

## **Special Relationships in Foreign Policy**

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### **Summary**

Special relationships are durable and exclusive bilateral relations between autonomous polities that are based on mutual expectations of preferential treatment by its members and outsiders as well as regular entanglement of some (external) governance functions. The concept has gained in prominence over the past three decades in part because of recent changes in IR and FPA theory (the constructivist and relational turn) and long-term shifts in the social structure of international relations, i.e. decolonization, international criminal and humanitarian law, which have posed questions of solidarity, reconciliation and responsibility of current and past special relationships.

The term has a long and diverse history. After WWII it was mainly used to depict the Anglo-American security relationship as special. Today, as one recent account found (Harnisch et al. 2015), well over 50 international relationships are deemed special. Despite this trend, no common theoretical framework has been developed to explain their emergence, variation, persistence and demise. Realism interprets special relationships as asymmetrical power relations, in which presupposed counter-balancing behavior does not occur because shared ideas or institutions mitigate autonomy concerns. Liberalism postulates that the special relatedness occurs when policy interdependence due to shared commercial interests or ideas allows deep cooperation and trust building. Social constructivism, in turn, assumes self-assertion but does not presuppose with or against whom the self, usually a polity, identifies itself. It follows that special relations may occur between in dyads with positive identification (Germany-Israel after reconciliation) or negative identification, such as in the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan.

As a relational term, special relationships do not sit easily with the first generation of FPA focusing on decision making processes rather than the policies themselves. As a consequence, special relationships have been primarily conceptualized either as a tool of foreign policy or as one context factor influencing foreign policy choices. In relational theories, such as social constructivism, special relations, such as solidarity relations, are not causally independent from actors, as these relations also define the actors themselves.

*Keywords:* Special Relationship, relationalism, friendship, empire, alliances, enduring rivalries

## Introduction

Why are some relationships between states seen as special while others are not? How and in what way does it matter when UK Prime Minister May calls upon the United States to deepen „the UK-US special relationship“ while initiating Britain’s exit from the European Union? Do special relationships reflect mere „rhetorical symbolism“ or do they extend to regular practices between nations and their public servants, thereby constituting international social processes and the actors involved?

Special relationships, in a first cut, may be thought of as a form of close international relations, in which one political unit acts from an accentuated position vis-à-vis another polity. It is an old political institution that is often used synonymously for imperial or tributary relations or friendship, characterizing various asymmetrical relations between peoples in ancient Greece, China and Rome through modern Europe. Special relationships regularly include both particular distributions of military power, material wealth and immaterial values, as in the Anglo-American or the Vietnam-Laos relations, and of past (and present) conflictual experiences, as in the case of the German-Israeli or the India-Pakistan relationship.

The term has a long and diverse history. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was apparently first used to describe the close relations between the British Empire and the United States before the WWI. After becoming popularized through a speech by Winston Churchill in Fulton, Missouri (March 5<sup>th</sup>) 1946, the term has been most often employed to refer to the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples and elites (Atlanticism) (Dunn/Avenell, 2016). Used as a tool of political rhetoric to describe over fifty political relationships, including those between the Holy See and Italy as well as between Russia and Belarus, the term has been highly malleable for some time and thus often devoid of a concise meaning. Recently, however, several scholars have proposed to conceptualize it more firmly as a category of political and social practice and as a particular instance of inter-state relationships (Harnisch, 2015; Haugevik, forthcoming)

As an analytical concept, special relationships refer to durable and exclusive bilateral relations between autonomous polities that are based on mutual expectations of preferential treatment by its members and outsiders and through the entanglement of their (external) governance functions (see also Oppermann/Hansel, 2016). According to Kristin Haugevik (2013), special relationships regularly intersect with the concept of imperialism and hegemony in several non-obvious ways: On the one hand, the British-American special relationship has been conceptualized as emanating from the American colonial experience against the British empire and then turning into the Post WW II American hegemony (see also Burk, 2007).<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, former colonial relations of Spain, France and Britain with African, Latin American, Caribbean and Pacific states have been transformed into the form of “metaphorical families of nations”, bound together by special historical and societal bonds (Brysk et al., 2002; Schieder et al., 2011). On the other hand, special relationships may encompass the transfer of substantial authority to decide policies for junior partners such as in the US relations with West European countries after WWII without a common colonial past (Lake, 1999; Lundestad, 2003).

Consequently, three analytical specifications are in order to distinguish special relationships from other hierarchical or non-hierarchical forms of international relations. First, special relationship is a relational term entailing both inter-state and other international relations, such as

between the member states of the EU (special German-French relationship) to foster further integration (Krotz/Schild, 2015) or between the EU and some former colonies to support their development (Schieder, 2015). Depending on the theoretical lens of relationalism, the constitutive parts do (or do not) exist prior to and are (or are not) distinct from the special relationship. Thus, in one of the most widely quoted works on amicable inter-state relations through „security communities“, Adler and Barnett (1998) argue in sync with mainstream social constructivism that these communities are based on (pre-existing) collective identities. In contrast, interactionist scholarship of various theoretical leanings suggests that such identities are formed through social processes of diplomatic practices and discursive representation (Adler/Pouliot 2011; Hansen 2006, Haugevik 2013, forthcoming, Pouliot 2008). Empirically, the German-Israeli relationship is certainly unique in this sense because both states have been established in view of the memory of the Shoah and their relationship serves, among other functions, to preserve that memory and to take on the responsibility for the past (Gardner-Feldman, 1984; Pallade, 2005).

Second, special relationships rest on a particularistic logic of inclusion and exclusion; that is, through their respective expectations the members create a qualitative difference between themselves and the ‘others’ (Mattern, 2001). But, in contrast to friendship and reconciliation, special relations are not meant to satisfy cognitive and emotional needs of its members, although their interaction may be characterized as open, reciprocal, loyal, trustful and intimate (Danchev, 1998:7; Lehmkuhl, 2012, Gardner Feldman, 2014). Friendship has been conceptualized as an actor-centric and progressive term (Oelsner/Koschut, 2014: 20) that focuses on the stabilization and advancement of its constitutive members rather than of outsiders. Thus, friendship between states does neither require a process of negative othering nor does it necessarily imply a change in the international order as such (Berenskoetter, 2007:672; Oelsner/Koschut, 2014: 21; but see also Oelsner/Vion, 2011; Roschchin, 2006). Reconciliation, instead, requires enmity as a precondition, because it focuses on the process by which current amicable relations are used as an antidote against past negative experiences (Gardner Feldman, 2013: 124).

Special relationships are relational concepts primarily concerned with international social order (Mattern, 2005), e.g. the German-French relationship as an engine of European integration. But it also follows that enduring rivalries – i.e. conflictual relationships with regular military altercations over time – may be considered as special relationships because of their qualitatively different interaction patterns over time and their structuring effects for the international order. As Jennifer Mitzen (2006: 342) has argued: “Even a harmful and self-defeating relationship can provide ontological security, which means states can become attached to conflict”.

Third, special relationships are a moderate form of international hierarchy, in which one of the partners is substituting for some governance functions of the other (see Hobson/Sharman, 2005; Lake, 2009). So between imperialism, as an extreme form of forced asymmetrical governance, and anarchy, as an extreme form of autonomous self-help governance, special relationships may be identified as a consensual form of limited hierarchical governance based on multiple functions. Special relationships are neither protectorates, in which subordinate members yield control over their foreign and security policy to dominant members, nor are they military alliances or security communities, where several members coordinate their defense governance by sharing capabilities in a limited functional realm (Adler/Barnett, 1998; Snyder, 1997).

For some, special relationships are a virulent form of neocolonialism. For others, they are a reincarnation of hegemony. For a third group, special relationships mark a particular dyadic form of relational governance. It is obvious that special relationships remain a contested concept.

Having defined the term and discussing some of the most pertinent empirical examples and theoretical challenges, the article proceeds as follows: the next section addresses special relationships in the field of foreign policy analysis, summarizing key trends and research foci. The section is followed by a review of the theoretical explanations for special relationships, focussing on the recent spike in constructivist and relationalist studies in the field. The following section traces the nexus between special relationships and the evolution of international social structures, e.g. by discussing their effect on regional integration and peaceful relations between similar regime types. The article concludes with a brief outlook on the future of special relationships.

### **Special relationships and FPA**

Special relationships have not been considered as a distinct research area in the extant FPA literature so far. The major analytical works can be grouped into two distinct phases: In the first phase, until the mid-1980s, special relationships were conceptualized as foreign policy outcomes explained through systemic factors (asymmetrical power relations) or domestic factors (common elite culture). Empirically, a host of studies described it as distinct British strategy to engage the United States and steer Washington towards British interests (Allen, 1955; Watt, 1963; Thorne, 1978; Reynolds, 1982; Warner, 1989; Coker, 1992; Dumbrell/Schäfer, 2009). Analytically, this research tried to systematically describe special relationships as agglomerates of (positive) properties, such as Transparency, Informality, Generality, Reciprocity, Exclusivity, Clandestinity, Reliability, Durability, Potentiality and Mythicizability (Danchev, 1998: 7). But as Danchev (1998: 7) noted in a major study on the Anglo-American relationships, these qualities were neither “absolute standard” nor “fixed requirement” to account for their evolution.

The second phase was initiated by Lily Gardner Feldman’s important study on the German-Israeli special relationship (Gardner Feldman, 1984) which opened up the field both theoretically and thematically. Theoretically, Gardner Feldman introduced common values, shared morality and historical experience as important sources of special relationships to the systemic and domestic institutional factors, prevalent in the Anglo-American literature. Thematically, she extended the field of research beyond the Anglo-American sphere and examined the German-Israeli case as an international institution rather than as a foreign policy outcome. As a consequence, the field of study moved on to analyze the changes in the institutional structures over time and policy areas (Burk, 2007; Campbell, 2007; Flint, 2009; Holland, 2005; Louis/Bull, 1986; Richelson/Ball, 1985).

The analytical distinction between the first and second phase of special relationships scholarship became blurred in the mid-1990s through the constructivist turn in IR and FPA analysis. Social constructivism implies that the material world does not come classified and that, as such, the objects of our knowledge are not independent of our interpretations, our language and culture (Carlsnaes, 2013: 213). In Brysk et al. (2002) reading of the post-colonial special relationships of Spain, Great Britain and France, the common historical bonds and a shared familial identity of a “special relationship” explain why these countries grant trade and other

concessions to their former colonies to the detriment of their material interests. More generally, these identity based studies of special relationship argue that only by considering oneself as bound by the shared identity, it becomes “appropriate” and thus rational to act accordingly. More recently, Kristin Haugevik (forthcoming) has analyzed in a major comparative study how changes in the discursive representation and bilateral interaction practices account for the diverging development pathways of the US-British and the British-Norwegian relationship, thereby explaining the persistence and demise of these particular inter-state relations.

### **Theories of special relationships**

The major theoretical contribution can be grouped into three IR-theory based and two distinct FPA approaches. Realist theories focus on relative distribution of power resources among states. Writing in 1979 from a neorealist or defensive positionalist position, Kenneth Waltz (1979) grounded the motivation for self-help but status-quo oriented behavior of states in the anarchic structure of the international system. In general, neorealism argues that special relationships must be tied to accentuated power asymmetries that lead to a deviation from the “normal”, i.e. balancing behavior to equalize power asymmetries to preserve their autonomy. This theme is the foundation for two distinct theoretical arguments: First, Glenn Snyder (1990: 106) argued that alliance relations are in so far “special relations” as they allow for temporary cooperative behavior among self-interested states when subordinate states have no internal means to balance a more powerful opponent. The theoretical corollary is that alliance relations emanate from dysfunctional self-help behavior which is substituted by temporal functionally specified help by others. As such, alliance relations are exceptional relations but they do not constitute “special relations”. Second, Kenneth Waltz (1979: 198) argued that “in any realm populated by units that are functionally similar but different of capability [...] those of greatest capability take on special responsibilities. Although he returns to the resulting functional specification and division of labor several times (Waltz, 1979: 105, 109, 114), he does not elaborate on the “special responsibilities” of Great Powers vis-à-vis other Great Powers and/or subordinate states. However, it follows that Great Powers, self-interested in the status quo, may provide common goods to subordinate states in so far the latter’s autonomy may be defended vis-à-vis Great Powers challenging the status quo. Theoretically, this does not constitute a special relationship proper but it explains why Great Powers have a special responsibility for the stability of the polarity in the international system (Bukanovsky et al., 2012: 8).

Empirical studies based on realism later argued that the Anglo-American special relationship was based on the asymmetrical alliance relationship (Baylis, 1985; Marsh/Baylis, 2006) but that exceptional historical, ideational and cultural factors accounted for their special character (Dawson/Rosecrance, 1966: 41). After the end of the Soviet Union and the demise of bipolarity, Dickie (1994) challenged the existence of a special relationship while others introduced economic and ideational factors to explain their persistence (Lehmkuhl, 2012; Bially Mattern, 2001). Robert Jervis (2009) highlighted that subordinate powers, such as the UK, would be prevented from balancing the hegemon in a unipolar system if the unipole provided subordinate powers with collective goods while leaving their autonomy intact.

Liberal theories emphasize conditions within states for their external relations. Where realists focus on relative power differentials, liberal scholars draw attention to the economic and ideational aspirations of societal actors that draw polities into competitive or cooperative relations (Moravcsik, 2008). Brian Bow (2009) and Bruce Cronin (2006) represent the ideational

liberalism. Positing that a common diplomatic culture of American and Canadian elites is responsible for their special relationship, Bow (2009) explains how common long-term benefits could take precedence over short-term issue-specific or personal conflicts. In a similar vein, Cronin (2006) argues that the reinvigoration of the Anglo-American special relationship can be traced back to the shared policy paradigm of neoliberalism. But in contrast to Bow, Cronin suggests that sharing the policy paradigm of neoliberalism set in motion a self-reinforcing effect in US-UK relations – a path-dependency if you will – by which the special relationship was strengthened both substantially and institutionally.

Interdependence theories, typically a part of larger liberal theories of international relations, highlight the reduction and management of interdependence costs. Employing this idea to interdependence conflicts arising from the formal equality as sovereigns and the de facto inequality in material capacities, Bukanovsky et al. (2012) assert that different mechanisms of “special responsibility” of states have been established to manage these interdependence costs: For bigger powers, taking on “special responsibilities” is a more cost-effective way of rule because legitimate rule – as rightful rule recognized by subordinate states – does not necessitate the use of force. For smaller powers, legitimate rule is a more beneficial because responsible rule implies that the powerless can hold the more powerful accountable (Clark/Reus-Smit, 2013: 42; Finnemore, 2005). In particular after the Cold War, when the norms of humanitarian intervention and responsibility-to-protect evolved, the new and special responsibility relations became contested, so that no stable new social structure of global responsibility has yet emerged (Clark/Reus-Smit, 2013: 53).

Another liberal explanation, republican liberalism, draws on representational theories. Earlier studies on the Anglo-American relation emphasized the role of elites as crucial agents for the special relationship, augmenting their argument either by introducing common cognitive patterns, as in epistemic communities, or shared cultures, such as Atlanticism (Lehmkuhl, 1999: 69ff; Watt, 1984). More recently, Ulrich Krotz (2002) has challenged the consensus on the centrality of elites for the German-French special relationship. Although he acknowledges their role, he claims that Youth-Exchange and town twinning programs as well as the collaborative work of cultural institutes have been much more important for fostering the Europeanization of the respective societies (see also Krotz and Schild, 2015).

A third strain of explanations has also developed, drawing upon social constructivism. In contrast to rationalist theories, which purport that actors have clear and fixed goals focused on survival or utility maximization, these approaches start with the assumption of self-assertion but without determining a priori what the self is and what it is that it is striving for (Giddens, 1984: 50; Wendt, 1992: 424; Mitzen, 2006). Special relationships, in this reading, emanate from a process of self-identification, in which a state continuously distinguishes itself from another state, such as the revolutionary Iran from the US (negative othering) or Poland towards the US (positive othering) (Wendt, 1994: 386). The variation in the type is created by the specific duration, kind and exclusivity of the process of self-identification. It follows that the unique character of the Anglo-American special relationship results from the periodical positive and negative self-identification with the other: In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain served as the constitutive negative other for the United States (and vice versa) (Dickinson, 2008). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Britain identified repeatedly with the United States as the protector (Gamble, 2008), even when the Suez crisis called the common identity of “the West” into question (Bially Mattern, 2001)

Two approaches, broadly based on constructivism are worth highlighting. First, Brysk et al. (2002) as well as Schieder et al. (2011; see also Schieder 2015) interpret special relationships as relations of solidarity, in which members are bound by a special relatedness and commitment to each other. In this approach, expectations of solidarity are distinguished from other forms of special relations by the exclusiveness of the particular commitment to help another member in the group (Schieder, 2009: 21). It follows that special relationships of solidarity are asymmetrical and particularistic in nature and their interaction is determined by their donative and loosely reciprocal character. Positing a special commitment to help each other in a solidary community, Schieder et al. (2011) explain variations in behavior by the type of bonds. In particular, solidarity may be based on a special historical experience (guilt, trust, reconciliation), current needs (with regard to an accepted standard of living) or promises of (reciprocal) effort. As these relationships were based on diverging historical experience and neediness, major EU member states development assistance towards various African, Caribbean and Pacific countries displayed substantial difference and less coherence than predicted by other theoretical approaches (Schieder et al., 2011; Schieder, 2015). Secondly, Kristin Haugevik is bound to enrich the emerging field with her sweeping re-conceptualization of special relationships as social processes of discursive and symbolic representation as well as diplomatic practices (Haugevik, forthcoming). Methodologically, she breaks new ground by combining a discourse-analytical framework to map representations of specialness with qualitative data on frontstage diplomatic practices and in-depth interviews to assess working relationships between respective diplomatic services. Theoretically, she shows convincingly how relational identities between states are constructed, re-constructed (or not) so that diverging patterns of persistence (US-UK) and demise (UK-Norway) relationships become empirically graspable. Overall, the study puts the analysis of special relationships squarely between those scholars who situate it in systemic structures and those who place it on the individual level as well as between those constructivist analysts that privilege linguistic representations over other social practices.

A fifth, nascent explanation has been developed that draws upon FPA and especially approaches of groupthink. In these approaches, special relationships are understood as another form of groupthink. Emphasis is placed on explaining why and how a strong normative group consensus and similar personal attributes lead to misguided decisions (Janis, 1982; 't Hart et al., 1997; Schafer/Crichlow, 2010). Employing this approach, Ian Davis and Andreas Persbo (2004) argue that groupthink among UK and US policy elites, in particular intelligence services, led to the misguided decision to intervene in Iraq (2003) because precautions were not taken and controversial thinking suppressed, so that drastic misjudgement ensued (see also Svendsen, 2009: 60). In a similar vein, but based on a social constructivist identity approach, Srdjan Vucetic (2011) suggests that the early 20<sup>th</sup> century special relationship between Britain and the United States was based on a common racial identity, in which a superior Anglo-Saxon identity was destined to apportion the colonies to the detriment of other European powers.

Theories of personal and leadership traits, typically part of FPA studies, focus on individual decision makers and their attributes (Neack, 2013: 47ff; Gardner Feldman, 2012: 14f; see also Gartzke, 1980). Walter (2013) examines the Israeli-American special relationship and comes to the conclusion that variations under the Reagan, Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations coincide with periods of personal friendship between the key leaders. He also finds that the polyheuristic approach by Mintz (2004) may explain patterns of rational and irrational negotiations between Yitzak Shamir and the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations (Walter, 2013; see also Bar-Sman-Tov, 1998).

The best explanations have always combined concepts from more than just one of these traditions. Lily Gardner Feldman (1984; 2012; 2014) augmented her agent-based approach with perceptual, institutional and more structural factors that allows her to capture the states in a special relationship as evolving entities themselves, which in turn drive, stop or change the character of the special relationship. Although different authors emphasize different dimensions and corollaries, every approach carries traces of the following components of a social relationship: subject and cooperating subject, reference group and effect on social structure.

*Table 1: IR and FPA approaches on special relationships*

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Cooperating subject</b>	<b>Reference group</b>	<b>Effect on social structure</b>
<b>Realism</b>	States/Great Powers	States	Common rival/ enemy	no domestic but adversarial external effect
<b>Liberalism</b>	States/Societal groups/Individuals	States/Groups/Individuals	Community of democratic states	No domestic but stabilizing external effect
<b>Social constructivism</b>	States/Societal groups/Individuals	States/Groups/Individuals	Positive or negative reference group	Domestic and external structuration effects
<b>Groupthink</b>	Groups/Individuals	States/ Groups	Decision making group	(negative) external structuration effect
<b>Personal/leadership traits</b>	Individuals	Groups	Decision making group/electorate	Domestic and external structuration effects

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### **Special relationships and shifts in international social structures**

Global inter-state war, decolonization and the end of the Cold War were three of the most important events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence, strong norms against state violence and colonialism as well as for democratic self-determination and human rights occurred. But the underlying social relationships for these momentous transformations still shape expectations about exclusive and durable preferential relationships between states and other polities as Kristin Haugevik (2013) has argued. In Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific, the European Union's development and association policy still seeks through preferential treatment to heal the wounds of the past colonial wrongdoings by its members. In the former Soviet Union, Russia continues to insist that its relations with the neighboring countries are special for his-

torical, cultural and religious reasons and do not allow for any external mingling (Weiß, 2015). In other regions, the United States has forged special relationships to stabilize and expand the sphere of Western civilization and democracy so that democratic peace may prevail (Jackson, 2003).

Although scholarly interest waned somewhat in the Post-Cold War era, special relations remain a vibrant topic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, a group of scholars has recently questioned the assumption of the democratic peace paradigm that democracies are especially prone to deep, long lasting and peaceful relationships (Leeds, 2000; Lipson, 2003; Pevehouse/Russett, 2006). In examining British foreign policy fiascoes in the Suez (1956) and the Iraq conflict (2003), Kai Oppermann (2015) identifies overconfidence in the expectations about the other as a crucial cause for Britain's misjudgment. Anna Sunik (2015), who investigates the Post World War II relations between the democratic British and the autocratic Gulf monarchies, comes to conclusion that mixed regime type dyads may pursue friendly, even persistent special relationships.

In a similar vein, but questioning the notion of a "community of autocracies" (Kagan, 2008), Nele Noesselt (2015) compares China's foreign relations with four socialist states (Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba and the Soviet Union) and Alexander Brand et al. (2015) analyze China's relations with four Latin American states. Their findings suggest that there is no preferential treatment of socialist vis-à-vis other regimes types – China's choices in Latin America depend on economic concerns and adherence to the One-China principle – and there is no discernible pattern of China imposing its own socialist model onto other socialist states by offering preferential treatment.

In sum, these studies find that neither democratic nor autocratic institutions do generate special relationships as such. These and studies by Gardner Feldman and others suggest that specific institutional and ideational elements of democratic rule do hamper or advance special relationships. In turn, as of now, no unambiguous nexus between a regime type and the evolution of special relationships can be established.

As special relationships increased in number and spread over policy areas, they have also played a crucial role in promoting or impeding formal international institutions. In other words, international institutions become the explananda – that which is to be explained – while special relationships become the explanan – that which explains. Green (2013) and Seidendorf (2013) have shown how the Anglo-American and German-French special relationship shaped the institutional architecture of the Bretton-Woods institutions and the European Union respectively. In contrast, Elena Kropatcheva's (2015) analysis of Russia's special relationship with the members of the Collective Security Organization (CSO) comes to the conclusion that, while Russia's provision of common goods stabilizes the fragile institution, its robust and hegemonic role in the institution is contained by balancing behavior among other members and external actors.

## **Outlook**

A new age of scholarship suggests that special relationships will be more complex than the old ones. As social structures of international relations diversify, Western scholarship pays more attention to other regions and (new) theoretical approaches, such as relationalism (Emirbayer, 1997; Jackson/Nexon, 1999), implant a fresh conceptual lens into the void between IR and FPA scholarship (Haugevik, forthcoming). New principles, such as humani-

tarian intervention, responsibility to protect or the Chinese “tianxia”, articulated in multilateral fora such as the UN or bilateral relations, could and have been employed to legitimize new responsibilities and respective “special relationships” (Bukanovsky 2012). The recent Russian intervention in Ukraine suggests that non-Western powers oppose a one-sided, pro-democratic interpretation of “special relationships” as based on the responsibility to protect (Ziegler, 2016), even if Russia itself cannot uphold such relationships with non-functioning states, such as Moldova. Moreover, as a majority of British citizens has voted in favor of leaving the European Union, Prime Minister May has called for special relations with the Union that do not resemble those of other close associated states, such as Norway and Switzerland, and she has also called upon the United States to further intensify the existing US-UK special relationship. It follows then, that as both old and new forms of special relationships become contested within and between societies, policy makers and analysts alike have to rethink the in- and exclusiveness of special relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Doyle (1986: 19) defines empires as "relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies... Imperialism is the process of establishing and maintaining an empire."