

Now we know: Brown is a European, not an Atlanticist

Irwin Stelzer says the Prime Minister has traded the special relationship for a home within an autocratic EU — and that Britain may be replaced in Washington's affections by France

There is little doubt, as Matthew d'Ancona and others have pointed out, that Gordon Brown is secure in the thought that he has established himself as what is called these days a 'change agent', cutting the ground out from Tory cries that 'It's time for a change.' If you want change, go for the experienced clunking fist rather than the PR tyro.

Unfortunately, not all change is in Britain's interest. Which brings me to the by now, or at any rate soon to be, forgotten visit of the Prime Minister to President Bush's retreat at Camp David. You know — the visit that the press hailed as a triumph for Brown because he (a) forced the ever-courteous George Bush to forswear his cowboy boots and open-necked shirt in favour of a jacket and tie, (b) described the discussions as 'full and frank', the unpleasant diplomatic term usually reserved for meetings with such as Bashar al-Assad, and (c) generated headlines from the right ('End of the affair', *Daily Mail*), left ('Brown fails to praise Bush at summit', *Guardian*, front page) and centre ('Mr Brown noticeably failed to return such compliments', the *Times*) that represent PR coups of the sort that have made David Cameron what he is today. Jonathan Freedland put it in his typically sober way when he wrote that Brown went 'about as far as a British Prime Minister could reasonably be expected to go in putting an America president at arm's length'. Lest the point be lost on American followers of British politics, the *New York Times* offered a helpful translation from Brownspeak into plain Americanspeak; references by the PM to 'our great shared history', and his refusal to refer to the President by the familiar 'George' when Bush called him 'Gordon', come down to: 'It's the United States we love, not George Bush.'

The electoral advantage of these triumphs is not to be doubted: Bush is not wildly popular in the UK (or in the US, for that matter), Brown has no desire to have the 'poodle' label affixed to him, and he certainly would not show to particular advantage in 'a pair of ball-crushingly tight dark-blue corduroys'. The long-term advantage to Britain is more problematic.

One way or another, Iraq will not be centre stage for much longer. British troops will be headed home or moved into safe bases,

an American withdrawal (read, 'retreat') will begin, and attention will shift to other international problems, including not least of all Iran's move to acquire nuclear weapons. If Bush learned one thing from his 'full and frank discussions' with Brown, and from the Prime Minister's insistence on accentuating the blandly political over the intensely personal, he learned that he cannot ignore those of his advisors who are telling him that the special relationship is dead, or at least on life support. Brown's statement that America is Britain's most important 'bilateral relationship' means little, since it leaves room for the multi-nation EU to be Britain's most important relationship.

Remember, Brown's trip was designed to offset the impression created by Douglas Alexander's talk to the Council on Foreign Relations — a talk that his office went to great lengths to portray to the press as an attack on American foreign policy — and by the appointment of Mark Malloch Brown to a seat at the Cabinet table. The very man who prides himself on subverting America's UN representative and on his anti-neocon views.

There is worse. Brown hopped off the presidential helicopter into the presidential 'Golf Cart 1' to join a president who has been fully briefed on the implications for American foreign policy of Brown's plan to sign on to the new European constitution, as the Prime Minister calls it in private and even, when he slips, in public. That 'treaty' makes it clear that a purely British foreign policy will be a thing of the past as soon as Brown puts pen to paper. Britain 'shall', orders the treaty, have the EU represented at the Security Council by its new foreign minister (a rose by any other name...) speak for it on any issue on which the EU has taken a position. Not 'may', or 'should consider', but 'shall'. Why bother with Brown or his Foreign Office when they are no longer players at the Security Council? Indeed, when Council membership is reviewed, as it will be when India, Japan and Brazil finally make their voices heard, why have any single EU member at the table? After all, France and Britain are permanent members, and perhaps three other European countries are usually represented among the 15 seated at the Council table. All five 'shall' vote as directed by the EU representative. Why not 'One Union, one seat', as

John Bolton has suggested? This is the one issue on which Bolton and Malloch Brown agree: as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, the new Foreign Office minister and former UN deputy secretary-general and apologist for UN corruption has long argued that Britain should give up its UN seat to the EU.

Washington is well aware of the implications of the 'treaty', and many in the administration see what I have just described as a desirable endgame. Henry Kissinger once famously wished for a single telephone number he could dial to find out Europe's position on various issues, and the State Department has always favoured just such an arrangement. They might be wrong to wish to lose an independent Britain as an ally, but they are close to having their way.

So it comes to this. British voters are angry because they believe that Tony Blair subordinated their nation's interest to that of the United States, especially since US foreign policy was in the hands of the hated neocons and their president, George W. Bush. So Mr Brown went to Camp David to distance himself both from American foreign policy and the American President. Which he succeeded in doing — more than even he imagines.

Almost immediately, as if a free hand in foreign affairs is a burden too heavy to bear — aside from pressing for aid programmes for Africa — Brown is setting about surrendering his new-found freedom from America to the EU. And permanently. Just at a time when the EU has proved ineffectual in dealing with Iran, President Sarkozy is pushing for a protectionist trade policy, France and Germany are cowering before a resurgent Russia that has unsheathed the energy weapon, the EU is turning out regulations at a pace that even Chancellor Brown could not match, and every EU leader with the sole exception of the new Prime Minister is assuring his and her constituents that the treaty is simply the constitution without the flag.

All of this makes something of a mockery of Brown's support for Trident, and his agreement to provide a base in North Yorkshire for America's new missile defence system. Once the EU has control of British foreign policy, the new treaty provides it with the tools to declare such moves inconsistent with EU policy. And the European court will surely agree.

But the news for America is not all bad. Now that Brown has forsaken his American holidays for Scotland, Nicolas Sarkozy has decided that he prefers New Hampshire to any spot in France, although, after a shouting match, he had to strike a deal with photographers to get the privacy this media-obsessed leader says he craves. New Hampshire is right around the corner from Kennebunkport, the Bush family manse. *Une relation spéciale* in the making?

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