

GREAT BRITAIN AS A GEOSTRATEGIC PLAYER IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES IN THE '80s

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Abstract. *The present article having as starting point The Grand Chessboard (Zbigniew Brzezinski), In Pursuit of British Interests, Reflections on Foreign Policy during Margaret Thatcher and John Major (Percy Cradock) and Diplomacy and Disillusion at the Court of Margaret Thatcher (George Urban) will consider that Great Britain had an active participation within the Cold War. Great Britain did not just follow the United States; it opposed the American policy towards the gas pipeline between Siberia and the German Federal Republic and its political representatives were skeptical about the total bilateral, Soviet-American, reduction of the nuclear arsenal. Great Britain identified the Western Europe security with its own and participated in an essential way within the negotiations regarding the Strategic Defense Initiative and regarding the reduction of the East-West nuclear capabilities.*

Keywords: *Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher, Cold War, the relation with United States, Geostrategic.*

This article had as a starting point the following references: *The Grand Chessboard* written by Zbigniew Brzezinski, *In Pursuit of British Interests, Reflections on Foreign Policy during Margaret Thatcher and John Major* written by Percy Cradock, *Diplomacy and Disillusion at the Court of Margaret Thatcher* written by George Urban.

Zbigniew Brzezinski considered that Great Britain was no longer a geostrategic player in the '90s (a player capable of implementing its interests in another geographical space than its own).¹ (Great Britain lacks ambitious purposes, it remains a base ally for the United States but it no longer has a powerful vision about Europe and it cannot play anymore the balancing role).²

Percy Cradock shows that Great Britain played an active role in the alliance with the United States. Some cases are enumerated where Great Britain did not just follow the United States and, furthermore, imposed its point of view.

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¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, pp. 40-41.

² *Ibidem*, p. 42.

George Urban shows that Great Britain, especially through Margaret Thatcher, played an active role within the Cold War, placing the accent upon the image battle between East and West.

We place ourselves within the opinion of the last two authors and we consider that: Great Britain had an active participation within the Cold War. Through its actions Great Britain participated to the changing of the course of the Cold War. Great Britain led a powerful image battle against the Soviet Union. We are going to show that at least in some cases Great Britain did not just follow the United States; it opposed the American policy towards the gas pipeline between Siberia and the German Federal Republic and its political representatives were skeptical about the total bilateral, Soviet-American, reduction of the nuclear arsenal. Furthermore Great Britain identified the Western Europe security with its own and participated in an essential way within the negotiations regarding the Strategic Defense Initiative and regarding the reduction of the East-West nuclear capabilities. In the case of Grenada, the representatives of Great Britain were put in front of *le fait accompli* (Margaret Thatcher acknowledged that this is the way of how great powers behave). In the case of the action of bombarding Libya, Great Britain was the only West European country that supported the United States.

In the '80s, within the alliance with the United States, Great Britain proved that it has become again a world geostrategic player, defending its interests in Europe.

In the inauguration speech of its mandate (1979), Margaret Thatcher showed that the relations of the Western Block with the Soviet Union must be conducted through a position of force. In the opinion of the British prime minister the Western Block had to fortify itself politically, economically and military in order to stop the Soviet expansionist policy. A very important fact must be mentioned: for Margaret Thatcher, the Soviet Union was a grand military power which failed economic, politically and socially. The communist ideology had lost its base substance and remained attractive just for the countries with big political or economic problems. The British prime minister was pointing out that the international world is becoming more and more interdependent and interconnected.³

In a document on 8 of February 1981 (a letter to Margaret Thatcher) it was showed that Great Britain in the conception of the American leaders remained a very important ally within the Cold War in Europe but also in Latin America (because of its influence).⁴ The American investment for the foreign help (civil or military) has relatively dropped in comparison of that of the Soviet Union. Starting with the end of the Korean war, the United States and Great Britain were confronted with the same economic problems, the increase of the state expenses,

³ Margaret Thatcher, 1979, *The Foreign Policy of Great Britain*, <http://www.famous-speeches-and-speech-topics.info/famous-speeches/margaret-thatcher-speech-foreign-policy-of-great-britain.htm>, accessed on the 11th of June 2012, 3.35 p.m.

⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive (Thatcher MSS), Memorandum, 8 February 1981, US: Sherman paper for MT (Potential Snags in Anglo-American Relations) (Reaganites since election "brutally differentiated themselves from MT's government) (declassified 2010), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114255>, accessed on the 15th of June, 2012, 9.30 a.m., pp. 1-3.

the increase of taxes, the stagnation of the private economy, the increase of unemployment, bigger social expenses at the cost of the foreign policy, expenses against unemployment, the increase of the state apparatus. At the same time the Army, Navy and the Fly Force were confronted with the lack of training.⁵ The priorities of the Reagan administration were: the restoration of the military capabilities, the restoration of the economic growing rate, the reduction of expenses, the increase of the defense budget⁶. In Latin America in order to counteract the communist danger, the United States needed the support or at least the benevolent neutrality of Great Britain and at a lesser degree the support of the other European countries which still had some influence on that region (and the support of the countries from that region).⁷ The American leadership wanted Great Britain to regard the Caribbean problems in the terms of the American strategic interest and not from perspective of the residual British commitments from that region.⁸

The Middle East was very important for the United States, Great Britain and France could help the American position through the quality of their troops and their position (France had a military base in Djibouti). There was a positive American appreciation for the British potential.⁹

In the case of hostages from Iran, the United States felt abandoned by the European allies; to this there were added the West German policy of Ostpolitik, the West German refusal of implementing their defense with Cruise American missiles, the reluctance of Great Britain to support the United States policy in Latin America and Africa with “the enthusiasm of an ally”. The American author saw this status as being temporary and generated by the partial American retreat from the role frame of leadership. The problems with the European allies were generating questions regarding the N.A.T.O. efficiency.¹⁰ We can notice that the support of Great Britain was very important for the United States also because the German Federal Republic was applying a policy of opening towards East and had refused to apply the nuclear defense project with Cruise missiles.

Hans Morgenthau states that “The international politics is, like other types of policy, a fight for power. Regardless of its final purposes, the power is always the first objective. The decision makers and in general, people can have as final purpose liberty, security, prosperity or power itself.”¹¹ All these were present as long term purposes and interests of the western alliance in general and especially of the British-American alliance.

The same author states that the policy of prestige is very important for a nation. “Its purpose is to impress other nations with the power that we hold or that we want to be believed we hold. Two instruments are serving this purpose:

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politica între Națiuni, Lupta pentru putere și lupta pentru pace*, Polirom, Jassy, 2007 p. 67.

the diplomatic protocol in the broadest sense of the word and the display of military power.”¹² This idea is important from at least two points of view. In the Falklands war, Great Britain obtained prestige with the help of the United States. On the other hand, in the opinion of the British decision makers the nuclear arsenal discouraged the Soviet Union.

Percy Cradock, the chief of Joint Intelligence Committee, considered that for Great Britain the European Economic Community was a solution for the future, and the United States were a solution for the present.¹³

In the opinion of the same author, the Soviet Union was the biggest threat regarding the security of the Western Block, a threat represented especially in Western Europe by the Soviet military projection, which could have modified the Soviet political influence in this area. The technological and economic advance was the biggest advantage of the Western Block. China became almost an ally for the Western Block.¹⁴

At the same time, this author showed that in the '80s Great Britain was becoming again a great power, having an important role in the world affairs.¹⁵

The collaboration of the services between Great Britain and the United States was very good and close. The British were obtaining information and were giving a second opinion. The collaboration was not emotional but based on professionalism. J.I.C. collaborated with C.I.A. and N.S.C. as an equal partner.¹⁶

Paul Kennedy considered that the relation between Great Britain and the United States was characterized by “a steady tilting of the scales from the older, declining power to the newer, expanding one”. From the XIX century we are dealing with a series of consideration acts from Great Britain to the United States like the Alabama settlement from 1872 and the British-American naval treaty from 1921.¹⁷

The United States were the only guarantor for the West European Security. In the bilateral context (The Polaris agreement from 1962), Great Britain was dependent on the United States for the nuclear discouragement of the Soviet Union. In this sense we have the relationship between Macmillan and Kennedy in the. In general the British-American interests were almost identical, and when they were not, the British leaders had to calculate for a long time before taking another course of foreign policy, different than the American one.¹⁸

In the '80s we are dealing with almost similar British and American positions regarding security and the relations with the Soviet Union. On the other hand the

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 116.

¹³ Percy Cradock, *In pursuit of British Interests, Reflections on Foreign Policy under Margaret Thatcher and John Major*, John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, London, 1997, p. 27.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁶ *Ibidem* p. 41 and Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive (CIA), 15 April 1982, Falklands: CIA Falklands document release (New York Times article) [“U.S. Providing British a Wide Range of Intelligence”] [declassified 2007], <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114295> accessed on the first of May 2012, 10.18 a.m.

¹⁷ Paul Kennedy, *The Realities behind Diplomacy* (George Allen&Unwin, 1981), p. 262, *apud* Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 51, note 6.

¹⁸ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 52.

relations with the countries from the Middle East, Central America, Caribbean space, and the commercial relations could have imposed some problems.¹⁹ The difference of power between the two states meant that the relation was far more important for Great Britain than for the United States. The United States had a far bigger degree of independent action, the Suez Canal Crisis proving the limits of power of Great Britain.²⁰

Great Britain was acting directly but sometimes, and more efficient, through Washington. The United States did not want to be isolated and Great Britain could act together with the United States where it could not have done so on its own. In the case of the bombardment of Libya, Great Britain was the only European power that supported the United States.²¹

The study of the American intentions and the access to the decision American factors were very important objectives for Great Britain, “the immediate answer to any crises was to ask what was the reaction of the United States”, “the consultation with the European partners increased, but was a secondary priority”. The disorderly decision taking in the United States, the semipublic arguments, the debates in Congress, made the intervention of Great Britain more powerful, but the result was obscure and unpredictable. The United States determined the international climate and Great Britain had to choose between narrow interests and solidarity.²²

When its immediate interests were in danger, the United States acted without many warnings. In this way we can explain the American military action in Grenada (1983). In Grenada, a Commonwealth member, a coup had taken place and as a result an extreme left political group had taken the power. President Reagan decides to intervene despite the arguments brought by Margaret Thatcher.²³ The documents are showing us that Great Britain was warned only a very little time before the intervention.²⁴ Margaret Thatcher was worried about the failure to comply with the international laws and by the possible association with the invasion of Afghanistan.²⁵ In the end she accepted that this is how the great powers behave. In the letters addressed to President Reagan, Margaret Thatcher showed her desire to reestablish the democracy in Grenada.²⁶ The belief in the democratic values of the free world was real.

Margaret Thatcher was worried about a possible association with the action of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. “We in the Western countries, the Western democracies, use our force to defend our way of life. We do not use it to walk into independent sovereign territories...If you are going to pronounce a new law

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 52-53.

²³ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Reagan Library, 25 October 1983, Grenada: Reagan Letter to Thatcher (intervention goes ahead) (declassified 2000) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109430->, accessed on the 27th of May 2012, 9.10 a.m.

²⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Reagan Library, 26 October 1983, Grenada: Reagan phone call to Thatcher (record of conversation) (declassified 2000) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109426>, accessed on the 27th of May 2012, 9.18 a.m.

²⁵ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 58.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

that wherever Communism reigns against the will of the people, even though it's happened internally, there the USA shall enter, then we are going to have really terrible wars in the world".²⁷ In the letter addressed to Margaret Thatcher, Reagan showed that he was considering a military operation in Grenada, which as a consequence of a coup was ruled by an extreme left regime. The danger of Soviet-Cuban infiltration was significant. As a result of the invasion the only legitimate authority would have been the British General Governor.²⁸ It appears that Margaret Thatcher offered counterarguments against the invasion but Reagan considered that the American arguments were more powerful. The American president decides to intervene, and will respond positively the request of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean states. Great Britain could offer political support and economic assistance to Grenada.²⁹ Margaret Thatcher considered even the reevaluation of Great Britain's relations with the United States and the Soviet Union, but in the end she declared that the British-American alliance is the most powerful point on the British foreign policy agenda.³⁰ The Atlantic alliance remained the most important direction for the foreign policy conducted by Margaret Thatcher in spite of the disservice made by the Americans through the invasion of Grenada. The British prime minister accepted that this is the way of how great powers are behaving. The British interests was keeping and extending the type of western economy and ruling.³¹

The solidarity with the United States of America, the defense through N.A.T.O. were the basic core of the British policy in the '80s.³²

According to the State Department, the action from Grenada could affect the United States position towards their allies. After the invasion, the Americans were reproached by the European allies, the lack of consultations and the military attack. Some European officials, in private, admitted the value of the action decision but were questioning the legality of that decision. The leaderships of the European allies were upset about their lack of implication from the United States and let the public perception to be critical, and to make the connection between Grenada, the problem of regulation of Intermediate Nuclear Forces and Lebanon.³³ The American officials were proposing a diplomatic tour in the west European capitals and wanted the implication of Western Europe in the political and economic reconstruction of Grenada.³⁴

²⁷ BBC World Service 30 October 1982 *apud* Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 58.

²⁸ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Reagan Library, 25 October 1983, Grenada: Reagan Letter To Thatcher (intervention goes ahead) (declassified 2000) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109430->, accessed on the 27th of May 2012, 9.10 a.m.

²⁹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Reagan Library 25 October 1983, Grenada: Reagan Letter to Thatcher (Decides to Intervene) (declassified 2000) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109429>, accessed on the 27th of May 2012, 9.10 a.m.

³⁰ George R. Urban, *Diplomacy and Disillusion at The Court of Margaret Thatcher; An Insider's View*, Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 1996, p. 86.

³¹ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 30.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 31.

³³ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, 2 November 1983, Grenada: State Department assessment of damage done to US image in Europe, declassified 2010, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110647>, accessed on the 27th of May 2012, 9.22 a.m., p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

The most important point on the American agenda was the worsening of the relations with Great Britain; Great Britain abstained at the U.N. from the vote regarding the condemnation of the action but publically it criticized the action. In Great Britain there was going to be a parliamentary session regarding the I.N.F. The poles of opinion from Great Britain showed that the United States would not consult Great Britain regarding the use of nuclear weapons. The document underlined the need to democratize Grenada, and to pull out the American troops in order to improve the relations with Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany, close allies where the majority of citizens did not approved this type of politics.³⁵ Grenada was a case when the American decision makers consulted very late with the British leaders and did not take into account their arguments. After the military action the American leaders wanted to improve the relations with Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany.

On the other hand Margaret Thatcher showed the way of the British foreign policy related to the United States: "We must never again find ourselves on the opposite side to the United States in a major international crisis affecting Britain's interests"³⁶ (the prime minister was referring to the Suez crisis). In 1981 Margaret Thatcher talked about an Atlantic partnership to promote stability, to prevent aggression and to oppose tyranny. In 1985, at Washington, referring to the relation with the United States, she declared: "We see so many things in the same way and you can speak of a real meeting of minds. I feel no inhibitions about describing the relationship as very, very special".³⁷

There was also a very good military collaboration between the United States and Great Britain. This is showed by sale by the Americans of Trident C-5 missiles at a much better price than during the Carter administration and by the war in Falklands when the United States offered Great Britain (temporary) the Ascension base, and provided the British with air-air missiles, fuel, gun, ammunition and intelligence.³⁸ On the other hand after the British troops arrived in Falklands, Ronald Reagan tried to mediate the conflict in order not to jeopardize the geopolitical balance from South America. Margaret Thatcher refused the offer of the American president and Great Britain followed its interest of reestablishing the British sovereignty in the islands.³⁹ In this case and in other that we are going to present and analyze, Great Britain defended its interests even in front of the United States.⁴⁰

In the '80s the leaders of Great Britain observed the vulnerabilities of the Communist Block. They wanted a reorientation of the countries from Eastern

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (Harper Collins, 1995), p. 88, *apud* Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 53, note 7.

³⁷ Financial Times, 23 March 1985 *apud* Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 53 note 8.

³⁸ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, pp. 54-55 and Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Memcon, 8 April 1982, Archive (US State Dept), Falklands: USE London to State Dept ("Secretary's Meeting with Prime Minister Thatcher April 8: Falkland Islands crisis") [MT: "impossible to be neutral in the face of unprovoked aggression"] [declassified 2009], <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/114333>, accessed on the 23rd April 2012, 10.44 a.m. pp. 2-3.

³⁹ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 55 and Claire Berlinski, *Why Margaret Thatcher Matters, There Is No Alternative*, Basic Books, New York, 2008, p. 176.

⁴⁰ See the dialog between Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock in Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p. 278.

Europe towards the democratic values and the free market and economy values. In this sense Great Britain helped Poland with 86 millions of dollars⁴¹ along with United States which helped Poland with 758 millions of dollars.⁴² In the same register we can place the visit of Margaret Thatcher in Hungary in 1985. In 1984 in a speech draft for Margaret Thatcher, George Urban noticed that “The Soviets notion of peaceful coexistence incorporates the notion of warlike coexistence”.⁴³ The countries from Eastern Europe are the allies of Great Britain because they are encircling the Soviet Union. The image war was continued with an intelligent policy of approach towards the East European States. In this sense we have the meeting between the two leaderships of Great Britain and Hungary.⁴⁴ In the speech draft related to the British “solidarity with the peaceful aspiration of the nations of Eastern Europe” it was shown that the satellites are distancing themselves from Moscow, communism is losing power, for the communist states the magnetism of Western Europe is increasing, different people from the Soviet Union wanted to assume national destinies and a democratic tendency was also felt in Russia.⁴⁵ The British leadership was aware of the weaknesses of the Communist Block and the possible centrifugal tendencies of East European Countries. We can place the economic relations of Great Britain with East European countries in the prestige politics defined by Hans Morgenthau. Through these relations the Western Block obtained prestige in front of the Communist Block. The following idea emerges: if British interests are present there can be economic or politic ties with states deficient in democracy.⁴⁶

The very good relationship between Great Britain and the United States was exemplified by the bombardment of Libya.⁴⁷ In the case of Libya there were consultations between the two states but the choice was difficult for Great Britain. Libya and Syria were behind some terrorist attempts (Frankfurt 1985, the capturing of a tourist ship, the killing of an American citizen of Jewish origin, terrorist attempts in Rome and Vienna, a British policeman killed by shots from the Diplomatic Mission of Libya).⁴⁸

Reagan stated that if American citizens were attacked by terrorist forces backed by Libya, the attacks would be regarded as made by the military forces of Libya and the answer would be accordingly. The president also announced the worsening of economic relations with Libya; the United States tried to impose an embargo on Libyan oil, without great success, European countries, including Great Britain, made business with Libya. In Libya there was an important British business community.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Memorandum, Reagan Library, 17 February 1981 Cold War: State Department Briefing for President Reagan (Essential Issues Papers), declassified 2006, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/111726>, accessed on the 22 of May 2012, 10.57 a.m., p. 5.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ George Urban, *cited work*, p. 65.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*. pp. 68-69.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p. 275.

⁴⁸ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

In March 1986 the United States Navy had made exercises in the Sirte Golf on the coast of Libya, the Libyan forces attacked the American Aviation forces, and the Americans responded by sinking two patrol vessels, and deteriorating an anti aerial battery. On the 5th of April a terrorist attempt in Berlin killed two people, including one American, and wounded 200 people including 50 Americans. The services established that Libya was responsible.

On 8 March Reagan asked Thatcher to use Great Britain as a base for the American Aviation which was going to bombard Libya. The base was not essential but it offered more safety and accuracy. The British policy makers were afraid of an Arab reaction (they were British hostages in Libya) and wanted a moderate answer. On the other hand, the American representatives declared that the United States would bombard Libya regardless of the position of Great Britain. The targets were the residences of Gaddafi and of the Libyan secret services and security forces.⁵⁰

In her memoirs, Margaret Thatcher showed that she wanted to support the United States (the most important guarantor of the security of Great Britain), but she did not want to break the international law. In January she condemned the military strikes which represented retaliations. The solution suggested by her advisers, Michael Havers the Attorney General, George Young, the Defense Secretary and Percy Cradock was to define the action as self defense under Article 51 of U.N. Charter. The British answer was that Great Britain supported the United States action but this had to be considered as self defense not as a retaliatory act. It was underlined that the action must affect only the institutions which had a role in the terrorist attempts.⁵¹

On 14 of April the United States attacked Libya. There are civilian victims, one American plane is shut down but Libya does not retaliate. This attack proved that the United States were acting in force against terrorism; the attack represented a deterrent act in the Middle East, but two British citizens were executed.⁵²

France and Spain did not allow the United States to fly over their territories and the Federal Republic of Germany criticized the action. We can notice that in spite of the Western Alliance and N.A.T.O., in this action the United States had only the support of Great Britain. Great Britain was an important actor for the U.S. but the British public opinion did not approve this action.⁵³ On the other hand in the United States there was a very positive reaction towards the position of Great Britain; the law of extradition was adopted for the I.R.A. terrorists and Great Britain gained more access and influence in the United States. We are dealing with “an active, assertive Administration, determined to use American power in response to terrorism and not to concerned with the niceties of international law; a more cautious British partner, ideally preferring a less exposed position, but firm on the primacy of the US connection.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 73-74.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 75.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 75-76.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 76.

The British support for another American-British action could not be taken for granted. If Syria was to be attacked there would have been problems with the public perception. In this sense the British policy makers decided to send to Washington Percy Cradock and the Permanent under Secretary of the Foreign Office in order to keep Great Britain informed in good time. The United States did not want to make another attack and were ready to accept the non military European measures regarding terrorism.⁵⁵

We can notice that Great Britain was very important for the United States, being the only Western Europe country that supported the United States in the bombing against Libya. The action was very important because it eliminated the tense situation in the Middle East and it stopped the terrorist attacks.

Within the East-West confrontation, Great Britain participated in a direct and powerful manner to the image battle. George Urban noted that there was a real battle between symbols and ideas.⁵⁶ The speech of Margaret Thatcher held on 29 September 1983 against the Soviet Union strengthened even more the image war. In this sense a BBC correspondent noticed that: "In Toronto and last night here (Washington), she (Margaret Thatcher) seemed to be embarked on some kind of an anticommunist crusade, using deliberately Churchillian rhetoric".⁵⁷

Ronald Reagan made the following considerations about Margaret Thatcher: "World affairs today demand the boldness and integrity of a Churchill. In his absence, I know he would want us to look to you as the legendary Britannia, a special lady, the greatest defender of the realm". The Times stated that "Thatcher delivers blistering attack on Soviet tyranny", The Guardian "Thatcher fuels the cold war of words".⁵⁸ Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan are starting an image war against communism. The constructivist theory can be applied in order to investigate the foreign policy of Margaret Thatcher. The ideas, the perceptions of the British leadership about the Soviet Union were submitted to the people. If we take into account the famous phrase of Alexander Wendt "Anarchy is what states make of it"⁵⁹ we can notice that the West was responding to the Soviet Union's confrontational attitude with a similar one. Margaret Thatcher considered that between the West and the Socialist Block are different conceptions and mentalities. Margaret Thatcher underlined in a speech held at Washington the danger of projecting the Eastern morality upon the West. The British prime minister believed that they were many people in the West who were not aware of the "Soviet danger,... of the real motivations of the Soviet leaders, and of the character of the Soviet man".⁶⁰ Through her speeches she implemented the idea that the Soviet Union was not only a rival power but a dangerous state which

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ George Urban, *cited work*, p. 38.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 51-52.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁹ Alexander Wendt "Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics" in *International Organization*, 1992, 2012, 46, pp. 391-425 *apud* Alexander Wendt, *Teoria Socială a Politicii Internaționale*, Polirom, Jassy, 2011, p. 37 note 20.

⁶⁰ George Urban, *cited work*, p. 57.

failed at the economic and human level.⁶¹ The British prime minister was aware of the Western World responsibility, as a free world, towards the entire world. Even within the meetings with Gorbachev she was criticizing the communist system.⁶²

There were critics from the Labor Party; its leaders considered that Great Britain should have offered advices not passionate speeches (Michael Foot). Also there were some critics within the Conservative Party; Enoch Powell considered that the American vision about the Soviet Union as a hostile and expansionist power was self sustaining and wrong. Lord Gladwyn considered that arms limitation and control are the only ways through which the danger could be reduced; the passionate speeches against the Soviet Union could not help the negotiations.⁶³

David Watt considered that the analogy with the conciliatory policy from the '30s is wrong. This fact was contradicting the opinion of the former Carter administration whose adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski defined the character of the Soviet Union as being expansionist.⁶⁴

Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were sharing the common belief in free initiative, the need to broadcast the message about the free market and a passionate opposition to communism.⁶⁵ They became close friends. Reagan saw in Margaret Thatcher an ally towards the Washington bureaucracy and Margaret Thatcher renounced to try to influence Reagan in order to balance the American budget and reached the conclusion that the Strategic Defense Initiative must be accepted by Great Britain because the United States would have implemented any way and it would have become an important part of international relations.⁶⁶ The solidarity with the United States, the defense through N.A.T.O. represented the basics of the foreign British policy.

A very important moment of the British-American relations was given by the gas pipeline between Siberia and the German Federal Republic. The American interest, as the documents are showing, was that the Soviet Union should not become one of the main energy suppliers for Western Europe. There would have been a dangerous dependency from a geostrategic point of view and on the other hand the Soviets would have received a large sum of money which could have financed their defense industry. Great Britain, which had a direct interest in this project (was participating through a private firm) did not agree to stop it. The British leaders sustained that the extra territorial principle must not be broken. In the end the United States renounced in trying to stop the project. We can observe that Great Britain defended its interests in this case even if the United

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

⁶² Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p. 300.

⁶³ George Urban, *cited work*, p. 60.

⁶⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Carter Library: Brzezinski Donated Box 42, March 1980, Cold War, Brzezinski Weekly Report to Carter ("fundamental disagreement within the Administration over Afghanistan", declassified 1998), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110910> accessed on 16 February 2012, 10.30 a.m., pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 54.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

States were its most important ally. Furthermore, in spite of the European Economic Community budgetary problem, Great Britain adopted the same position as its European allies.

In the opinion of Percy Cradock, sustained by documents, the imposition of the martial law in Poland determined the Americans to forbid the sail licenses for oil and gas equipment to the Soviet Union. The real target was the gas pipeline project between Siberia and the German Federal Republic realized through the Schmidt-Brezhnev agreement in November 1981. The United States opposed the agreement because it did not want a West Germany dependent on Soviet gas. They found a pretext in the Polonaise crisis. Firstly the measure was applied to the American companies, and afterward to branches and foreign companies.⁶⁷

Margaret Thatcher opposed the American because of the principle (extraterritoriality) and because a Scottish company had a contract for this pipeline. At Washington she avoided having a direct conversation with the president, but talked with his advisers, and in Parliament condemned the American action by stating that "I feel I have been particularly wounded by a friend". In November 1982 Reagan renounces the sanction in exchange for an agreement within N.A.T.O. regarding a more restrictive economic approach towards the Soviet Union.⁶⁸

In a document of the National Security Council of the United States it was showed that the United States tried unsuccessfully to determine the German Federal Republic to renounce the project which would have meant a 20 billion gain for the Soviet Union.⁶⁹ In the same document it was showed that Western Europe was dependent of energy imports which constituted a grave strategic problem.⁷⁰ Ronald Reagan had a tough position related to the commercial ties between the Western Block and the Soviet Union.⁷¹

Another American document showed that the American decision makers thought that the U.S. must oppose the pipeline which would have offered an advantage to the Soviet Union related to Western Europe and would have increased the defense spending of the United States. It was showed that the United States had to oppose the manipulation of the Western European markets, and to the acquisition by the Soviet Union of technology and foreign currency.⁷² This could be done through leadership, incentives and arguments. The technology exports to the Soviet Union had to be controlled, especially those regarding the exploitation of oil and natural gas.⁷³

Margaret Thatcher and the British leadership did not approve stopping the Western exported technology in order to build the pipeline. We can notice that

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Reagan Library, 6 July 1981, Cold War: National Security Council Minutes (declassified 2004) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110932>, accessed on 22 May 2012, 11.46 a.m., pp. 7-8.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Memorandum, Reagan Library, 8 July 1981, Cold War: Weinberger Paper (US Policy on the West Siberian Pipeline) (declassified 2004), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110933>, accessed on 22 May 2012, 12.10 p.m., p. 1.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

Great Britain did not follow the United States policy in this case. Furthermore, in 1982, Reagan is going to accept the realization of the pipeline between Siberia and the German Federal Republic.

In the opinion of the American leadership there had to be tighter control of the technology export to the Soviets for the exploitation of oil and natural gas. In this sense the Western European could be offered access to the Uranium American resources and the United States could invest in the Western European energy industry and infrastructure.⁷⁴

The alternative to the Soviet resources were the use of oil from the North Sea, the efficiency of the use of coal, the development of nuclear energy and the use of the American private sector.⁷⁵ Even from the start of the '80s there was the problem of Western Europe dependency of Soviet oil and natural gas. The Americans wanted to stop the American technologic export towards the Soviet Union. The solutions were diplomatic pressures (the President could ask a six months moratorium regarding the gas pipeline). The collaboration with Japan and Great Britain was the key of "derailing the project" in terms of the technological control. France, the German Federal Republic and Italy were holding up the project because of security issues. In this talk it was shown that in the German Federal Republic dominated by Ostpolitik there were pressures from the left for promoting the project and in France there was sensitivity in responding the United States pressures. There had to be found alternative resources of energy, the gas pipeline was considered a security threat by the United States. Without American, Japanese and British equipment the project would have been behind the schedule with three or four years. In this sense the American leaders were talking about possible pressures against the Japanese Komatsu firm.

The participation of Great Britain to the project was essential because Great Britain was supplying compressors. At the same time the American leaders considered that there was an ideological compatibility between the two countries (U.S. and Great Britain) and that Great Britain would have small financial losses if all the countries gave up on the project.⁷⁶ The German Federal Republic could not continue all by itself with the project but it was dependent on Soviet exports. On the other hand France was more sensitive to the negative strategic aspects. According to the Defense Intelligence Agency, in 1984 the Soviet Union would have gained 10 billion dollars from selling natural gas.⁷⁷

As a result of the energy connection with the Western Europe, the Soviet Union would have obtained a financial, political and military advantage.⁷⁸ Haig, the American State Secretary pointed out the possible separation of the allies if the United States were to follow a very strong policy giving as an example the confrontation between the U.S. and the German Federal Republic regarding the

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 8 July 1981, Archive, Memorandum, Reagan Library, Cold War: Haig Paper ("Control on Exports to the Soviet Union") (declassified 2004), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110934> accessed on 23 of May, 2012, 9.26 a.m., p. 1.

selling of German nuclear equipment to Brazil.⁷⁹ The American leadership was aware that the energy problem was more serious in Western Europe than in the United States. One solution was increasing the American export in oil and natural gas and to pressure Holland and Norway to increase their own export in natural gas.⁸⁰

Great Britain defended its interests by not accepting the technological sanctions regarding the Soviet Union (those connected with the exploitation of natural gas and oil).⁸¹ The American leadership was seeking a solution for restricting the technology export towards the Soviet Union.⁸² In the opinion of the C.I.A. the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls was the best way for the U.S. to control the exports towards the Soviet Union.⁸³ The United States took into account stopping or diminishing the steel export, pulling out the American troops from the German Federal Republic, the reduction of military technology export to Great Britain and Japan.⁸⁴ In the opinion of the American decision makers Great Britain was losing very little because it did not depend on imports of natural gas. At the same time if the U.S. stopped the technology exports, the British firm Rolls Royce would have taken its orders.⁸⁵ In the same document it was shown that the United States must not distance itself from the European allies.

In this case, Great Britain and the European allies adopted a firm position which determined the United States to give up trying to stop the project. Great Britain followed and implemented its own interests, an interest opposing the immediate interest of the United States.

In the relation with Eastern Europe, Great Britain wanted the solidarity of the Western World. The British decision makers wanted an Eastern Europe open to reforms (Poland, Hungary). On the other hand when the American president, Ronald Reagan launched the "Strategic Defense Initiative", Great Britain pointed out the problem of defending Western Europe. The Soviet advantage in conventional and chemical weapons could be counteracted only through the presence of American nuclear arms.⁸⁶ In 1985, Reagan talked in front of the National Security Council about the possibility of the total reduction of nuclear weapons.⁸⁷ The

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 3-4.

⁸¹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Memo, Reagan Library, 31 July 1981, Cold War: Richard Allen Memo for President Reagan, ("Britain Drifts") (declassified 2000), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110522>, accessed on 23 of May 2012, 9.46 a.m., p. 6.

⁸² Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Minutes, Reagan Library, 16 October 1981, Cold War: National Security Council Minutes ("Siberia gas pipeline") (declassified 2004), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110939>, accessed on 23 May, 10.41 a.m., pp. 8-10.

⁸³ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, Archive, Memorandum, Reagan Library, 27 October 1981, Cold War: CIA paper for NSC ("Possible Allied Response to US strategy on the pipeline) (declassified 2004) <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110993>, accessed on 23 May 2012, 11.58 a.m., p. 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Thatcher, *The Downing Street years*, p. 472, *apud* Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p. 293, note 38.

⁸⁷ Max M. Kapelman, "Bombs Away", in *New York Times*, 24 aprilie 2006 *apud* Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p. 289, note 35.

total reduction of nuclear weapons was avoided at Reykjavik because of the Soviet refusal to accept the Strategic Defense Initiative.⁸⁸

Regarding the East European revolutions, Margaret Thatcher was at first against a rapid reunification of Germany (unlike her advisers and the Foreign Office functionaries).⁸⁹ But the collapse of communism represented a success of the western policies and of the foreign policy of Great Britain during Margaret Thatcher.

Margaret Thatcher and the British decision makers were worried about the technological problem and about the problem of insecurity of Western Europe, about what might happen if only the United States were defended.⁹⁰ The Mutual Assured Destruction and the offensive strategy maintained the peace and if the United States were to apply the Strategic Defense Initiative, the Soviet Union could start its own strategic initiative. If this was to happen the entire deterrent capacities of France and Great Britain were under question. In the opinion of Margaret Thatcher Great Britain had to take and this American project and to adapt it to the interests of Great Britain and Europe. Margaret Thatcher considered that the economic burden of this contest was very important for defeating the Soviet Union. The British prime minister was clearly for defending Europe against the Soviet Union with nuclear American weapons.⁹¹

Within the talks with the American president a compromise solution was reached. The Strategic Defense Initiative was accepted but there was a clear delimitation between research, testing, and the use of it. The negotiation and deterrence remained the base of the East West relations. The Strategic Defense Initiative was considered mainly a research program. These negotiations marked a victory for the British diplomacy materialized through a common statement.⁹² At Camp David, in a meeting Margaret Thatcher defended her point of view regarding the Mutual Assured Destruction and the Strategic Defense Initiative. The British prime minister considered that the Mutual Assured Destruction has assured the peace till then and the Strategic Defense Initiative could determine the Soviets to spend more on attack capabilities or even to implement a preemptive strike.⁹³

Conclusions

During the '80s in the relation with the United States, Great Britain proved to be an important geostrategic player.

Great Britain defended its interests related to the gas pipeline between Siberia and the German Federal Republic. It played an active if not essential role in the

⁸⁸ Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p.292.

⁸⁹ George R. Urban, *cited work*, pp.81-83, 99-100, 116-117, 124, 129, and Margaret Thatcher Foundation, National Security Archive, Archive, Memcom, September 1989, Cold War: Margaret Thatcher conversation with Gorbachev (Extract from Soviet Memcom in Gorbachev Archive) (Britain and Western Europe are not interested in the unification of Germany), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/112005>, accessed on 28 May, 13.34 p.m.

⁹⁰ Percy Cradock, *cited work*, pp. 63-64.

⁹¹ 29 October, 1983, House of Commons PQs, Hansard HC (10/985-90) in Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, p. 277.

⁹² Percy Cradock, *cited work*, p. 65.

⁹³ Thatcher-Reagan meeting at Camp David, 22 December, 1984, record of conversation, European and Soviet Affairs Directorate, National Security Council, Folder "Thatcher Visit-Dec." 1984 (1), Box 90902, Reagan Library, *apud* Claire Berlinski, *cited work*, pp. 286-287, note 30.

image battle against the Soviet Union. At the same time it participated essentially at improving the relations with Eastern Europe. Great Britain was the only Western European country which supported the bombing of Libya by the United States. Furthermore Margaret Thatcher convinced Ronald Reagan to put the Strategic Defense Initiative within the research programs and maintained the military equilibrium between East and West. At the same time the limits of the British influence over the United States were felt in the case of Grenada when the British leaders were informed late about the American invasion.

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