

Hillary's Surprising Ties to Tony Blair

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Hillary Clinton and Tony Blair, the former prime minister of Britain, enjoyed a close personal relationship that allowed them to collude on a number of foreign policy issues behind the scenes.

Blair went from helping the former secretary of state make moves in the Middle East to joining former Clinton insiders at a well-connected consulting firm whose work has stoked concerns that the Clintons help their friends profit off their personal ties.

Additional details about Blair's relationship with Clinton have emerged in several batches of private emails that have been released by the State Department at the end of each month, including those published Wednesday.

Clinton's foreign policy partnership with Blair seems all the more unusual given Blair's past support of President George W. Bush and the invasion of Iraq, a war Clinton voted for in the Senate but has since criticized.

Many of the conversations between Blair and Clinton are [classified](#).

But unredacted emails paint a picture of a mutually beneficial relationship between the two former leaders.

"It's great having you on the team," Clinton wrote to Blair in September 2010.

Clinton evidently asked Blair to "go to Israel as part of our full court press on keeping the Middle East negotiations going," according to an [email](#) between the former secretary of state and Lynn Forester de Rothschild, a top Democratic donor.

"Just spent 3 hours with BB," Blair wrote to Clinton after his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "Ready to speak when convenient but should do it on secure line."

At the time, Blair served as the special envoy to the "Middle East Quartet," a diplomatic arrangement involving the U.S., the United Nations, the European Union and Russia that was established to assist in Israeli peace talks.

Blair was also heavily involved in Clinton's work on Libya in 2011, as the country faced an escalating civil war aimed at deposing its authoritarian regime.

Jake Sullivan, Clinton's former director of policy planning, flagged an article of concern to Clinton in Sept. 2011 that alleged, among other things, that Blair had met secretly with Moammar Gadhafi, ousted Libyan dictator.

The Israeli article reported Blair had nurtured a [friendship](#) with the authoritarian leader, even flying on Gadhafi's private jet.

Earlier emails indicate Blair and Gadhafi did indeed speak directly when the Libyan leader still held power. In Feb. 2011, a Blair aide sent Sullivan a [memo](#) marked "URGENT- PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL" that described a phone call between Blair and Gaddafi.

"Gadhafi asked Tony Blair several times to come to Libya to see for himself that there is no violence," Catherine Rimmer, the Blair aide, wrote to Sullivan. "Tony Blair said he didn't know if he could do that but again repeated that the important thing was for the violence to stop."

Blair also urged the dictator to find a "safe place" to hide amid rising tensions within the North African nation.

"If you have a safe place to go then you should go there, because this will not end peacefully unless that happens and there has to be a process of change," Blair warned Gaddafi, according to the email. "That process of change can be managed and we have to find a way of managing it."

Emails released in previous batches indicate Clinton was encouraged to lobby foreign leaders for Blair when he was angling to be the president of the European Council.

Sidney Blumenthal, Clinton's divisive confidante and informal advisor, sent Clinton updates about Blair's chances in the high-profile race in 2009. Blair ultimately did not secure the position.

Clinton forwarded one Blumenthal [memo](#) to Doug Band, an aide to her husband, and asked whether Bill Clinton had any ideas to help Blair.

Blair also reportedly asked Clinton to [lobby](#) Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, on his behalf in the fall of 2009.

Cherie Blair, the former prime minister's wife, apparently knew Clinton's private email address and spoke to her directly while she served as secretary of state.

For example, in June 2010, Cherie Blair asked Clinton to meet with the crown prince of Qatar in order to help the food security organization of which the prince was in charge. Clinton said she would be "happy to meet with him."

"As you know I have good links to the Qataris," Cherie Blair [wrote](#) to Clinton.

Cherie Blair noted that the prince had been appointed head of the Qatar National Food Security Programme, which has donated between \$25,000 and \$50,000 to the Clinton Foundation. She said her Qatari friend was "keen to talk more generally about U.S./Qatari cooperation."

Cherie Blair [followed up](#) in Jan. 2011, when Clinton was visiting Qatar, to remind her that the food security program was "looking to invest \$10 million into food security over the next few years."

Tony Blair joined forces with Band and others in the Clintons' [inner circle](#) to form Teneo Strategies in 2011, a consulting firm whose close ties to the former first couple have drawn scrutiny since its inception.

Most recently, Teneo has made headlines for employing Huma Abedin, Hillary Clinton's former deputy chief of staff, while she also worked for the State Department and the Clinton Foundation.

Bill Clinton was even on Teneo's payroll during its first months.

The firm managed to benefit from its close ties to State Department leadership, securing a [consulting contract](#) with the agency in June 2011.

The State Department severed its ties with Teneo eight months later, after MF Global, a client of the firm, [collapsed](#) and took millions of dollars in investors' funds with it.

The close friendship between Hillary Clinton and Tony Blair is one of several relationships exposed in greater detail by the Clinton emails. For her part, Hillary Clinton has embraced the steady drip of published emails as a way for people to catch a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the State Department's inner workings.

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