of Vietnam” see Greg Jaffe, “As Iraq War Rages, Army Re-Examines Lessons of Vietnam,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2006.

³ See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). These minor, peripheral conflicts were of course anything but minor to those closely involved. See also Tony Judt’s review of John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2000) *New York Review of Books*.

⁴ See, for example, Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America’s Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Hubert Védrine, *Face à l’hyper-puissance* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); and Josef Joffe, “Überpower” *The Imperial Temptation of American* (New York: Norton, 2006).

⁵ The argument about whether to regard the US as an empire is of course a recurring one. The point of view adopted here is that while the term captures many aspects of the American past, it also obscures the very real difference between that experience and what empire looked like elsewhere. This point was made forcefully some years ago in the contributions to Wolfgang Mommsen & Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London: Allen & Unwin, for the German Historical Institute), especially in the essays by Klaus Schwabel on the United States and Ronald Robinson on the “excentric idea of imperialism.”. See also Tony Smith, *The Pattern of Imperialism: The United States, Great Britain, and the late-industrializing world since 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For a useful review of the debate about the new American imperialism, if such it is, see Michael Cox, “Empire by Denial: the strange case of the United States,” *International Affairs*, LXXXI, 1 (January, 2005), 15-30; and also the thoughtful contributions to the “Forum on the American Empire” in the *Review of International Studies*, XXX, 4 (2004): Cox, “Empire, Imperialism and the Bush Doctrine,” 585-608; G. John Ikenberry, “Liberalism and Empire: logics of order in the American unipolar age,” 609-630; and Michael Mann, “The first failed empire of the 21st century,” 631-653. To simplify three complex arguments, Cox finds it useful to regard the United States as an imperial power, Ikenberry thinks it is not and Mann feels that whatever American leaders may wish, empire is in the current era of nation-states and anticolonialism is impossible. The term has become ubiquitous in contemporary discourse primarily because it is embraced by both advocates and critics of American empire – see, for example, Ferguson, *Colossus*, who wants more of it and fewer apologies; Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite* (London: Vintage, 2003), who regrets its necessity and agonizes over its tactics; Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2002) who want it to be more enlightened and nuanced; and Richard Falk, *The Decline of World Order: America’s Imperial Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2004), who believes it portends a “global fascism” and so wants none of it. It is of course unobjectionable to use the term as a metaphor for what is certainly a preponderance of power, but as an analytical term it is seriously lacking in precision and historical accuracy, as Eric Hobsbawm – no friend of empire or U.S. hegemony – has recently pointed out. See Hobsbawm, “Why America’s Hegemony Differs from Britain’s Empire,” Massey Lectures on “American Empire in Global Perspective,” Harvard University, October 19, 2005; and also Charles S. Maier’s thoughtful discussion in *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). See also Chris Patten, rather more friendly towards America and empire, who reaches much the same conclusion in *Cousins and Strangers: America, Britain and Europe in a New Century* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 22-24. For a useful collection of views on empire, see Bacevich, ed., *The Imperial Tense: Prospects and Problems of American Empire* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2003).

⁶ P.J. Cain & A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (London: Longman, 2002), 640. The systemic character of Labour’s failures is discussed in J. Cronin, *New Labour’s Past* (London: Longman, 2004), chapter five.

⁷ There has been considerable recent interest in these founding moments of human rights politics. See, *inter alia*, A.W. Brian Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001); Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: origins, drafting, intent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); John

Humphrey, *Human Rights Law and the United Nations* (Dobbs Ferry: Transnational Publishers, 1984); and Andrew Moravcsik, "The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe," *International Organization*, LIV, 2 (Spring, 2000), 217-252.

⁸ Michael Ignatieff, ed., *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁹ Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 299-300.

¹⁰ Interestingly, British representatives had played a key role in making sure that the Helsinki agreements covered Soviet human rights; and later, the Labour Foreign Secretary, David Owen, made the campaign for human rights a major theme of his tenure in office. See Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 80; and David Owen, *Human Rights* (New York: Norton, 1978). It must be said, however, that Owen viewed human rights as an extension of *détente* rather than as a new departure. The human rights section of the agreements was known as "basket three," the first basket concerning security and the second mainly economic relationships. On British and US divergence on some of these issues, see Watt, *Succeeding John Bull*, 156-7. On the long-term consequences for the Soviet bloc, see Daniel Thomas, "The Helsinki accords and political change in Eastern Europe," in Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp & Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 205-233.

¹¹ See David Watt, "Introduction: the Anglo-American Relationship," in Hedley Bull & Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *The 'Special Relationship': Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 13, where he argues that "since the 1970s Anglo-American relations, considered entirely by themselves, have ceased to be very important or very interesting." Other contributors to this, at the time more or less definitive, volume were somewhat less dismissive, but the general sense was that the heyday of the relationship was long past. For other assessments, see David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century* (London: Longman, 2000); D. Cameron Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Ritchie Owendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998); and John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (New York: St. Martin's, 2001); Alex Danchev, *On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998); and, of course, Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

¹³ See Joel Krieger, *Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) for thoughtful comparisons.

¹⁴ The Alternative Economic Strategy was debated and momentarily defeated within the Cabinet in the discussions over the IMF loan in 1976 but continued to dominate Labour Party economic thinking well into the 1980s. On the former, see Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts*, 181-2.

¹⁵ Ronald Michie, "The City of London and the British government: the changing relationship," in Michie & Philip Williamson, eds., *The British Government and the City of London in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 50-52.

¹⁶ On US support for European integration, see Geir Lundestad, *'Empire' through Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). There is considerable scholarly debate about whether moves toward regional economic integration aid or retard the creation of a more open world economy. The theoretical argument could presumably go either way, but the assumption here is that for Britain integration into the EU was a "building block" rather than a "stumbling block" in the broad movement toward a liberal trading order. See Ruggie, *Winning the Peace*, 129-134; and also Kees van der Pijl, "Lockean Europe?" *New Left Review* 37 (Jan/Feb, 2006), 9-37.

¹⁷ See James Shoch, *Trading Blows: Party Competition and U.S. Trade Policy in a Globalizing Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹⁸ *New York Times*, 9 June 1982.

¹⁹ See Larry Diamond, Juan Linz & S.M. Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries*, 4 vols. (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner, 1988); and Diamond & Marc Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

²⁰ Reagan, speech of 16 December 1988, cited in Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 292.

²¹ Maier, *Among Empires*, 250.

²² Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, 262-3.

²³ Minor, harassing engagements on the periphery continued, but it is only in retrospect that they have taken on any major significance, and it is unlikely they had a serious impact on the demise of the Soviet Union. Some had greater hopes, of course, and some had greater fears. See, for instance, W. Bruce Weinrod, ed., *Confronting Moscow: an agenda for the post-détente era* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1985); and, for a critique, Michael Klare & Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low-intensity warfare: how the USA fights wars without declaring them* (London: Methuen, 1989).

²⁴ Including considerable resentment about the US response to the Falklands crisis. See Lawrence Freedman, "The Special Relationship: Then and Now," *Foreign Affairs*, LXXXV, 3 (May/June, 2006), 61-73.

²⁵ The debate about the causes of the ending of the Cold War and the collapse of the regimes in eastern Europe and the USSR itself will continue for some time. For a first approximation, see J. Cronin, *The World the Cold War Made* (London: Routledge, 1996); for a more recent but compatible perspective, see Steven Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: the Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁶ On the construction of those settlements, see Charles S. Maier, "The Two Postwar Eras and the Conditions for Stability in Twentieth-Century Western Europe," *American Historical Review*, LXXXVI (1981), 327-352; and Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*. G. John Ikenberry suggests in *After Victory* that the minimal adjustment of major international institutions after the Cold War is testimony to the institutional framework put in place at the end of the Second World War. This would seem rather optimistic.

²⁷ Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 636-9.

²⁸ As Walter McDougall argues, "Neither Bush nor Clinton provided over a real reassessment of the old U.S. traditions..." in foreign and defence policy. See McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 202; and also Bacevich, *America's Empire*, 77.

²⁹ Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States*; Michael Klare, *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws: America's Search for a New Foreign Policy* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995).

³⁰ Warren Christopher, 25 January 1993, cited in Klare, *Resource Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), 8.

³¹ Or a "strategy of openness," as Bacevich, *American Empire*, chapter 4, labels it.

³² The phrase is from Bill Clinton's speech to the United Nations, 27 September 1993, quoted in Michael Cox, "Wilsonianism Resurgent? Democracy Promotion under Clinton," in Cox, Ikenberry, & Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 224. See also the Clinton White House document, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, February 1996. Earlier variations appeared in 1994 and 1995 and the policy was largely in place in 1994, if not earlier. There was in fact an earlier moment when the participants in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe sought to bind themselves to peace and democracy in 1990, when they signed up to the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* (Paris: OSCE, 1990). On this effort, see Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 350-351.

³³ Nicholas Guyatt, *Another American Century? The United States and the World since 9/11* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 179.

³⁴ Dumbrel, *A Special Relationship*, 192.

³⁵ G.R. Urban, *Diplomacy and Illusion at the Court of Margaret Thatcher* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996).

³⁶ See John Dickie, *'Special' No More – Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994).

³⁷ Mead, *Special Providence*, 264-309.

³⁸ Commentators were uniformly critical of the Clinton administration's approach, with many on the left decrying its timidity and others deploring its preference for social work. See, for example, Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs*, LXXV, 1 (Jan-Feb, 1996), 16-32; Alvin Rubinstein, "The New Moralists on a Road to Hell," *Orbis*, XL, 2 (Spring, 1996), 277-295; and Richard Haass, *The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States after the Cold War* (New York: Council of Foreign

Relations, 1997), who proposed that a strategy of “engagement” be replaced by one of “regulation,” though to much the same end.

³⁹ “Assertive multilateralism” was the term used by Madeleine Albright and Anthony Lake to describe Clinton administration policy in 1993, before the debacle in Somalia. It was formally replaced by a more cautious policy premised on the need to make “hard choices about where and when the international community can get involved.” The quote is from Anthony Lake, speaking on May 5th, 1994, and cited in Guyatt, *Another American Century?* 81.

⁴⁰ Tony Blair, speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, 22 April 1999. For an assessment of the speech’s implications and its implicit rehabilitation of older principles and arguments about “the standard of civilization”, see Jackson, *The Global Covenant*, 355-360; and for background, Gerritt Gong, *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

⁴¹ The “illegal, but legitimate” judgment was rendered by the Independent International Commission on Kosovo. The intervention was a crucial fact behind the creation of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which reported to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in late 2001 and whose report developed the concept of the “right to protect” as a compelling reason to intervene. On both of these points see David Coates & Joel Krieger, *Blair’s War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004) 139, 144-5.

⁴² See Richard Little & Mark Wickham-Jones, *New Labour’s Foreign Policy: a new moral crusade?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

⁴³ For a critical assessment, see David Edgerton, “Tony Blair’s Warfare State,” *New Left Review* #230 (July-August, 1998), 123-130.

⁴⁴ See J. Cronin, “Convergence by Conviction: Politics and Economics in the Emergence of the ‘Anglo-American Model’,” *Journal of Social History*, XXXIII, 4 (Summer, 2000), 781-804, for the argument that prior to 1979 Britain represented something rather different than a “liberal market economy,” as it is now widely held to be. For more detail on the significance and effectiveness of Thatcher’s reforms, see David Card, Richard Blundel & Richard B. Freeman, eds., *Seeking a Premier Economy: the economic effects of British economic reforms, 1980-2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ Andrew Gamble, *Between Europe and America: The Future of British Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2003), 102-107.

⁴⁶ See, for example, John Redwood, *Superpower Struggles: Mighty America, Faltering Europe, Rising Asia* (London: Palgrave, 2005). On both the closer integration of the two economies and the proposal to bring the UK into NAFTA, see Dumbrel, *A Special Relationship*, 174-7, 195.

⁴⁷ Institutional inertia is one consequence of “path dependency.” On this and related issues, see Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁴⁸ See, for example, Guyatt, *Another American Century?* whose most telling examples from the 1990s are the efforts to ban landmines and the create an International Criminal Court (64-74). On unilateralism and exceptionalism a traditional aspects of US foreign policy, see Ignatieff, *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*; and see McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*. For slightly different perspectives on the traditions described by McDougall, see Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); and Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American foreign policy and how it changed the world*(New York: Knopf, 2001).

⁴⁹ See Ruggie, “American Exceptionalism, Exemptionalism, and Global Governance,” in Ignatieff, *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, 333 on the “unsigning” of the ICC agreement.

⁵⁰ What Mead refers to as the Hamiltonian thrust of recent American policy. See *Special Providence*, 270ff.

⁵¹ See Barry Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security* XXVIII, 1 (Sept., 2003), 5-46.

⁵² Christopher Coker, “The Anglo-American Defense Partnership,” in Barry Rubin & Thomas Keaney, eds., *US Allies in a Changing World* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 75-93, suggests that Britain is also falling behind the US technologically, though less so than other European countries.

⁵³ This is true even as critics and commentators have come to credit the sincerity of the vision. See, for example, Will Hutton, “Why the US exports its ideals,” *Observer*, 24 January 2006.

⁵⁴ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September, 2002).