

"U.S.-UK Alliance and the Future of the Principled International Order"
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Good morning.

Thanks very much, Lorrie...old friend. Thanks very much. Appreciate those kind words, and all you're doing to help ensure today's students – and readers – learn the best of the old lessons of war and strategy as they seek to shape and serve in a new era.

I want to thank Dean Woods, who could not be here, and the Blavatnik School for inviting me to return to Oxford to speak with all of you today. I've got a number of friends in the audience I'll mention shortly.

It's a pleasure to be back in the United Kingdom and back on campus. That's because, first of all, the United States has no closer ally, no stronger ally than the United Kingdom, and the world has few finer educational institutions than this one. For centuries the great and the good have been studying here...and you've even been generous enough to let people like me in over the years.

As Lorrie mentioned, I was fortunate to be one of them...and I was grateful no one held my Philadelphia accent against me. Now, you probably know in the United States, speaking with a British accent earns you automatically ten extra points of perceived IQ. And here it works just the other way around...but everyone treated me very well. And I had a wonderful time here.

I earned a doctoral degree in theoretical physics at St. John's College under Chris Llewellyn Smith, sitting here today. Terrific to learn from him, [laughter] as you must know...but I'll spare you the details. I studied many other subjects at one of Oxford's other renowned institutions of higher learning, the Lamb and Flag Pub. I'm disappointed to say I don't have time for a visit there today also.

That's because I have to make it back to London in time for a very special event. Tonight, dozens of defense ministers from around the world will gather for the first-ever UN Peacekeeping Defense Ministerial. My friend and the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Defence Michael Fallon, my very good friend, my very able friend, is hosting this important event where we will discuss how the world's militaries can and must do more to end – and, more importantly, prevent – conflicts around the world.

Of course, that's not a new commitment for the United Kingdom. Like many Americans and many others around the world, I've always valued Britain's – and its people's – global view.

I saw that as a student here at Oxford. I've seen it in my years working on defense issues for my country, alongside our British allies, who have long played a leadership role – economically, politically, militarily, and morally – around the world. As it has done so, the UK has helped ensure collective security and prosperity in Europe and many other regions of the world, among many other important contributions to global progress and civilization.

And I see the UK's global view, global influence, global reach – both military and moral – still today...at a time of great change in the world and at a time when the principled international order we've built together is being tested in Europe and elsewhere. Indeed, in the face of Russia's aggression and coercion, and ISIL's barbarism – the two topics I'd like to address this morning – the United States and the United Kingdom are continuing to stand together. And so I'd like to speak with you about the steps our alliance – our special relationship – is taking to continue to stand up for the principles and values that have, for decades, made all of us safer, freer, and more prosperous.

We've been doing so together for the last seven and a half decades. Because, although the U.S.-UK relationship is rooted in centuries of shared history – including a few contretemps and centuries of tension along the way – our modern alliance has its roots in conversations and meetings held just 75 years ago last month aboard the USS AUGUSTA and HMS PRINCE OF WALES. In August 1941, on those two ships anchored off the shores of Newfoundland, President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill met for the first time, and together made history.

President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill's conversations those days were unique and instructive for us today. That's because before World War II was won, before it even seemed likely to be won anytime soon, and before the United States was even in the war, the U.S. and UK – in the Atlantic Charter – identified the eight “certain common principles...on which they base[d] their hopes for a better future for the world,” as they put it. Those principles included freedom of the seas, the right of people to choose their own government, and the elimination of territorial changes against the wishes of the peoples who live there.

We should take a moment to appreciate the wisdom – and the pluck, some might say – of those two great statesmen who had the foresight to make a plan for after the war before they had finalized a plan to win the war. At the time the Atlantic Charter was issued, the United Kingdom was fighting for its very survival. And the United States would soon be in the fight as well. But, as the Charter demonstrated, they also sought – and later fought together – to build a world that would not just be safer, but also better, thanks to those shared principles. That commitment, and the inherent logic of our partnership is what makes our relationship so special. We are brought together and we work together not only because of shared interests and values – though they are closely aligned – but also because of a shared belief in, and willingness to take action to promote and defend, the principled international order.

That's why Roosevelt and Churchill met near Newfoundland and worked so closely in the years that followed. And that's also why generations of Americans and British,

servicemembers and civilians, have served together to deliver on the commitment and principles embodied in that Charter. Along with our other allies, those men and women – whether they served at the Battle of the Bulge or Bletchley Park, under the seas of the Atlantic or on the sands of North Africa, in the skies over the continent or in battles of the Asia-Pacific – all those places, they together won a world war, and set the stage for the hard work to build a better world around those principles.

And together, the United States and the United Kingdom, our militaries, our servicemembers, have realized that opportunity. Together, during and after the war, we built multilateral institutions like the United Nations and the Bretton Woods system. We established and led the greatest alliance in history, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to deter an aggressive Soviet Union and provide a shield behind which the nations of Europe could rebuild. During the Cold War, we stood together to confront a global adversary intent on autocracy and dominion – and after we succeeded, we helped bring East and West together again. We stood together to help make and keep the peace in the Balkans. We stood and responded together in the face of terror – 15 years ago after 9/11, 11 years ago after the 7/7 bombings, fighting side-by-side during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. And we’ve continued to do so, most recently in the coalition military campaign plan to deliver ISIL a lasting and certain defeat.

And because of all we’ve done together, our people, our two nations, and people around the world have benefited over the past 75 years. And the world has become more prosperous and dynamic as a result. All that change – economic, political, military, social, and technological; personal and national; regional and global – has produced many opportunities for both our nations, but it has also created challenges and crises as well.

Indeed, today’s security environment is dramatically different from that of the last generation, and even the generation before that. In this new era, the United States and the Department of Defense I lead are contending with five immediate, major, and rapidly evolving challenges. First, of course, here in Europe, the United States is standing with the United Kingdom and America’s NATO allies and taking a strong and balanced approach to deter Russian aggression, on that I will say more about in a moment. We’re managing change in the vital Asia-Pacific, where China is rising, which is fine, but also behaving in some ways that are aggressive and self-isolating, which is not. In that same region, we are also strengthening our deterrent and defense forces in the face of North Korea’s nuclear and missile provocations and threat to our allies, South Korea and other allies. In the Middle East, especially in and around the Gulf, we’re checking Iranian aggression and malign influence, all while standing with America’s friends and allies in the region. And, of course, in the broader Middle East, as well as elsewhere in the world, the Defense Department is continuing to counter and defeat terrorism – in particular, accelerating the lasting defeat of ISIL in its parent tumor in Iraq and Syria, and everywhere it metastasizes. More on that in a moment as well.

Now, thankfully, the United States and its military and Defense Department do not have to respond to these challenges or underwrite global security alone. President Obama and all Americans are heartened to know that we can continue to count on our allies and alliances,

and especially on the United Kingdom, to join us in meeting these challenges and defending the principled world order. That's because – even with all the change in the world – the inherent logic of our countries' special relationship still stands.

That was true the day before the Brexit vote, and it is true today after the Brexit vote. The United States respects the decision of the British people, and we're committed to continuing to partner together in the months and years ahead. While I said before the vote that I wished it would go the other way, I'm confident the U.S. and the UK will now focus on the future. And that's what I'm doing. And I'm here this week to work with my counterpart Secretary Fallon, who's doing the same, to ensure that our countries, and our militaries, are ready to keep standing together and partnering together in the years ahead.

That's important, because the Brexit decision does not change all that we have to do together, whether in response to Russian provocation or ISIL's threats or anything else. It does not change the fact that the UK will continue to have a rich relationship with countries across Europe – economically, politically, and militarily. And it does not change all that the United Kingdom – and particularly its military – all that it is doing, all that it is doing at home and around the world.

We see that in the ambitious, forward-looking Strategic Defense and Security Review conducted last year, which has quickly progressed to the implementation phase. We see it in the coming modernization of the UK's continuous at-sea deterrent, maritime patrol aircraft, and attack helicopters, which make clear the British military will continue to be among the most capable in the world. And we see it in the British military's contributions to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, to the global coalition to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat, to our deterrence efforts against Russian aggression, and to leading in NATO, including upholding the alliance-wide commitment – and this is important – to invest 2 percent of GDP in defense.

This week's UN Peacekeeping Ministerial is yet another example of the UK's continuing leadership in the world. At a time of crises and change, strengthening UN peacekeeping is vital, and I appreciate Britain's leadership in pressing for reforms to UN peacekeeping. And I look forward to discussing that further this evening, when I join Prime Minister May, Secretary Fallon, and other defense ministers for this important ministerial.

The United Kingdom's continued commitment to global leadership comes at a time when the principled international order is being tested. For, as more nations rise, as some states fail, as some institutions fray, as people seek better lives in other countries and on other continents, some are questioning whether the principled international order can endure and continue to serve us as well in the future.

Unfortunately, some in the world are also intent on challenging or even upending that principled order. I'll speak about two of these challenges today. First are states like Russia that are trying to play by their own rules, undercutting the principles that have benefited their

own country and the rest of the world. None of these actors can overturn the international order completely, but they are intent on undermining its cohesion, questioning its effectiveness, and assailing its legitimacy. And the second type of challenger – who in their own right stand opposed to the principled order – are terrorists like ISIL, who are intent on pursuing a violent ideology, premised on hatred and intolerance, and seeking to thrive on division and suspicion. They directly target the human values and shared principles that bind the current order.

Let me start with the challenge posed by Russia's coercion and aggression. Despite the progress that we made together in the aftermath of the Cold War, Russia's actions in recent years – with its violations of Ukrainian and Georgian territorial integrity, its unprofessional behavior in the air, in space, and in cyber-space, as well as its nuclear saber-rattling – all have demonstrated that Russia has a clear ambition to erode the principled international order that has served the United States, our allies and partners, the international community, and in fact Russia itself.

As it does so, Russia appears driven by misguided ambitions and misplaced fear. Russia wants to be considered, very understandably, as the important world power it is, one of historic importance. Unfortunately, its tendency is to pursue that goal by undercutting the work and contributions of others rather than by creating or making any positive contributions on its own. It sows instability rather than cultivating stability. It lashes out, alleging that it fears for its own viability and future, even though no nation – not the United States, not the United Kingdom – seeks to defeat it or constrain its potential. Just the opposite; we all have expressed an interest in being able to work more closely with Russia.

Now in response to this behavior, the United States is taking a strong and balanced approach to address Russia's actions and deter Russian aggression against our allies. We are strengthening our capabilities, our posture, our investments, our plans, and our allies and partners, all the while keeping the door open to working with Russia, wherever and whenever our interests align.

Let me be clear, the United States does not seek a cold, let alone a hot war with Russia. We don't seek an enemy in Russia. But also make no mistake – we will defend our allies, the principled international order, and the positive future it affords all of us. We will counter attempts to undermine our collective security. And we will not ignore attempts to interfere with our democratic processes.

Now, we haven't had to prioritize deterrence on the Transatlantic Community's eastern flank for over 25 years. Unfortunately, now we do. That's why the United States is strengthening our deterrence posture here in Europe. Our defense budget for the coming year includes significantly more funding for our European Reassurance Initiative – \$3.4 billion dollars, more than quadruple what we allocated this last year. That will allow us to rotate an Armored Brigade Combat Team into Europe on a persistent basis, and to preposition a brigade-worth of

equipment and warfighting gear to be used by American troops flown into Europe. And that's in addition to the two brigades the United States already has stationed in Europe.

Meanwhile, NATO, which the United States and the United Kingdom helped establish and build into the greatest alliance in history, has been writing a new playbook for itself. Here's what I mean by that: the 20th-century NATO playbook that helped counter the Soviet Union in the Cold War is not a perfect match for today's Russia challenge. That's why NATO's new playbook takes the lessons of history and leverages our alliance's strengths in new ways. Together, we've been adapting and innovating to meet new challenges, like countering the cyber and hybrid warfare threats we're seeing more and more of, integrating our conventional and nuclear deterrence, and adjusting our military posture and presence here in Europe so we can be more agile and quick in responding to new threats.

For example, the United States, the UK, and our NATO allies have developed and exercised what we call a Very-High-Readiness Joint Task Force. It can deploy NATO forces on 48 hours' notice from multiple locations in Europe to any crisis on alliance territory. This is a real innovation: one that combines the commitments from many members of the Transatlantic Alliance – the United States, the UK, and others – to respond to crises in Europe's East, South, or elsewhere. The UK's own Allied Rapid Reaction Corps will rotate in to spearhead this task force soon.

NATO has also agreed to a persistent Enhanced Forward Presence of four NATO battalions stationed in Allied countries on its eastern flank – one each in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This past July at the NATO Summit in Warsaw, the United Kingdom announced that it will lead the battalion in Estonia, and the United States announced that it will lead the battalion in Poland.

Additionally, NATO and its members, including the U.S. and UK, are also providing support to partner countries like Ukraine and Georgia, both of which have seen their sovereignty and territorial integrity violated by Russia. We're helping them strengthen their capabilities for national defense, to improve their ability to work with NATO, and reform their defense institutions...all important in the face of Russian coercion and aggression.

Of course, even as we take these prudent steps to guard against a revisionist and more aggressive Russia, the United States will continue to hold out the possibility that Russia could one day assume the role of a constructive and reliable partner. In fact, we've cooperated with Russia when it's been in our shared national security interest to do so – even recently, most recently in fact, in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

And these past few weeks, America's Secretary of State, John Kerry, has been tirelessly testing the proposition for a true ceasefire in Syria with his Russian counterpart. Russia entered the Syrian tragedy saying it wanted to counter terrorism and end the civil war – the source of so much suffering – through a political transition. But what it has done is very different from what it said.

Unfortunately so far, Russia, with its support for the Assad regime, has made the situation in Syria more dangerous, more prolonged, and more violent. That has contributed to what President Obama this weekend called the “gaps of trust” that exist between our two countries.

Nevertheless, our diplomatic team continues to test whether Russia will agree to take, and then actually carry out, the specific steps to attain a true ceasefire, and whether it is in fact willing and able to influence the Syrian regime toward a political transition that ends the civil war. And today’s news out of Syria is not encouraging. The choice is Russia’s to make...and the consequences will be its responsibility.

Of course, there was a time, in the years after the Cold War, when Russia worked with the United States and other nations closely, contributing to the principled international order rather than undermining it. I know and I remember that personally. In 1995, for example, I negotiated with Russia’s then-defense minister so that Russia could help NATO bring peace to Bosnia and also to establish a number of cooperative efforts together between the U.S. and Russian militaries. Both of us then blinking from the bright light of the new potential to work with common purpose rather than previously at cross purposes.

And I also worked in a very practical and successful manner with Russian defense officials to help limit the dangers of nuclear proliferation in former Soviet states. In fact, 20 years ago this summer, I was in the Ukrainian town of Pervomaysk with the Russian defense minister, and his American and Ukrainian counterparts, when the last nuclear weapon rolled out of Ukraine. The denuclearization of Ukraine was the result of far-sighted American, NATO, Russian, and Ukrainian statesmen dedicated to turning the page of history and making a better world together. So it can be done. And someday I hope to see that spirit rekindled.

Now, let me turn to the Middle East, where the United States and the United Kingdom face a very different challenge from the one posed by Russia, and that’s ISIL – a barbaric organization intent on harming our citizens, damaging our allies and partners, and trying to shake the principled international order with an ideology that is hateful and cruel to those under its sway.

In response, the United Kingdom and the United States are leading a historic coalition to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat. We’re fighting that campaign in many different ways, across all domains from air to land to cyberspace, to destroy both the fact and the idea of an Islamic state based on ISIL’s barbaric ideology.

As I speak to you today, we’ve entered a decisive phase in our counter-ISIL coalition military campaign. Thanks to the contributions and sacrifices of our local partners there in the region, and of British, American, and coalition servicemembers, we’ve accelerated the military campaign, we have the momentum firmly on our side, and we are seeking – this year – to put ISIL on a path to the lasting defeat it will surely suffer and richly deserves.

Let me remind you briefly of our campaign's three objectives and our strategic approach that Secretary Fallon played a critical role in shaping.

The first objective is to destroy the ISIL cancer's parent tumor in Iraq and Syria. ISIL's safe havens in those countries threaten not only the lives of the Iraqi and Syrian peoples, but also the security of our own citizens and those of our friends and allies. The safe havens feed the illusion that there can be an Islamic State based on ISIL's hateful ideology. That's why the sooner we defeat it in Iraq and Syria, the safer America, the United Kingdom, and other countries will be.

Our second objective is to combat ISIL's metastases everywhere they emerge around world. That's because, while defeating ISIL in Iraq and Syria is necessary, it's not sufficient. We know this cancer can metastasize, and in some cases it already has. That's why U.S. and coalition forces are engaged in supporting local forces in operations against ISIL in Afghanistan, in Libya, and elsewhere , and in countering ISIL across the intangible geography and terrain of the Internet.

And our third objective, and a very important one, is to support our law enforcement and our intelligence partners, in protecting our respective homelands.

All three objectives are critical to defeating ISIL and delivering it the lasting defeat it deserves. Ensuring that sort of defeat – a lasting one – requires our coalition to identify and enable capable, motivated local forces in Iraq and Syria, and not to attempt to substitute for them. That is our strategic approach...for local forces are the only ones that can hold and govern territory after it has been retaken from ISIL. So their participation is necessary to make ISIL's defeat stick.

From my first conversations with Secretary Fallon, we resolved to accelerate our coalition's military campaign. We set in motion a series of deliberate steps to gather momentum and put ISIL on a path to a lasting defeat. And we've seen those steps carried out over the last year. We mobilized the coalition to step up the contributions – not only of the United States and the United Kingdom but of all its members – and get them to join the fight. And we made it clear that there can be no free riders in this campaign. When the war is over and the coalition prevails – which I am certain it will – the United States will not forget that the United Kingdom stood with us. And collectively we will remember who failed to show up for the fight.

Since last fall – town after town, from every direction, and in every domain – our campaign has accelerated, pressuring and squeezing ISIL, and rolling it back towards Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria.

In Iraq, we enabled the Iraqi Security Forces led by Prime Minister Abadi and the Peshmerga commanded by Kurdish Regional President Barzani to clear Ramadi, and Hit, Rutbah,

Fallujah, Makhmour, and now the important town of Qayyarah – setting the stage to complete the envelopment and the isolation of Mosul and collapse ISIL’s control over that city.

In Syria, we’ve also enabled considerable results by our local partners. After seizing Shaddadi – a crucial junction on the road between Mosul and Raqqa and key to cutting ISIL’s self-proclaimed caliphate in two, an Iraqi piece and a Syrian piece – our partners on the ground cleared Manbij City, a key transit point for external plotters, by the way, threatening Europe and our homelands. And our NATO ally Turkey, working with vetted Syrian opposition forces, is clearing the remaining stretch of the Syrian side of the border from ISIL. The United States is supporting this effort also through air strikes, surveillance, and other enablers, and – as of last week – with High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS. To be clear, the United States is willing to do more to help Turkey – including on the ground in Syria – to cut off ISIL lines to and from Europe. At the same time, we will continue to work with and support the Syrian Democratic Forces to capitalize on their considerable successes on the battlefield, especially as they begin to converge on Raqqa – our next objective in Syria.

At the same time, across Iraq and Syria, our coalition is pressuring ISIL by systematically eliminating its key leaders and destroying its financial base. Just last week, our coalition targeted Abu Muhamad Al-Adnani – one of the most lethal leaders within ISIL, who was actively planning to kill our civilians around the world. Wherever our local partners have advanced we’ve taken out ISIL field commanders. Thus far, we’ve removed from the battlefield more than 20 external operators and plotters of ISIL, including Jihadi John and Junaid Hussein. We’re continuing attacks on ISIL’s economic infrastructure – from oil wells and cash storage sites to tanker trucks. In recent days, our coalition hit over 40 oil tankers and other key ISIL financial centers, depriving ISIL of tens of millions of dollars in revenues. And we’re taking the fight to ISIL across all domains, including cyber.

We’ve also seen results where we’ve been countering ISIL’s metastases. Working alongside our Afghan partners, U.S. forces have conducted two large operations against ISIL in Afghanistan, dealing the organization severe blows, including killing its top leader there, and degrading its infrastructure, logistics base, and recruiting. And more operations are coming. Meanwhile, in Libya – which a few months ago many predicted would become the next ISIL headquarters – our air strikes in support of local forces aligned with the Government of National Accord have shrunk ISIL’s presence in Sirte to a single neighborhood.

So as I said, we have entered a decisive phase in our campaign. Our coalition has expanded our geographic reach, intensified our operations – in the air, on the ground, in cyberspace – and we’ve enabled our local partners to take and hold territory. ISIL is simply unable to resist this pressure. They’re still a dangerous adversary and their lasting defeat will take time. But we won’t let up until ISIL is defeated.

Of course, even when the coalition wins this fight – and let there be no doubt that we will – there will still be much more to do. We must ensure that when that time comes, the Iraqi and

Syrian people have what they need to hold, stabilize, and govern their own territory and win back peaceful lives for themselves. So our coalition's development and diplomatic institutions must summon the courage and foresight that Roosevelt and Churchill had all those years ago, and make their own plans and preparations to keep a lasting peace once our militaries and our partner forces have delivered that defeat.

Russia's aggression and ISIL's barbarism are robust challenges for the United States and the United Kingdom, and, to be sure, there are many others out there. But, if we continue to stand together, if we pursue our objectives with vigor and focus, and if we avoid needless distractions, we not only can meet these challenges, but also seize the many opportunities – many bright opportunities – before us.

To do so, as I discussed today – and as I will discuss later this afternoon with Prime Minister May and Secretary Fallon – we must recommit our two countries to standing together and standing up for the values and principled order that we have promoted and defended over the last 75 years. We must partner together in new ways and in new domains. And we must remember that our two nations have faced – and overcome – many challenges and many difficult days in the past.

At the close of their meetings off Newfoundland, on the quarterdeck of the USS AUGUSTA, Prime Minister Churchill brought out two copies of a poem, a verse of which President Roosevelt had sent him eight months before to help boost the Prime Minister's spirits in, of course, a very difficult and dark time. As he said goodbye after their meetings, Churchill signed one part of the poem and gave it to Roosevelt, and asked Roosevelt to do the same.

That poem was “The Building of the Ship” by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It rather eloquently makes the point that even though a sailor – or by implication a statesman – may worry in the face of storms, rough seas, and tough days, they must sail on for their own good – and the good of everyone on their ship.

Now, studying theoretical physics, Chris, I didn't get many opportunities for me to recite poetry here at Oxford. But I'll quote a few lines from that Longfellow poem today. He wrote:

“...Sail on O Ship of State!
...In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee...”

You see, for decades, the United States and the United Kingdom – and millions of American and British servicemembers – have helped provide the security and uphold the values that have allowed millions upon millions of people around the world to be safe, to raise their

children, to dream their dreams, and to live lives that are full, and to contribute to the civilization you see all around you in this city

At a time of change, and at a time of challenges to what our two nations have both built and defended, we must continue to do so together. As we do, we must not be afraid of change, or intimidated at the challenge, or doubtful of our capacity to meet it – we must not flinch at the “rock and tempest’s roar” or be distracted by “false lights on the shore.”

Instead, we must sail on, and sail on together...for our national and shared interests, for the principles and values embodied in the Atlantic Charter, and for the principled international order that of course has continued to serve us all so well. As we do, we must remember that... the hearts and the hopes of the world are with us.

Thank you.

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