**OBAMA'S 'FRIENDLY' WARNING OF DANGERS OF BREXIT**

BY[**JOSH LOWE**](https://www.newsweek.com/authors/josh-lowe)ON 4/22/16 AT 3:18 AM EDT

US President [Barack Obama](https://www.newsweek.com/brexit-obama-intervention-eu-referendum-450510) has urged Britons to keep their “outsized” global influence and honour years of transatlantic co-operation by voting to remain in the EU.

In a strongly-worded column for the [Daily Telegraph](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/21/as-your-friend-let-me-tell-you-that-the-eu-makes-britain-even-gr/) newspaper, Obama acknowledged that the June 23 [EU membership referendum](https://www.newsweek.com/dominic-cummings-brexit-billions-450311) is a “matter for British voters,” but said he felt bound to recommend, with “the candour of a friend,” that Britons should vote to stay in the bloc.

Obama countered the anti-EU argument that Britain would gain influence and independence if it broke with Europe, writing that “the European Union doesn't moderate British influence—it magnifies it. A strong Europe is not a threat to Britain's global leadership; it enhances Britain's global leadership.”

“In today's world, even as we all cherish our sovereignty, the nations who wield their influence most effectively are the nations that do it through the collective action that today's challenges demand,” he said, adding that the European Union and Britain had both played a vital role in negotiating a historic [nuclear agreement with Iran](https://www.newsweek.com/ethical-trade-totalitarian-iran-bahai-447440) and the climate accord signed in Paris last year.

Obama also appealed to a shared history of war, writing that “the tens of thousands of Americans who rest in Europe's cemeteries are a silent testament to just how intertwined our prosperity and security truly are.”

“Together, the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union have turned centuries of war in Europe into decades of peace,” he wrote.

But London Mayor and leading Brexit campaigner Boris Johnson, writing in [The Sun](http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/7095695/UK-and-America-can-better-friends-than-ever-Mr-Obama-if-we-LEAVE-the-EU-says-Boris-Johnson.html), said voters shouldn't heed the president's advice. He said Obama would never lead his own country into an organisation like the EU: “much as I admire the United States, and much as I respect the President, I believe he must admit that his country would not dream of embroiling itself in anything of the kind,” he said.

Obama is in London today for his fifth visit to Britain. He will meet the Queen to wish her a happy 90th birthday before bilateral talks with Prime Minister David Cameron.