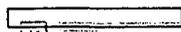


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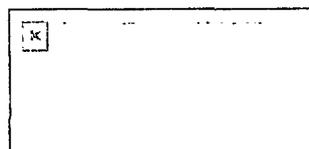
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From The Sunday Times
 March 28, 2010

It's over: MPs say the special relationship with US is dead



Winston Churchill, Franklin D Roosevelt and Josef Stalin
 Michael Smith

BRITAIN'S special relationship with the US — forged by Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt in the second world war — no longer exists, says a committee of influential MPs.

Instead, America's relationship with Britain is no more special than with its other main allies, according to a report by the Commons foreign affairs committee published today.

The report also warns that the perception of the UK after the Iraq war as America's "subservient poodle" has been highly damaging to Britain's reputation and interests around the world. The MPs conclude that British prime ministers have to learn to be less deferential to US presidents and be "willing to say no" to America.

The report, entitled Global Security: UK-US Relations, says Britain's relationship with America is "extremely close and valuable" in a number of areas, particularly intelligence co-operation. However, it adds that the use of the phrase special relationship, in its historical sense, "is potentially misleading and we recommend that its use should be avoided".

It does not reflect the "ever-evolving" relationship between the two countries and raises unrealistic expectations, the MPs say.

"Over the longer term, the UK is unlikely to be able to influence the US to the extent it has in the past," the committee adds.

In an apparent rebuke to Tony Blair and his relationship with President George W Bush, the report says there are "many lessons" to be learnt from Britain's political approach towards the US over Iraq.

"The perception that the British government was a subservient poodle to the US administration is widespread both among the British public and overseas," the MPs say. "This perception, whatever its relation to reality, is deeply damaging to the reputation and interests of the UK."

While the relationship between the American president and the British prime minister was an important part of dealings between the two countries, the cabinet and parliament also had a role to play. "The UK needs to be less deferential and more willing to say no to the US on those issues where the two countries' interests and values diverge," the MPs say.

They are also critical of the US use of extraordinary rendition and torture. The report calls for a comprehensive review of the use by the CIA of British bases, such as that on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, to carry out extraordinary rendition.

"The issues relating to rendition through Diego Garcia to which we have previously drawn attention raise disturbing questions about the uses to which US bases on British territory are put", the MPs say.

They express regret at "considerable restraints" on the ability of both the government and parliament to scrutinise US activities carried out on British territory.

"We recommend that the government should establish a comprehensive review of the current arrangements governing US military use of facilities within the UK and in British overseas territories." The review should "identify shortcomings in the current system of scrutiny and oversight ... and report to parliament on proposals to remedy these".

The report also demands a statement from the government on the implications of the Court of Appeal judgment regarding the alleged collusion of MI5 in the torture of Binyam Mohamed, a British resident.

Last month the court ordered the government to release evidence from American intelligence reports which showed that MI5 was aware of the torture.

Senior US officials subsequently suggested that releasing such evidence might prevent the US from sharing some intelligence with Britain.

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