

A N G L A I S

L V I

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ANGLAIS - LVI

The fourth pillar sways

Donald Trump's presidency will force Britain to grow up about the "special relationship"

"MARGARET THATCHER here." "If I were there, Margaret, I'd throw my hat in the door before I came in," replied Ronald Reagan. It was October 26th 1983. The United States had just entered Grenada, a Commonwealth island-state in the Caribbean. The prime minister had opposed any action, but just woken to the news that American marines had invaded while London slept. In the now-public transcript of the ensuing call, the brutal architecture of what Britons like to call the "special relationship" is laid bare, Reagan's polite superiority crackling and sparking on the phone line like a faraway thunder storm.

For America, the alliance has long rested on three pillars. One: the historical links and shared values between the two countries. Two: the chemistry between their political and cultural elites. Three: the case-by-case alignment of their interests. All of which puts Britain in an inner circle of American allies, along with Canada, Israel, Germany, Japan and Australia.

For some excitable politicians in London, however, that is not enough. For them, a fourth pillar exists: a common foreign-policy doctrine evolving in lockstep; a bubbling elixir of mutual admiration. This odd blend of chest-puffing arrogance and simpering insecurity is writ large in talk of Britain being "Greece to America's Rome" (as a few old fossils still put it) [...]. The belief in this fourth pillar waxes and wanes, but is always present.

It was there in Thatcher's disappointment during her call with Reagan in 1983, in Tony Blair's confidence in his ability to shape the Bush administration's response to the September 11th attacks, in Gordon Brown's humiliating dash through the basement kitchens of the UN in 2009 to buttonhole Barack Obama about the financial crisis. Yet every time the fourth pillar has crumbled before their eyes, British high-level officials have reacted with fresh shock. They did so when Bill Clinton granted a visa to Gerry Adams (a militant Irish Republican) in 1994, when George W. Bush ignored Mr Blair's entreaties about Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 2006 and when Mr Obama upbraided David Cameron about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico during a visit to Washington in 2013.

Donald Trump's election has exemplified this inability to learn lessons. Britain's press responded with a symphony of British exceptionalism: Mr Trump would be sympathetic; Britain might even join NAFTA; the Trump administration would stand behind it in the coming Brexit talks. In a speech on November 14th Theresa May drew flattering comparisons between Britain's vote to leave the EU and America's election shock (both, she deduced, corroborated her argument that globalisation needs saving from itself).

[...] Soon, reality will dawn. For it seems that the Trump era will be dominated by brute national interests. And it is far from clear why that should mean America doing a trade deal with Britain ahead of other countries, why the incoming administration might rein in its otherwise protectionist impulses to help Britain forge other trade agreements, why a White House led by Mr Trump would help London apply pressure on the continental Europeans, or what leverage Mrs May has to curb Mr Trump's pro-Russian instincts. Or why—when the incoming president has long railed against Europeans freeloading on his country's armed forces—the transatlantic partnership can satisfactorily substitute for Britain's nascent defence partnerships in the EU. All of which could shove Britain back into the arms of continental Europe. An impetuous, inward-focused Washington only makes Britain's allies in Berlin, Brussels and Paris more important [...].

To be sure, Britain needs to do what it can to build links with the next White House. Britain's military and intelligence complexes remain integrated with America's. Pillar One of the alliance still matters—and is in jeopardy, Mr Trump having questioned the rules-based, institutional world order that has bound the two countries and their allies together for decades. So does Pillar Two: Mrs May, Mr Johnson and their advisers have all been rude about the president-elect and must now patch up the relationship. But the basic truth remains. Mr Trump will probably be an unabashed Pillar Three president, enraptured by the national interest and unmoved by transnational affinities. His presidency will thus expose Pillar Four as the sentimental chimera it has always been. If the next years do not teach Britons about the mercurial reality of the special relationship, it is hard to imagine what will.

ORAL CONCOURS 2017

ANGLAIS - LVI

Husbands Are Deadlier Than Terrorists

With the President Trump Reality Show, it's easy to be distracted by ANGRY ALL-CAPITAL TWEETS or Oval Office tantrums. But resist, and stay focused on matters of life and death. Consider two critical issues: refugees and guns.

Trump is going berserk over the former, but wants to ease rules on the latter. So let's look at the relative risks. In the four decades between 1975 and 2015, terrorists born in the seven nations in Trump's travel ban killed zero people in America, according to the Cato Institute. Zero. In that same period, guns claimed 1.34 million lives in America, including murders, suicides and accidents. That's about as many people as live in Boston and Seattle combined. It's also roughly as many Americans as died in all the wars in American history since the American Revolution, depending on the estimate used for Civil War dead.

It's true that Muslim Americans — both born in the United States and immigrants from countries other than those subject to Trump's restrictions — have carried out deadly terrorism in America. There have been 123 such murders since the 9/11 attacks — and 230,000 other murders. Last year Americans were less likely to be killed *by* Muslim terrorists than *for* being Muslim, according to Charles Kurzman of the University of North Carolina. The former is a risk of approximately one in six million; the latter, one in one million. The bottom line is that most years in the U.S., ladders kill far more Americans than Muslim terrorists do. Same with bathtubs. Ditto for stairs. And lightning.

Above all, fear spouses: Husbands are incomparably more deadly in America than jihadist terrorists. And husbands are so deadly in part because in America they have ready access to firearms, even when they have a history of violence. In other countries, brutish husbands put wives in hospitals; in America, they put them in graves.

Yet Trump is raging about a risk from refugees that seems manageable, even as he talks about relaxing rules on another threat, guns, that is infinitely more lethal. "I will get rid of gun-free zones on schools," Trump said last year. "My first day, it gets signed, O.K., my first day." [...]

The House of Representatives this month voted to end a restriction on people with severe psychiatric disorders buying guns. Likewise, there is a strong push in Congress — backed by Donald Trump Jr., the president's son — to end longstanding curbs on the purchase of silencers. The younger Trump and other advocates say that silencers would reduce the danger of hearing loss from gunfire. "It's about hearing protection," Donald Jr. explained in a video for SilencerCo, a Utah company that makes silencers. "It's a health issue, frankly." He expressed admiration for silencer technology and frustration that "I don't get to use it in the People's Republic of New York."

The truth is that we don't have much evidence on the impact of silencers (partly because the gun lobby tries to block research on gun safety). But the sale of silencers has been restricted nationally since the 1930s because of fears that they help criminals avoid attention after shootings, and the National Rifle Association's battle for them seems to be rooted in its broader campaign to eviscerate gun laws.

The evidence does suggest that if we really want to make Americans safer, then we should require universal background checks before gun purchases (22 percent of guns are purchased without background checks). We should work hard to get guns out of the hands of people subject to domestic violence restraining orders, or people with recent histories of crime or alcohol or drug abuse. We should also require trigger locks or safe storage of guns, especially in houses with young children. We should crack down on gun trafficking and fake identity purchases.

So let's not be diverted by shiny things and furious tweets. With his travel ban, Trump is peddling an ineffective policy that is morally repugnant, even as he marches toward a looser policy on guns likely to result in more school shootings, more shattered families and more lives lost. Those graves will last long after Trump's tweets are gone. [...]

ORAL CONCOURS 2017

ANGLAIS - LVI

Back From Afghanistan, and Straight to the Greenhouse

Mark Benoit, who grows hydroponic* produce, talks about his rapid, unexpected transition from being a soldier to being a farmer.

[...] Mark Benoit is the head grower at BrightFarms Capitol Greenhouse in Elkwood, Virginia, where he oversees, year-round, 200,000 square feet of greenhouses. For *The Atlantic's* series of interviews with American workers, I spoke with Benoit, who served in Afghanistan, about how he got into agriculture, what he likes about working with greenhouses, and how the transition from the army has changed him. [...]

Lam: How did you get into growing hydroponic plants?

Benoit: My story is rather unique. I got into this industry after my last stint in Afghanistan. I was over there for three years, as both a soldier in the Army and a private contractor. On my last day in Afghanistan, I was on the top of this mountainside with a bunch of my Afghan counterparts and we were digging a machine-gun pit.

I remember it being really hot. I was in full battle rattle: You have all your kit on—your pack, your rifle, everything, and so I was just sweating like there was no tomorrow. I pulled down my binoculars while we were digging, and I saw this guy with a pitchfork digging. I thought, "This is not good," because normally when you see guys digging over there, they're putting roadside bombs down. I was watching him, and he was just digging an irrigation ditch. He walked over and moved this clump of clay and water ran down all his fields and I thought, "Wow." I'm up here digging with a pickaxe, and this guy is down there [with] a nice cool breeze, watering his crops, just having a great day. I thought that was something I could get into. And so I did. I was at the end of my contract and I told my company, "Listen, I'm burnt out. I'm done with this. I've been here three years." I flew on a helicopter from Kabul to Dubai and then to JFK. I took the train to Rensselaer Station in Albany, New York, where my mother lives, and I drove to SUNY Cobleskill and attended school the next day for agriculture.

It was so time-consuming because I randomly picked agriculture, and I knew nothing about it. I went to a school with kids that were going to go inherit million-dollar dairies, and I didn't know the difference between a sow and a pig, or a steer and a heifer. It was a little embarrassing and intimidating at first, but coming right out of the combat zone, it kept me so engaged. I had to go and relearn so much stuff that I just had forgotten from high school. I came out of there with a degree in agriculture that was just heavily focused in greenhouse production, plant science, and hydroponics. I loved it. "You go from destroying things for a living to creating things, and I thought that seemed really peaceful."

Lam: What do you like about it?

Benoit: I liked the challenge it presented me, because it was something to keep me occupied. A lot of guys have problems coming home from war, and I almost didn't have time to think about any of that stuff because I was trying to figure out all the phases of photosynthesis. I'd say it's the polar opposite of what I devoted my whole life to as a soldier who was deployed overseas. You go from destroying things for a living to creating things, and I thought that seemed really peaceful. I was very comfortable with myself in what I was doing. [...]

Lam: You were saying you went from a career of destroying things to a career of creating things. How does that transition and having this job now relate to your personal identity?

Benoit: It definitely brought a complete shift in personal values as an individual. [...] It has changed who I am as a person. It's definitely made me a lot more patient. Nothing in agriculture happens in a split second; you have to really wait for your results. That just translates to how I deal with people on a day-to-day basis.

I was fortunate enough to get my degree paid for by the military, and then after college find a job that is 100 percent related to my degree. You're not that person that feels like they're at a dead-end job, because they're not doing what they're passionate about. It gives me an immense sense of purpose. Everyday, I come to work and I'm a guy that loves what he does and it makes me feel like a really important part of the division of labor here in the U.S. It's a super important role that's never really talked about too much. I've never felt this way about anything else I've done outside of the service.

*Hydroponics : the growing of plants in nutrient solutions with or without an inert medium (such as soil) to provide mechanical support

ORAL CONCOURS 2017

ANGLAIS - LVI

100 Women 2016: The women challenging sexism in e-sports

Very few women enter the world of professional gaming, and those that do often face harassment and a huge gender pay gap. Two of the top female gamers talk to the BBC about how they are fighting discrimination and encouraging other women to play.

On Monday the e-sports industry awards take place in London to applaud the top players in the business but not one female player has been nominated.

Competitive gaming, also known as Electronic Sports or e-sports, is growing at an incredible pace. In 2016, revenues from e-sports are predicted by professional services firm Deloitte to rise by 25% to \$500m (£406m). Its regular global audience will likely top 150 million people. Unlike in traditional sport, physical advantages in e-sports are non-existent yet the most popular games are still overwhelmingly played by men. Recent research by the Pew Center shows men and women are equally likely to say they play video games but men are twice as likely to consider themselves "gamers". It is when gaming becomes competitive that the number of women playing drops dramatically.

Steph Harvey is one of the most successful gamers in the world. She says that the number of women in e-sports is as low as 5% and the main reason is the stereotype attached to gamers. "It's still a 'boy's club' so as a woman you're automatically judged for being different," she says. Online abuse has been prevalent in the gaming community for years. Notably, in 2014 and 2015, it played a major role in the so-called Gamergate controversy, when people on both sides of the furor complained of harassment. Steph has even received online rape threats in the past: "The way I get harassed is about what they would do to my body, about why I don't deserve to be there because I use my sexuality - it's all extremely graphic."

She has begun to feel despondent about the work she does for the gaming community and says she often thinks, "Why do I do this if my community hate me? Because I am a feminist, because I believe women have a place in gaming." Julia Kiran is the leader of Team Secret, which in October became the top female team in the world. She thinks this reflects a common attitude: "It's always felt that female teams are not a real scene. Male players see us as a side game that doesn't count."

One of the solutions has been the creation of female teams and female-only tournaments. For Steph, this was her way into e-sports: "I'm... proof that it helps because I saw women compete and thought I want to win this world cup. It's so much stronger to be inspired by someone you can relate to."

But female tournaments are not without controversy. Many players, including Julia, believe they reinforce gender divides. "It would be cool to see something that male and females are working together on," she says. Prize money offered in female tournaments highlights a big disparity in earnings between male and female players. The Paris e-sport World convention had a cash prize of \$75,000 in the mixed competition while the women-only competition had a cash prize of \$15,000. The earning for the top male player in e-sports amounts to over \$2,500,000 while the top female earnings are less than \$200,000. Ultimately, there is less money to be made from female teams, leading to fewer sponsors, and reduced coverage. Steph hopes that big companies support female tournaments and female players, "because in the end you need money to compete but ultimately the goal is that these female tournaments don't exist any more, because there's no need for it".

Twitch, the gaming streaming site owned by Amazon, is now working to tackle abuse on the site, and Steph has created her own solution. Missclicks is an organisation and stream, which promotes female role models in the gaming world.

The rarity of female gamers turning professional is also connected, Steph believes, to the history of games development which has seen the creation of games dominated by men and so despite e-sports not being physical "they focus on spacial awareness and reflexes, skills often stronger for men," Steph says. She wants to see more female developers creating the games, which will reflect women and inspiring more women to play: "We'll see mainstream gamers becoming more diverse and if I can inspire one person then it would have been worth it."

ORAL CONCOURS 2017

ANGLAIS - LVI

Is pain keeping American men out of the work force?

Once upon a time, nearly every man in America worked. In 1948, the labor-force participation rate was a staggering 96.7 percent among men in their prime working years. That statistic has been steadily declining ever since. Today, about 11.5 percent of men between the ages of 24-54 are neither employed nor looking for a job. Economists say that these people are "out of the labor force" -- and they don't figure into statistics like the unemployment rate.

This demographic trend has been the subject of much noise and consternation lately. Nicholas Eberstadt, a demographer at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, calls the development a "quiet catastrophe: the collapse, over two generations, of work for American men."

Eberstadt concedes that he can't pinpoint the precise causes, but he implies that the problem, at its root, emanates from some kind of moral or societal dysfunction. [...]

Princeton professor Alan Krueger, a former chief economist at the Department of Labor and former chairman of President Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, has taken a look at the same data -- but he came away with a different conclusion. What stood out to him is that a lot of these men say they are in considerable pain.

In a recently released draft of his paper, which he is to present at a Federal Reserve conference in Boston on Friday (Oct. 14), Krueger finds that 44 percent of male, prime-age labor force dropouts say they took pain medication the day prior -- which is more than twice the rate reported by employed men.

In a follow-up survey focusing on these male labor-force dropouts, Krueger found that these were serious habits. About two-thirds of the people taking pain medication were using prescription drugs, not over-the-counter remedies like Tylenol or aspirin. Compared to their employed counterparts, these men also reported more emotional pain -- more feelings of sadness, tiredness and stress. About 20 percent of these men say they have difficulty walking or climbing stairs; about 16 percent say they have memory or concentration problems; over a third say they have a disability of some kind, and nearly 18 percent say they have multiple disabilities. [...]

Declining health is becoming a major reason prime-age men are working less and less. The Bureau of Labor Statistics regularly asks people why they aren't in the labor force. Of the 11.5 percent of prime-age men who aren't employed or looking for a job, over half blame illness or disability. The rest are either retired, going to school, or performing housework.

In other words, fully 6 percent of American men between the ages of 25-54 feel that their minds or their bodies are too broken for them to work. This rate has nearly quadrupled since 1968, when only 1.6 percent of men felt the same way.

Women have seen the same increase in pain and disability. About 5.8 percent of prime-age women say they can't work because of health issues, up from 1.8 percent in 1968. But that trend has been somewhat obscured by the tremendous number of women who have joined the labor force in recent decades.

Others have also pointed out that America is suffering a pain epidemic. Last year, a widely-cited paper from Princeton economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton found that the death rate has been increasing for middle-aged whites in America. At least part of the problem is that opiate deaths have been increasing - but Case and Deaton also discovered that people are taking painkillers for good reason. The economists found that among whites aged 45-54, over a third report chronic joint pain while a fifth report say they have neck pain - and these rates have been going up in the past decade.

We still don't know why Americans are in so much pain, but it is clear that sickness and disability have become major obstacles for people who want to work, Krueger says. If we want to increase labor force participation, we will have to work harder at diagnosing and fixing these health problems. "We should look at interventions to help this group get back on their feet and become healthy enough and maintain their health long enough to start working again," he says.

The Obama administration has proposed other solutions to coax people back into the labor force - using tax credits or wage subsidies, for instance. These are worthy ideas, but they start from the assumption that these men mainly struggle with finding suitable work. As Krueger's research points out, many of them seem to struggle just to make it through the day.