

Thank you to The Oxford Union for that kind introduction.

You may have heard but the U.S. Congress is not very popular back home. You see, I have to go overseas to get a decent reception. I even get grief from my own family. My dad is a big, tough former Air Force Sergeant. He is fond of saying:

“You know I have five boys. Four turned out really good and I have one in Congress.”

August 24th of this year marked a special occasion between our two countries: it was the 200th anniversary of the British burning the US Capitol and half of Washington, DC to the ground. We have certainly come a long way since that time. And we forgive you.

Our bonds date back to the early 17th Century, and like all good relationships, ours has had its ups and downs, but we are the closest allies and closest of friends. We have you to thank for the core of our social structure in America. Our legal system is rooted in English Common law; our local government structure includes counties and law enforcement based on your configuration.

23 Presidents have sat at the Resolute desk, a gift from Queen Victoria. And it is believed that 23 percent of the American population can trace their ancestry back to the United Kingdom.

If our social, geographic and government ties weren't enough, J.J. Abrams and company are currently in the neighborhood somewhere filming the new Star Wars movie on a London soundstage. You certainly can't get anymore American than the Star Wars series. You gave us the Beatles and we gave you Star Wars, now that's a pretty good deal.

In 1944 Winston Churchill gave a speech in which he publically invoked the concept of a “special relationship” between our two nations. While we had a close association even prior to World War I, Churchill's designation set off more than a just military affiliation but one that involved our economies, trade, treaties and intelligence.

In 1946, a secret pact between the U.S. and Britain formed a bond between the countries that allowed for the sharing of signals intelligence. Several years later, we expanded this relationship to Australia, Canada and New Zealand, formally known as the Five Eyes.

The Five Eyes is much more than a relationship based on intelligence. Initially formed to share intelligence in an effort to combat communism, the relationship has grown to include counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism. This alliance has done incredible things to provide for our common security.

While many nations have sought to join the Five Eyes, no other country in the world is as willing, or as capable, to carry out the mission our five countries agreed upon so many years ago.

Well with you all are entering the work force after college so I am sure many of you have the state of the world economy on your mind. The health of the economy is so important to our militaries and in turn our way of life. In order to pay for a strong military, we need a strong economy. The two are inextricably intertwined.

The Soviets lost the Cold War in large part because their economy could not keep up. And believe me, this is a lesson of history that has not gone unnoticed in Beijing.

About 40% of the world's trade travels through the South China Sea. This is also why you see such concern about the actions of the Chinese in the South China Sea by those of us who follow these things.

That's why I am so concerned about where our economy is. It impacts our place in the world and our future.

The strategic partnership between our nations was forged on the battlefields of World War I and II and was only deepened by the burden we shared during the Cold War. That partnership has continued unbroken as we struggle today with common threats like terrorism and the continued aggression from states such as Iran and North Korea.

Our special relationship isn't just about common enemies, however. It's about common values and goals, like democracy, freedom, global stability, and market-driven prosperity. We share a common, hopeful vision of what the world should look like, and we are willing to do the sometimes difficult work to make it happen.

Our vision of a free and prosperous world isn't shared, of course, by leaders in places like Beijing or Moscow, or in the dark corners where al-Qa'ida and ISIL lurk. There are many challenges to the worthy goals to which we aspire, so our shared work goes on.

Our goals and our shared security are challenged by new and expanding terrorist safe havens in places like Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Mali. The threat posed by many violent radicals in Syria and Iraq who carry U.S. and British passports requires us to work closely together to keep them from bringing the fight back to our shores.

Despite all that our brave men and women have done around the world, and the incredible sacrifices they have made, the fight against al-Qa'ida is not yet finished. Even if we can eliminate the threat from core al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we must be prepared to deal with a persistent global jihadist threat beyond al-Qa'ida. This extremist ideology is bigger than one person or one group. It is persistent and dangerous. Both of our countries have been fighting it for a very long time.

At the turn of the 19th century, the United States of America's first covert action led to her first war, and the conflict was sparked in part by an extreme, violent interpretation of Islam. President Thomas Jefferson launched our first covert action in 1803 to protect American ships traversing what was then referred to as the Barbary Coast – the waters in the Mediterranean Sea along Northern Africa. In March 1785, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams went to London to negotiate with Tripoli's envoy from Libya. During the meeting, the ambassador declared:

“It was written in the Koran, that all nations which had not acknowledged the Prophet were sinners, whom it was the right and duty of the faithful to plunder and enslave.”

Sound familiar at all with where we are in the world today? And this was 230 years ago.

ISIL clearly aspires to become the leader of the global jihad, and the group’s prestige is certainly growing in those circles. ISIL has shown a proclivity for smaller scale, more achievable attacks, and we may be facing a future of lower-level but still deadly terrorist threats within our borders.

ISIL’s deadly intent and access to a flood of new recruits with Western passports, combined with al Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula’s bomb-making capability, make this picture still more grim.

We must resolve to rollback these terrorist safe havens that are breeding grounds and launching pads for such dangerous threats. To that end, we need to sustain the work we have done in Afghanistan to ensure that it does not slide back into anarchy. Europe may be a closer target but that is merely because it is a shorter flight. Either of us could easily be next. ISIL would love to cut the heads off of as many Americans or Brits as it can.

Lady Thatcher once stated: “Terrorism attacks free societies and plays on those fears. If those tactics succeed, terrorism saps the will of free peoples to resist.”

The United States and the United Kingdom must lead the world in countering the extremist ideology. We can and should target terrorist leaders, but there are individuals to replace them. While correctly attacking safe havens and training sights with bombs, we must also attack the warped terrorist ideology that distorts Islam and despises progress, modernity, and our very way of life.

Terrorism is certainly not the only threat we face. Mr. Putin’s continued aggression in Ukraine is likely a harbinger of more aggression as he seeks to rebuild the Czarist Russian empire. Following his successful invasion and occupation of 20% of the country of Georgia, the world did little and Putin noticed. He has expanded his ambitions to what he calls New Russia, a terrifying flashback for free people in Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine. He rattles sabers at the Baltic nations and had his pilots buzz Alaska while the new Ukrainian Prime Minister spoke to the United States Congress.

The West does not seek a new Cold War, but history tells us that in order to preserve our freedom and that of others, together we must stand up to tyrants who bully Europe and free peoples who are inconvenient to their ambitions.

Beijing follows a very similar and equally irresponsible model. Hardly a month goes by without another example of China’s steady efforts to change the status quo by taking another island or reef to benefit its economic and security interests.

China has been busy moving sand onto reefs and shoals to create several new artificial islands in the Spratly archipelago in territory claimed by Vietnam and the Philippines.

China is engaged in similarly aggressive behavior in the East Sea with the recent declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone over territory claimed by Japan and South Korea.

These provocations must be seen in the larger context of China's increasingly aggressive posture in Asia. Beijing has chosen in recent years to use its newfound power to bully and intimidate neighboring countries in a transparent regional power grab.

For the moment, Beijing seems to be getting away with this aggressive behavior, and the longer it continues unchallenged, the harder it will be to unwind.

These reckless efforts to acquire new territory in a quest for natural resources isn't all that different from China's relentless economic cyber espionage campaign against the world's developed economies to steal our innovation and the jobs that come with it.

China's leaders fear they won't be able to sustain economic growth without stealing other nations' trade secrets and natural resources.

The United States and the United Kingdom must unite to fight the ideology of the planned authoritarian regimes of Russia and China. Today, Russia stands for little but raw ambition and consolidation of power. China's aims and rise are quieter and yet potentially as dangerous. We hear leaders in NATO, on the European continent, making comments questioning liberal democracy and free markets. It's easy to see the growth of planned economies over the last two decades in China or other places and think that is the answer for the world. With centralization of power you can get a bridge built if you need it or a new high speed train approved in no time, without due process or proper compensation. What our leaders too often fail to highlight is that you also can get arrested without charge and the Internet is state owned, controlled, and censored.

In these regimes, citizens have no recourse. They are merely a nuisance to those in power and those with connections. This authoritarianism can provide some economic growth for a time, but ultimately, the best system mankind has ever created for unleashing innovation and human potential is free market-based capitalism.

Controlled economies fail to send a society's resources to its most-productive use, and rent-seeking and inefficiencies burgeon. And, indeed, there are strong indications of serious, structural problems with both the Chinese and Russian economies that could undermine their success and vast military spending increases in recent years.

Iran is also a malignant player on the international stage. Long a state sponsor of terrorism, the Iranian government has plenty of American and British blood on its hands in Iraq. Now the regime is propping up the unthinkable atrocities committed in Syria by the Assad regime, including the barrel bombing of children and the use of chemical weapons against unarmed civilians.

The P5+1 countries must tread carefully in their negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program. I do not believe a deal for the sake of a deal is a good deal, nor is one that allows the Iranians to retain the capability to quickly develop a nuclear weapon. Such an arrangement might allow the regime the ability

to quickly develop a weapon precluding detection by inspectors until it is too late. And a nuclear Iran would lead to a nuclear arms race in the most volatile region on the planet.

North Korea last year raised a missile on a silo, said it was nuclear and that it could reach the west coast of the United States. It is a rogue regime that starves its own people to feed the gluttony of the elites. With a young, untested leader, the regime is unpredictable, has access to nuclear weapons, and presents a clear threat to global security.

It probably isn't said enough, but I would like to thank you all for the vital support of the British people in every significant security threat and crisis the United States has faced over the last century – including the latest battle with ISIL.

I'll close with this story. During the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, I was in the little town of Bastogne, Belgium. I met with elderly women there who described the horrific events of America's fight against Nazi Germany. Recalling the stories with tears in their eyes as if it happened last week, these women spoke about how when they were little girls, young American GI's arrived to liberate them from a brutal, oppressive Nazi Germany. They spoke of big, strong, tough 18 and 19 year olds from every corner of America who, after fighting the Germans by day, would console them and give them the socks off their feet at night. They shared with them their candy, food, and anything else they had.

That's who we are. That's who you are. That's our shared lineage, our shared humanity that distinguishes us from our adversaries.

Although there is no shortage of problems facing the world, I know together there is no challenge we can't overcome. Churchill said: "here we are able to stand together and work together for righteous causes, we shall always be thankful, and the world will always be free." I believe that with every fiber of my being.

Thank you all so much. God bless.