

Introduction

[Leaders](#) | Britain

Little England or Great Britain?

The country faces a choice between comfortable isolation and bracing openness. Go for openness



The Economist, Nov 7th 2013

To read the whole editorial you may go [THERE](#)

ASKED to name the European country with the most turbulent future, many would pick Greece or Italy, both struggling with economic collapse. A few might finger France, which has yet to come to terms with the failure of its statist model. Hardly anybody would plump for Britain, which has muddled through the crisis moderately well.

Yet Britain's place in the world is less certain than it has been for decades. In May 2014 its voters are likely to send to the European Parliament a posse from the UK Independence Party, which loathes Brussels. Then, in September, Scotland will vote on independence. In 2015 there will be a general election. And by the end of 2017—possibly earlier—there is due to be a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union.

Britain could emerge from all this smaller, more inward-looking and with less clout in the world (and, possibly, with its politics fractured). Or it could become more efficient, surer of its identity and its place in Europe and more outward-looking. Call them the Little England and Great Britain scenarios. (...)

The most straightforward way Britain could shrivel is through Scotland voting to leave the United Kingdom next September. At a stroke, the kingdom would become one-third smaller. Its influence in the world would be greatly reduced. A country that cannot hold itself together is scarcely in a position to lecture others on how to manage their affairs.

The referendum on the EU was promised last year by the prime minister, David Cameron, in a vain attempt to shut up the Little Englanders in the Tory party and ward off UKIP; Ed Miliband, Labour's leader, may well follow suit. If Britain left the EU, it would lose its power to shape the bloc that takes half its exports. And, since Britain has in the past used that power for good, pushing the EU in an open, expansive, free-trading direction, its loss would be Europe's too. To add to the carnage, the plebiscite could break up the Conservative Party—especially if Mr Cameron fails to get re-elected in 2015. (...)

Two useful links from the British Council

- Analysis - Investment in UK soft power falls as competition for global influence increases [HERE](#)
- Global Perceptions 2023 - [How 18 to 34 year olds see the UK and the world](#)

Text 1 - Has the UK now found its role in the world?

ALEC RUSSELL - *The Financial Times*, AUG 22 2025

In light of the blandishments offered to Vladimir Putin in Washington, it has become a commonplace for America's allies to hark back to the age of full-throttle US diplomacy.

5 Where, they ask, is the **Richard Holbrooke*** of 2025, who might be able to bludgeon Putin to give ground, in the way that 30 years ago the late bulldozer-envoy coerced Yugoslavia's leaders to sign a peace treaty? Or the latter-day **James Baker*** who might globe-trot and arm-twist until there
10 is a Middle East deal?

In truth, these legendary figures could be ruthless^o in riding roughshod^o over allies' feelings and interests. Some were openly caustic: Dean Acheson noted of post-1945 Britain that it had **"lost an empire but not yet found a role"**.
15 This notion of the UK casting around for a purpose has resonated again mightily since Brexit. Yet now, against the dire^o backdrop of the war in Ukraine — and partly because America is no longer charging around as it did in the days of Acheson and co — it is just possible a role is emerging for the
20 UK.

The last fortnight of statecraft^o over Ukraine has been marked by a back and forth of contradictory statements by Donald Trump that has been bewildering^o even by his extemporising standards. But amid it all, one certainty has
25 stood out: there is a new European steering committee, call it an "E3", of Germany, France and the UK. Sometimes they are joined by Italy and also Spain, and sometimes by Poland and/or Finland, depending on the issues at stake.

It is an informal arrangement that could implode in a
30 stroke on the results of the next French or British election. But it does link the continent's three largest economies and include its two nuclear powers, Britain and France. A kernel^o even of a joint tripartite European security arrangement for the future is coming into view. And yet just a year or so ago
35 the idea of Britain taking part in key European meetings was seen as risible.

For Britain this is of course a bumpy path^o to navigate. Its link with the US has been the pillar of its post-1945 diplomacy. That relationship is arguably now at its most
40 challenging since the start of the second world war when Winston Churchill had to woo Franklin Roosevelt to intervene. **The sycophancy^o displayed by Britain's prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, to Trump may grate^o but he — like other European leaders — has decided that to have
45 any chance of winning over this overtly imperial president requires a vassal deference.**

Too formal a rapprochement with the EU risks a steep^o penalty. Trump has, as it were, graced Britain with a blanket tariff of 10 per cent, lower than the 15 per cent he imposed on
50 the EU. He and his circle leave no doubt of

their disdain for the bloc. With Nigel Farage's Reform UK on the march in Britain's provinces, the governing Labour party is wary^o of even implicitly reopening the Brexit debate —
55 however much opinion polls suggest a majority of the population are now against the 2016 vote to leave the EU.

Britain's warming ties with China may yet occasion a Trumpian backlash depending on how his relationship with Beijing evolves. **But, for now, not having to choose
60 between the US and Europe is quite a result.** For a decade the arguments over Brexit and the chopping and changing of ministers at the Foreign Office have left British diplomats in limbo, if not despair. But with America retreating from many of its post-1945 roles on the world stage, there are
65 opportunities for Britain to play a positive part in helping to fill the vacuum, in say the Balkans, where it can have an impact.

Take Holbrooke's most successful arena, Bosnia. The US has moved from centre stage in the region's diplomacy to the
70 wings. In the last year British officials have stepped up^o to fill the gap^o. Three decades on from the end of Bosnia's awful war much is unresolved. Britain has been putting pressure on disruptive Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb politicians to fall into line. At a time when America is making clear that it's not
75 in the business of helping small nations with democracy, this matters.

There are limits. Britain is merely one of a dozen or more "middle powers" orbiting China and America. In the Middle East, it is reduced to being little more than an observer. There
80 is also, of course, no money to fund an activist Foreign Office. **The relentless demoralising message ambassadors hear from Whitehall is to focus on just one thing: how their work can shore up UK plc.** But even within these constraints, and as the UK's aid budget shrinks, there are
85 opportunities.

This is not just about engagement in fragile regions, important as that is, but also about flying the tattered multilateral flag. For now, America appears to have stepped back from global health, climate and science. Britain is
90 holding a summit on illicit finance next year. Could it also, for example, host a great conference on migration, a subject of consequence to the world?

In recent years America has tilted^o to blocs such as the Quad, a gathering of Australia, India, Japan and the US. Now
95 that force field is waning^o — just ask India — in favour of a top-down approach run as spokes from a hub^o. So there is an opening and a need for reinforced ties with like-minded^o states in east Asia, as well as shoring up^o relations with the powerhouses of the global south.

100 Values tend to be seen as a luxury. Britain has long liked the idea of managed decline. But with the domestic agenda and the economic outlook so bleak, why not be bold?

Part One- A UK – EU reset?

● House of Commons Library - Research Briefing

The UK–EU reset: Next steps after the May 2025 summit, Tuesday, 29 July, 2025

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10312/>

Text 2 - UK-EU post-Brexit reset: the key points

From defence to fishing access, the major changes agreed in trade talks

The Financial Times, May 19 2025

The EU and the UK have announced a deal to “reset” their relationship at a summit in London between UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen. Here are the key points:

Defence and security pact

- Six-monthly foreign and security “policy dialogues” between the UK foreign secretary and the EU’s high representative for foreign affairs, alongside regular invitations for the UK to join high-level meetings of the EU, including European Councils.
- An annual EU-UK dialogue on defence, and potential for the UK to participate in crisis management exercises under the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy.
- Deeper co-operation and information exchanges on space, cyber security and the so-called “shadow fleet” used to breach sanctions by Russia, Iran and others.
- Personnel training exchanges through the EU and UK’s respective defence colleges.
- Agreement that, subject to the UK signing a third country agreement, the UK can participate in a €150bn loans-for-arms fund backed by the bloc’s shared budget.

Fisheries agreement

- A 12-year deal to guarantee access for EU boats to UK waters from mid-2026, when a current agreement expires, to 2038.
- The agreement offers continued access for EU fishing boats to UK’s 6-12 mile coastal waters.
- Access will be based on the average tonnage caught between 2012-16 in each others 200-mile zone of Exclusive Economic Zone.

Veterinary agreement

- Agreement to work towards a deal that would mean the “vast majority” of agrifood exports to the EU happen without checks and certificates. The deal requires both sides to apply the “same rules”, meaning the UK would automatically follow EU rules on plant and animal products, referred to as “dynamic alignment”.
- The pact is covered by an independent arbitration mechanism to settle disputes, but the European Court of Justice remains the final arbiter of any points of EU law.
- The UK is to make an “appropriate financial contribution” to cover costs of implementing the deal.

Youth mobility, business mobility and touring artists

- The EU and the UK agree to “work towards” a youth experience scheme for 18 to 30-year-olds to travel and work more easily in each others’ countries.
- Scheme to be time-limited, have a dedicated visa path, and ensure that the overall number of participants is “acceptable to both sides”.
- Agreement to “work towards” the UK rejoining the EU’s Erasmus+ student exchange programme.
- The EU will “continue to support” touring artists working in the bloc, but the UK’s request for a special deal is not granted. Agreement to discuss easier business visas and mutual recognition of each others professional qualification regimes.
- EU says “no legal barriers” to UK citizens using e-gates at airport when the bloc’s entry/exit visa waiver scheme comes into force.

Energy trading and carbon border taxes

- EU commits to exploring UK participation in the EU’s internal energy market that was blocked by Brexit, with current energy trading arrangements continuing to apply in the meantime.

- The EU and UK agree to explore relinking their respective emissions trading schemes that were severed by Brexit. If this is done, the UK will be exempted from EU's carbon border tax that comes into force on January 1 2026, a year before the UK's own scheme a year later.
- EU will require "dynamic alignment" to EU rules as a condition of any relinking of energy markets. The UK will also make an unspecified financial contribution.

Security exchanges and border security

- A pledge to "swiftly" finalise arrangements for co-operation with Europol that were part of the original post-Brexit Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- Agree to "mutually beneficial" information exchanges on terrorism and other serious crimes, and to "deepen co-operation" on people smuggling and other areas of irregular migration.
- The EU agrees to "explore ways" to deepen co-operation and speedier exchanges of information databases of DNA, fingerprints and vehicle registration data.
- Pledge to "share best practices" on how to manage returns of irregular migrants to third countries.

■ A long but thorough explanation of the deal in [this VIDEO](#)

The EU Deal No one voted for: Is this Brexit in reverse? EconomyTalk, June 23 2025

Text 3 - The UK-EU deal is just a start

The Economist, 19 May 2025 (abridged)

Sir Keir Starmer chose the gilt-edged splendour of Lancaster House in central London to stage the first post-Brexit EU-UK summit on May 19th. He, Ursula von der Leyen (the European Commission's president) and António Costa (the European Council's president) duly talked up a historic "reset" of relations. In fact what was agreed were some relatively small changes to eliminate the worst trade frictions, plus a new defence deal. But this may presage the start of longer negotiations that in time may bring the two sides significantly closer together.

The defence-and-security agreement matters most, given the background of Russia's war in Ukraine and Donald Trump's demand that Europe must spend more on its own defence. Britain will now be able to take part in the EU's planned €150bn (\$169bn) defence fund (though it will have to pay its own fair share). Both sides have recognised that rebooting European defence without one of its strongest powers would not be sensible. The efforts by some countries to restrict such spending to EU members alone were seen off.

On trade, the main agreement was for Britain to align with most EU food standards. That will facilitate trade in food and fish products, exports of which have suffered since Brexit. It will also reduce border checks between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which was already subject to EU standards under the 2023 Windsor Framework negotiated by Rishi Sunak. As part of the deal, Sir Keir agreed to extend the current fisheries agreement for 12 years, to 2038. And the two sides are to link their carbon-adjustment mechanisms and aim for a joint electricity market.

The third component of the deal was to work towards a youth-mobility (or "youth-experience") agreement. This should make it easier for young people to move, study and work across borders. Britain is to explore how and when it might rejoin the Erasmus+ student-exchange programme. An agreement is to be made to co-operate in fighting organised crime through data-sharing and working through Europol, the EU's police agency. And in a gesture to please grumpy tourists, Britons are to be allowed to use border e-gates at most EU airports, reducing annoying queues at passport control. Like other parts of the deal, the details will take some months to negotiate: use of e-gates may not happen before the summer.

Critics from the Conservative Party and Reform UK, amplified by outrage in parts of the press, were quick to denounce the entire deal as a betrayal. The Daily Telegraph headlined its report "Kiss goodbye to Brexit". The biggest grumbles were about the fisheries deal, which was said to mean handing over Britain's fishing waters to French and other fishermen for more than a decade. There were also complaints about Britain choosing to align with EU rules when it has no say in how they are drawn up, thereby submitting itself to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. And the youth-experience agreement was attacked as merely presaging more immigration. The Tories vowed to reverse all these changes once back in power.

Yet this narrative of Brexit betrayal is absurd. Sir Keir has stuck firmly to his red lines of not joining the single market or customs union and not accepting free movement of people. Even after his "reset", this is what was once termed a hard (not a soft) Brexit. It is, for instance, harder than the Brexit deal that Theresa May tried vainly to get through Parliament in 2019. The betrayal story is also increasingly out of line with shifting public opinion. A clear

majority of voters now say that Brexit was a mistake, and an even bigger majority wants closer relations with the EU (this is true even of those who voted Reform in the last general election).

It is true that Sir Keir has conceded more than he may have wished on fisheries, prompting the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to talk of a "horror show". Yet there was never much chance of taking back full control of British waters, not least because British fishermen export most of what they catch to the EU. As for being a rule-taker subject to the European Court of Justice, that is the price that any country wishing to sell into the much larger EU market inevitably has to pay. After all, the EU takes over 40% of British exports, twice as much as America and 20 times as much as India (the two other countries with which Sir Keir has recently struck deals). And a limited youth-experience deal is a long way from the old system of free movement of people across Europe. [...]

Text 4 - Starmer's EU 'reset' risks pleasing no one

James Heale, The Spectator, 19 May 2025

Keir Starmer has just wrapped up his press conference with European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen. The Prime Minister sought to bang the drum for his EU reset, citing his three 'driving principles': more jobs, lower costs and enhanced border control. Starmer boasted that his deal ensures 'unprecedented access to the EU market, the best of any country outside of the EU or Efta', while ensuring Britain remains outside the single market and customs union, with no return to freedom of movement.

The text of today's agreement is still being scrutinised – yet the risk is it ends up pleasing neither Remainers nor Brexiteers. Both the UK and EU have agreed to 'work towards' a youth mobility scheme, but there is no detail on a cap or timeframe. Britons will be allowed to use e-gates in the EU but the language is caveated, suggesting they are only to be used 'where appropriate'. The much-vaunted defence pact agrees only to 'swiftly explore' UK access to the £150 billion EU rearmament fund. Both sides will work towards the UK rejoining the Erasmus scheme, enabling British students to study in the EU and vice versa.

There are three aspects of this deal that could provoke a significant political backlash. The first is the end of checks on agricultural exports from the UK, providing there is 'timely dynamic alignment' with EU rules and standards. Britain can 'contribute appropriately' to the formulation of rules and standards – but it has no right of veto. The second is on fishing: the EU will be given 'full, reciprocal access' to UK waters until June 2038 – a period three times longer than the four-year deal many commentators thought likely. The third is the emissions trading scheme, which risks handing the EU control over UK industrial policy.

The scepticism of the attendant press pack at Lancaster House was evident in the questions they asked. The Prime Minister was asked, variously, if he was 'backsliding on Brexit', 'selling out the fishing sector', enabling the 'worst of all words' and 'stitching up' the UK 'like a kipper'. A touch of irritation crept into Starmer's tone as he jibed that most of those criticising the deal 'came out against it' before even reading a word. He cited British supermarkets welcoming the deal, arguing it guaranteed business stability and lower prices.

The skirmish was a taste of what is to come later this week. There is much in the deal that we do not yet know. The food standards agreement requires an 'appropriate financial contribution': how much might that cost? Will British gene-edited crops be allowed under EU dynamic alignment? How many Europeans can come under the youth mobility scheme? Can the UK access the records of EU law enforcement agencies? Signing the deal is one thing; selling it is quite another.

Text 5 - Britain and Europe Are Changing Together

The New York Times, Jul 14, 2025 [Mark Leonard](#)

The nuclear pact recently signed by French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Kier Starmer reflects how an emerging post-liberal Europe is taking the form of a defense community. Britain can help shape the continent's new security order, so long as it banishes the Brexit mindset.

BERLIN – Many state visits are empty, symbolic acts that have little to no policy content or lasting significance. But every now and then, such a visit changes the shape of international relations. Could French President Emmanuel

Macron's recently concluded trip to London be one of them?

Macron's three-day trip, the first state visit to the United Kingdom by a European Union head of state since Brexit in 2020, had plenty of pomp and pageantry. But it also

10 focused on policy and politics, which reflects a profound shift in the UK's circumstances since leaving the EU.

During the upheaval of the Brexit psychodrama, there was little interest in constructive exchange, and the UK's relationship with Europe remained defined by its lurching
15 departure from the bloc. But nearly a decade on, Donald Trump is back in the White House and has launched a trade war on the world. Russian President Vladimir Putin has shredded the European security order. And Chinese President Xi Jinping has resorted to threats of economic
20 coercion – a striking reversal from the “golden era” of UK-China relations proclaimed in 2015.

Even more dramatic, perhaps, are the changes in the EU. The big policy initiatives launched during Macron's UK visit reflect the forces that are turning the bloc on its head.
25 First, the EU is moving from a peace project to a war union. For most of its existence, the EU sought peace through economic integration. But Putin's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 reoriented the bloc toward security – a goal that has taken on greater urgency since Trump cast
30 doubt on the United States' commitment to collective security on the continent.

There is broad support for this new orientation. According to a recent opinion poll conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations, many Europeans favor
35 increased defense spending, conscription, and the development of a European or national nuclear deterrent.

Against this backdrop, Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer took a bold first step toward establishing an independent nuclear deterrent with
40 the Northwood Declaration, in which they agreed that “there is no extreme threat to Europe that would not prompt a response by our two nations.”

A second major change is the development of “securonomics.” The EU economy is under pressure from
45 Trump's tariffs and China's export restrictions on magnets and critical minerals. EU policymakers now talk of de-risking, diversifying, and deepening the single market, rather than pursuing free-trade agreements. While the UK has made it clear that it will not rejoin the single market or
50 the customs union, the question is whether it can persuade the EU that it can be counted on to help the bloc achieve its new trade goals, or whether it will be given unfriendly treatment because it is seen as posing a risk to those objectives.

55 Domestic politics in Europe has also undergone a rapid transformation. It has been fascinating to watch Macron – once a poster boy for liberal universalism – reinvent himself as a champion of secure borders and

protectionism, while taking a tougher stance on crime.
60 This volte-face has seen mainstream European politicians shift focus toward defending national sovereignty – from Russia, China, Trump, and migration – while they try to contain populist parties such as Marine Le Pen's National Rally and Alternative für Deutschland. That is the
65 backdrop for the ground-breaking deal that Starmer and Macron signed on migration returns.

Starmer's approach to Europe is a marked improvement from that of former Conservative prime ministers Boris Johnson (who compared the EU to Napoleon and Hitler)
70 and Liz Truss (who questioned whether Macron was a friend or a foe). Starmer has proved himself, particularly with his deft diplomacy on Ukraine, to be a reliable partner and stakeholder, regaining the trust of EU institutions and member states. One senior German policymaker told me
75 how impressed he was by the UK filling the leadership vacuum created by Trump's disregard for Ukraine.

In other words, the UK is widely seen in Europe as being “part of the team” again. The EU-UK summit in May provided a clear framework for deepening the relationship,
80 not least through a Security and Defense Partnership that paves the way for British participation in European defense programs.

But the UK government has remained far too cautious in other areas. Most notably, Starmer has been careful not
85 to cross the Labour Party's self-imposed red lines: no freedom of movement, no customs union, and no single market. Future historians may well wonder why Starmer did not aim higher.

The changing international environment offers Starmer
90 a clear opportunity to redraw Europe's political map, which would establish him as one of Britain's most consequential leaders. But to do so, Starmer must convince British voters that today's Europe is a different creature from the one they imagine: a defense community that is
95 more focused on safeguarding the continent than on transcending the nation-state. And he must explain how the UK can help build this new European security order, so long as it banishes the Brexit mindset.

As a post-liberal Europe emerges, Britain must stop
100 clinging to the past and seize the chance to shape the continent's future in a way that advances its interests. That requires acknowledging that both the EU and the UK have entered a new era.

105 Mark Leonard, Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of *The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict* (Bantam Press, 2021).

See also

• VIDEO - UK-EU talks show 'genuine commitment' to deliver on youth mobility • FRANCE 24 English

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKM1KqSqMfE>

• “How Trump Is Bringing Europe Together Again” *The New York Times*, July 21, 2025

The European Union has its problems, but the bloc is gaining public trust and making new friends. President Trump's attacks are one reason why.

● **German and U.K. Leaders Sign Mutual Defense Pact as U.S. Steps Back, *The New York Times*, July 17, 2025**

The new treaty includes a pledge by both countries to regard a threat against one as a threat against the other, in the latest sign of European nations uniting amid growing instability. [HERE](#)

PART Two – The U.K. and the U.S. – Trump's second state visit

See DM 1 LVB

The Guardian view on Trump's state visit to Britain: plenty of glitter, but this was gilt, not gold

[Editorial](#), *The Guardian*, Thu 18 Sep 2025

AUDIO Document 6 - **How the U.K. government wields the Royal Family's soft power for diplomacy**

(Type St Cyr - On Cahier de Prépa)

NPR, September 18 2025

Text 7 - U.K. Offers Trump a Royal Welcome of Maximum Pomp and Minimum Politics

A day of military and monarchical pageantry demonstrated Britain's eagerness to appeal to a president who has seemed intent on upending the post-World War II order.



As part of his arrival at Windsor Castle on Wednesday, President Trump was welcomed by a guard of honor representing three colors: the Grenadier Guards, Coldstream Guards and Scots Guards. Credit...Doug Mills/The New York Times

By [Michael D. Shear](#), Reporting from London, *The New York Times*, Sept. 17, 2025

President Trump received a pomp-filled royal welcome to Britain on Wednesday, feted by King Charles III at Windsor Castle during a two-day trip designed to be heavy on majesty and light on diplomacy.

- 5 At a gilded dinner in the castle's St. George's Hall, the king toasted Mr. Trump, citing what he called the "enduring bond" between the peoples of Britain and the United States. And he noted that "British soil makes for rather splendid golf courses," a nod to the two clubs Mr. Trump owns in Scotland.

"Through the generations, our people have fought and died together for the values we hold dear," Charles said.

"We have celebrated together, mourned together and stood together in the best and worst of times."

- 15 Mr. Trump returned the praise, thanking the king and his wife, Queen Camilla, for their "extraordinary graciousness." He said the two countries must defend "the exceptional heritage that makes us who we are, and we must continue to stand for the values and the people of the English-speaking world."

20 In a sign of how eagerly Britain is seeking to appeal to a president who has seemed intent on upending the post-World War II order, the visit marked the first time that an American leader has been invited to a second royal banquet. Mr. Trump attended a state banquet in 2019,

and on Wednesday said he was honored to return for a second, saying, “That’s the first and maybe that’s going to be the last time. I hope it is actually.”

But the closest either of the two toasts got to current
30 affairs was the king’s effort to — gently — cajole Mr. Trump on the need for the United States and Britain to jointly defend Ukraine.

“Our countries have the closest defense, security and intelligence relationship ever known,” he said. “In two
35 world wars, we fought together to defeat the forces of tyranny. Today, as tyranny once again threatens Europe, we and our allies stand together in support of Ukraine, to deter aggression and secure peace.”

Publicly at least, Wednesday was more about the
40 trappings and grandeur of royalty, not the grim realities of a war-weary world.

On his arrival at the castle Wednesday morning, accompanied by the first lady, Melania Trump, the president was welcomed by a guard of honor
45 representing three colors: the Grenadier Guards, Coldstream Guards and Scots Guards. The three colors have never previously been assembled for a state visit, another sign of how the royal family was seeking to impress Mr. Trump.

50 For the president, who has repeatedly expressed his love for a martial display, there were key moments planned throughout the day, including the royal salute as the King’s Troop Royal Horse Artillery marched past with their mounted guns and a spectacular flyover, with
55 aerobatic jets known as the Red Arrows.

Windsor Castle has been the site of two state visits this year: the one on Wednesday, and one for President Emmanuel Macron of France. Mr. Trump, whose mother was born in Scotland, has called it a singular
60 gesture by the royal family. The president has said that his mother revered Queen Elizabeth II and watched her coronation in the early 1950s on television.

After a private lunch, the Trumps met with Charles and Queen Camilla in the castle’s Green Drawing Room,
65 viewing items from the Royal Collection that relate to the United States.

“Wow,” Mr. Trump said as he looked at an item related to American independence. He and the king then looked at something related to a trans-Atlantic cable, according
70 to reporters. The president turned to those reporters and asked, “Are you enjoying it, are you having a good time?”

The Trumps and the royal couple also exchanged gifts. The king and queen gave Mr. Trump a leather-bound
75 volume celebrating the 250th anniversary of the

Declaration of Independence, as well as the Union Jack that flew over Buckingham Palace on the day of Mr. Trump’s second inauguration. The royal couple gave Mrs. Trump a silver and enamel bowl crafted by the
80 Northern Ireland artist Cara Murphy, as well as a handbag designed by Anya Hindmarch.

Mr. Trump gave the king a replica of one of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s swords, symbolizing the alliance of the United States and Britain during World
85 War II. He gave the queen a Tiffany diamond and ruby flower brooch.

Not everyone in Britain was happy about Mr. Trump’s arrival in the country, or the royal treatment he received. British activists upset about the state visit protested his
90 arrival on Tuesday by projecting a picture of Mr. Trump with Jeffrey Epstein on the walls of Windsor Castle and unrolling a massive banner of the picture on the castle’s grassy lawn.

The police intervened to stop both political stunts
95 quickly and made arrests over the projection. Representatives of the group behind the banner said they had achieved their goal of seeking to embarrass the president by noting his onetime friendship with the sex offender.

100 In London on Wednesday night, drum-playing protesters stopped near Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s residence at 10 Downing Street, making a noisy protest against Mr. Trump’s visit. The building is protected by a line of police officers in front of security gates.

105 And the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, launched a broadside against Mr. Trump and his administration in an opinion essay published in The Guardian shortly before Air Force One touched down on Tuesday night. Mr. Khan, a politician from Mr. Starmer’s Labour party
110 who became the first Muslim to hold the position in 2016 and has since won two more mayoral elections in Britain’s capital, accused Mr. Trump of “fanning the flames of divisive, far-right politics around the world,” continuing a long-running feud between the two men.

115 Mr. Trump took a swipe at Mr. Khan during his last visit to Britain in July, calling him “a nasty person” who has “done a terrible job.”

When Mr. Trump was honored by Charles at the banquet, Ed Davey wasn’t there. The leader of the
120 centrist Liberal Democrats boycotted the dinner as a protest over Mr. Trump’s policies and the failure of the president to use his leverage over Israel to stop the war in Gaza.

Mark Landler, Maggie Haberman, Shawn McCreesh,
125 and Nader Ibrahim contributed reporting.

Text 7 b - Diplomatic Coup or Abject Groveling? U.K. Debates Trump's Royal Welcome

Some British commentators praised the state visit as a necessary piece of realpolitik. Others criticized it as an embarrassing display for a destructive president.

By Stephen Castle, Reporting from London, *The New York Times*, Sept. 18, 2025

A masterful act of British diplomacy, deploying royal pomp, pageantry and ceremony in pursuit of the national interest. Or a desperate example of groveling to a fickle American president with a frail ego.

Britain's media was on Thursday divided in its interpretation of day one of the state visit, in which the red carpet was rolled out to President Trump with all the trappings at which British royalty excels.

Photos of a glittering banquet in Windsor Castle and of Mr. Trump's procession through its grounds in a horse-drawn carriage adorned newspaper front pages. But the divide in perceptions was best illustrated by the front pages of two tabloids.

"The Special Bond," ran the upbeat headline in The Sun, which reported that Mr. Trump's speech at the state dinner on Wednesday evening praised the special relationship between the U.S. and Britain while the band had played the theme tune from the James Bond movies. The Sun, known for its conservative bent and sensational headlines, is part of News Corporation, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch, who attended the banquet.

By contrast, the Daily Mirror, a left-leaning paper, wrote on its front page: "The royals did their job. They smiled, laughed and massaged Trump's frail ego."

Those were the words of Russell Myers, the newspaper's royal editor, who added on social media: "When Britain's star has fallen so far and we are forced to grovel for recognition of the special relationship, our dutiful royals serve us well in desperate times."

A more literary critique of the state visit appeared in The Guardian, where a poem by Carol Ann Duffy, one of the country's most prominent poets and a former poet laureate, appeared to reimagine the ceremonial banquet taking place in a bomb site.

It did not explicitly mention Gaza, but was surely inspired by the contrast between the opulent state dinner and the worsening hunger crisis and suffering in the enclave as Israel escalates its military campaign there.

There were other complaints too, including from one unlikely demonstrator at the march, Max Hastings, the writer and former editor of the right-leaning Daily Telegraph. He was spotted by a BBC journalist as he walked alongside other protesters. When interviewed about his presence, Mr. Hastings accused Mr. Trump, who is unpopular in Britain, according to opinion polls, of wrecking the world order. "He's a destroyer," he said.

The other half of The Guardian's front page focused on investments by American companies worth an estimated £150 billion to Britain, reporting that Prime Minister Keir Starmer hoped that this would placate critics of the state visit.

That underscored the extent to which much of the media saw Mr. Trump's visit in pragmatic terms. "Britain wheels out the Windsors to play its royal Trump card," read the headline of The Independent.

The next question is whether, when Mr. Trump departs on Air Force One later today, there will be sufficient political and diplomatic benefits to persuade the president's many British critics that it was all worthwhile.

Stephen Castle is a London correspondent of *The Times*, writing widely about Britain, its politics and the country's relationship with Europe.



Text 8 - Spare a thought for Charles as Britain fawns over Trump – will it all be worth it?

Donald Trump has been given an unprecedented state visit to the UK with the royal family laying on the pomp and pageantry, which has been lapped up by the US President

Opinion? **Russell Myers** Royal Editor - *The Daily Mirror*, 17 Sep 2025

Russell Myers is Royal Editor for the Mirror and a regular on our Royal podcast Pod Save The King. In an ever fractured world you would be hard pressed to find many feeling sorry for the royal family. But spare a thought for the King and his kin on this occasion.

This unprecedented state visit for US President Donald Trump and his cronies had all the hallmarks of a government in crisis. How far Britain's star has fallen when forced to grovel for recognition of the so-called special relationship which hangs as fragile as Trump's ego.

Yet, our dutiful royal family serves us well in such desperate times.

When we can wheel out the big guns, lay on the pomp and pageantry thicker than peanut butter jelly and serve up a glittering banquet in a castle older than the US of A, you've got half a chance.

In the confines of Windsor Castle, unusually designed to be behind closed doors so Trump wouldn't have to deal with the embarrassment of protestors lining the streets, the royals turned the charm up to 11.

Trump had labelled "Prince Charles" a dear friend before heading across the pond this week, failing to recall the three years that have passed since he became King.

A small detail when international relations as well as crippling tariffs are at stake! The Prince of Wales (another "friend") and Princess ("so beautiful") made their own sacrifice in firstly trudging over a soggy field to greet the Donald and his wife, before joining them on a carriage ride through the Windsor estate.

Trump became a living meme last year when showing off a specially made book of pictures of himself with members of the royal family. And to the Don, the author behind the Art of the Deal, presentation is everything.

The royals did their job, smiled and laughed at the right times and places and Trump got his photos and bragging rights having been the only US president to be offered such an honour of returning for a second "fest", as he called it.

Whether Britain wins for all its fawning remains to be seen.

Text 9 - Carol Ann Duffy writes 'bombsite' poem about Trump's UK state visit

Exclusive: Former **poet laureate*** has reader contrasting pomp and ceremony of banquet with ruins left by war
Daniel Boffey *Chief reporter, The Guardian*, Wed 17 Sep 2025

Carol Ann Duffy has written a poem about Donald Trump's state visit to Britain that appears to reimagine the ceremonial banquet as taking place in a bombsite.

Duffy, who was the UK's poet laureate between 2009 and 2019, writes of the "rocks and rubble" in lines that have the reader contrasting the diamonds of the "great and good" with the ruins left by war.

The US president and his wife, Melania, arrived in Windsor on Wednesday morning to be met by the Prince and Princess of Wales, who escorted them to join the king and queen.

The monarch is hosting a state banquet for 160 guests in Windsor Castle's St George's Hall on Wednesday evening, at which Trump and Charles will give speeches.

Trump promised during his presidential election campaign to bring peace to Ukraine on day one of his second term in the White House, but the war waged by Russia continues.

Israel announced a "temporary" new route for residents to flee Gaza City on Wednesday, as it launched an major ground offensive after intense bombardment of the Palestinian territory's main urban area.

Five out of six Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since the attack on 7 October by Hamas have been civilians, according to figures from a classified Israeli military intelligence database.

In Duffy's poem, entitled STATE/BANQUET, she plays with the ceremonial pomp of the meal and imagines a menu while seemingly inviting readers to think of the plight of those in peril.

"Let the trumpets sound on the bombsite," she writes.

Trump is the first US president to be honoured with a second state visit to the UK. Those in their second term in the White House are usually invited for tea or lunch with the monarch instead.

Duffy, who was the first female poet laureate, gave an interview in 2018, near the end of her tenure, in which she spoke of being demoralised by world events.

"I think the past couple of years, with the evil twins of Trump and Brexit ... I don't remember ever having felt such a kind of lowering abstract stress coming from the political aura," she said.

STATE/BANQUET

*How it glitters and shines, The Grand Service,
among the rocks and the rubble,
laid out on a breezeblock horseshoe table,
six crystal glasses per setting.
It took eight servants three weeks to polish -
silver coated in a thin layer of gold -
even the concrete dust in the air seems glamourised
and the ruins are decked in the uplifting flags of
democracy.*

*To start, fillet of Dover sole filled with salmon mousse,
served on a bed of leeks with white wine sauce.
Poached Sandringham venison with truffles to follow,
then Key Lime Pie, and among the wines,
Chateau Pichon-Longueville Comtesse de Lalande, 1990.
Yum-yum. Let the trumpets sound on the bombsite
as the great and the good pick their way through,
and a famished child peers through a bullet-hole in a wall.*

Text 10 - Trump state visit: behind talk of harmony there are notes of discord

The Conversation, September 18, 2025

Jason Ralph, Professor of International Relations, University of Leeds

(Jason Ralph has previously received funding from UK Research Councils and the European Union. He is a member of the Labour Party.)

An unusual feature of Donald Trump's second state visit to the UK was the spectacle of the Royal Marines, the Coldstream Guards and the Royal Air Force "beating retreat" as the president and King Charles looked on.

This is a traditional military ceremony that started in the 17th century and marked the closing of camp gates and the lowering of flags. It is, by all accounts, the kind of British “soft power” that excites the president and consolidates “the special relationship” between allies.

But one cannot help wondering if what this ceremony marked was in fact the final retreat of the US and UK from their self-defined role as defenders of an international order based on liberal and democratic values.

How are we otherwise to reconcile the fact that a “populist” American president, supposedly elected on an anti-elitist message, so visibly revelled in facing an audience composed almost exclusively of the elites of a monarchical system (on Wednesday) and the tech-business community (on Thursday)?

Trump may have had the unprecedented honour of a second state visit. But what does it say about “the special relationship” between common people (if not heads of state) when the visit was arranged to land in a week the House of Commons was not sitting, meaning he would not be able to address the national parliament?

Perhaps it says something about the retreat of American Republican virtues and the rise of an “imperial presidency” (just as King George III in Hamilton the musical predicted). Trump would not want to be reminded that it was President Obama who had the recent honour of speaking to the British people through their elected representatives in Westminster Hall.

Meanwhile, how do we reconcile the sense that Prime Minister Keir Starmer knows how to handle President Trump with Starmer’s apparent inability to prevent the political retreat of his own government?

The answer to that is that the prime minister may be a better diplomat than he is a politician. He understands that flattery makes Trump the man happy, but he seems less certain about how to deal with Trumpism the idea. Trumpism has inspired so-called “new right” movements throughout the western world. In the UK, it defeated Starmer’s preferred brand of progressive internationalism when Nigel Farage pushed for and won a vote to leave the European Union in 2016.

In the wake of this state visit, the government will claim success by pointing to the £150 billion of investment apparently secured through tech deals. It is not, however, clear what role the US state, or indeed the state visit, had in securing (as opposed to announcing) that.

In the meantime, Starmer’s Labour is still reluctant to push back against new right thinking by pointing to the cost Brexit has had on government tax revenues.

A similar concern is being voiced on the cost of the new right’s approach to immigration in the US. The president proudly defended his administration’s actions on immigration and even recommended the UK deploy the military to manage migration. But armed raids on Hyundai factories in the US have left another key ally, South Korea, questioning its longstanding commitment to invest there.

This state visit has coincided with the United Nations Commission of Inquiry finding that Israel has engaged in four of the five genocidal acts as defined under international law since the beginning of its war with Hamas in 2023.

One cannot expect policy – and certainly not policy differences – to make their way into banquet speeches. But the expectation that Trump will simply ignore UK pleas to pressure Israel into stopping its offensive makes the Windsor scenes difficult viewing for many.

Middle East policy differences were on display at the Chequers press conference and the UK government will seek to mollify its critics by following through on its intention to imminently recognise Palestine as a sovereign state. But without US support, the UK cannot expect this to make an immediate difference to the humanitarian situation.

Notes of discord

There was an additional musical theme to the speeches at the state banquet during Trump’s visit. The president described the US and UK as “two notes in the same chord”.

That may be the case, but there are many discordant notes sounded when the president’s words are mixed with the political soundtrack beyond Windsor castle and Chequers. Outside these sheltered surroundings, the mood music is changing.

The images of militaries marching in royal gardens resonate with the recent ceremonial displays of hard power in Washington and Beijing. Putin standing alongside Xi no doubt disappointed Trump, who reportedly tried to ally with Russia to balance the power of China. He was explicit on that at Chequers. Trump feels “let down” by Putin.

The progressive side of UK foreign policy thinking hopes this now means Trump will be more committed to Ukraine and the liberal principle of national self-determination. But perhaps the wider implication of these discordant notes is that “the special relationship” is being reimagined as a focal point in an international order of competing power blocks. This state visit may indeed come to symbolise the retreat of the liberal international order.

Part Three – The Special Relationship



Text 11 - Entre les Etats-Unis et le Royaume-Uni, une « relation spéciale » à l'épreuve de Trump

Par [Cécile Ducourtieux](#) (Londres, correspondante) Le Monde, 23 mars 2025

Analyse - Depuis le retour du milliardaire à la Maison Blanche, les rapports entre Washington et Londres connaissent de fortes turbulences. Ukraine, défense... les Britanniques s'interrogent sur leur allié historique.

5 Peu après les attentats du 11 septembre 2001, l'ambassade du Royaume-Uni à Washington remit à la Maison Blanche un buste de Winston Churchill réalisé par l'artiste Jacob Epstein. Le symbole était clair : dans les moments sombres, les Britanniques se voulaient les alliés les plus
10 fiables des Américains, réitérant leur attachement à leur « relation spéciale ». L'expression est attribuée à Churchill, qui l'aurait utilisée la première fois le 5 mars 1946 : lors d'un discours prononcé à Fulton, dans le Missouri, il avait insisté sur la nécessité, pour les deux
15 Etats, de maintenir l'étroite collaboration militaire élaborée durant la seconde guerre mondiale, afin d'assurer la paix dans le monde.

George W. Bush installa la sculpture de l'homme d'Etat britannique (Churchill se rendait régulièrement à la
20 Maison Blanche au début des années 1940, quand il essayait de convaincre Franklin Delano Roosevelt d'entrer en guerre contre l'Allemagne nazie) dans le bureau Oval. En 2009, elle fut retirée avec l'arrivée de Barack Obama – décision que Boris Johnson, alors maire de Londres,

25 attribua à « l'aversion ancestrale d'un président aux origines kényanes pour l'Empire britannique ». Elle retrouva le bureau Oval en 2017 et jusqu'à la fin du premier mandat de Donald Trump en 2021, disparut de nouveau lors de l'administration Joe Biden (2021-2025),
30 avant de reprendre sa place initiale, en janvier, comme l'avait promis M. Trump au moment de sa seconde victoire électorale. Les médias britanniques ont alors soupiré d'aise, le retour en grâce du buste de Churchill compensant le fait que, contrairement à une tradition bien établie, Keir
35 Starmer n'ait pas été le premier dirigeant occidental à rencontrer le président américain après sa prestation de serment – Emmanuel Macron l'avait devancé de trois jours, le 24 février.

Ces questions de protocole et de buste en bronze, peut-être
40 superficielles à l'aune des bouleversements du monde, illustrent bien l'importance de la relation spéciale aux yeux des Britanniques et leur sentiment d'insécurité dès que celle-ci paraît menacée. Ils la considèrent comme indispensable, une boussole de leur politique étrangère, un
45 fondement de leur sécurité. Pourtant, cette relation va mal. Certes, le Royaume-Uni est jusqu'à présent épargné par Donald Trump, qui ne l'a pas menacé, contrairement à l'Union européenne (UE), de droits de douane sur

l'ensemble de ses exportations. Le nouveau président
50 américain s'est comparé à Churchill (« *un grand leader* »),
a loué le roi Charles III (« *un homme formidable* »). Mais
il a entrepris des négociations sur l'Ukraine avec Vladimir
Poutine sans consulter ni Kiev, ni Londres, ni aucune autre
capitale européenne. Il a laissé Elon Musk proférer des
55 accusations sans fondement contre le premier ministre
travailliste, Keir Starmer, et n'a pas réagi davantage quand
son vice-président, J. D. Vance, a offensé l'armée
britannique. Sur la chaîne de télévision Fox News, le
3 mars, ce dernier a moqué « *ces pays quelconques* » – la
60 France et le Royaume-Uni – qui proposent d'envoyer des
troupes de maintien de la paix en Ukraine.

Une autre démonstration du malaise actuel qui règne entre
Britanniques et Américains est cet échange étonnant, le
12 mars, au palais de Westminster, où deux représentants
65 du Parti républicain au Royaume-Uni étaient interrogés
par la commission aux relations internationales de la
Chambre des lords. L'un des membres de la commission,
Nicholas Soames, petit-fils de Winston Churchill, s'est
emporté contre la « *perversion* » du parti de Donald
70 Trump, « *qui a l'air de penser sincèrement que Poutine
n'est pas l'agresseur* » dans la guerre en Ukraine. Ce
conservateur respecté, qui travailla brièvement au Sénat
américain dans les années 1970, a jugé « *répugnante* » la
« *défenestration* » de Volodymyr Zelensky, le 28 février,
75 dans le bureau Oval. « *Cette Amérique n'est pas celle que
j'ai connue* », a-t-il conclu.

« Collaboration sur les sujets les plus sensibles »

Une manière classique de définir la relation spéciale est
d'insister sur ses aspects culturels. Le lien avec les Etats-
80 Unis, une fédération d'ex-colonies britanniques qui ont
gagné leur indépendance en 1783, « *renvoie à la langue
anglaise, (...) à la common law, (...) à des systèmes
juridiques similaires, à une vision particulière de la
liberté* », énumérait Karen Pierce, ambassadrice
85 britannique sortante aux Etats-Unis, lors d'une audition à
la Chambre des lords, le 5 mars. D'autres ont tendance à la
relativiser : « *Les Français ont, eux aussi, leur relation
spéciale*, relève Sir John Holmes, ambassadeur britannique
à Paris de 2001 à 2006. *A chaque visite d'Etat [aux Etats-
90 Unis ou en France], ils évoquent le marquis de La Fayette,
ils disent qu'ils sont amis des Américains depuis plus
longtemps que nous et des amis plus critiques que nous.* »
Cette relation est pourtant singulière, surtout depuis la
seconde guerre mondiale, après que le Royaume-Uni et les
95 Etats-Unis, alliés contre les puissances de l'Axe,
entamèrent un étroit partenariat de défense et de sécurité.
A partir de 1941, les Britanniques aident les Américains à
lancer leur fameux projet Manhattan de conception d'une
arme nucléaire. Par ailleurs, « *le 8 février 1941, des
100 représentants des services de renseignement britanniques
et américains se rencontrent à Bletchley Park [dans le
Buckinghamshire, où étaient localisés les services
britanniques de décodage] et partagent leurs principaux
secrets*, raconte Sir John Scarlett, lui-même directeur du
105 MI6 (le service de renseignements extérieurs du Royaume-
Uni) de 2004 à 2009. *Les Britanniques dévoilent le*

*décryptage de la machine à coder allemande Enigma ; les
Américains révèlent leur connaissance du code Purple, la
méthode de chiffrement japonaise* ». En août 1941,
110 Winston Churchill et Franklin D. Roosevelt signent la
Charte de l'Atlantique, esquisant une vision commune de
l'ordre international d'après-guerre, fondé sur le libre-
échange et le multilatéralisme.

Ces collaborations sont formalisées par l'accord de
115 défense mutuelle de 1958, puis par le traité sur les ventes
de missiles balistiques Polaris, en 1963. Ce dernier scelle
la dépendance de la dissuasion nucléaire britannique à la
technologie américaine. Les sous-marins lanceurs
d'engins et les têtes nucléaires sont conçus au Royaume-
120 Uni, mais les missiles Polaris sont de fabrication
américaine – ils seront remplacés par les Trident au début
des années 1980. Les services de renseignement
britanniques et américains, qui avaient systématisé leurs
échanges avec l'accord Ukusa (United Kingdom-United
125 States Communications Intelligence Agreement) dès 1946,
étendent progressivement ce système de partage
d'informations aux ex-dominions britanniques –
l'Australie, le Canada et la Nouvelle-Zélande – pour
former les « Five Eyes ». « *Il s'agit d'une collaboration de
130 long terme, sur les sujets les plus sensibles et secrets de
ces pays*, précise au Monde Sir John Scarlett, qui fut en
poste à Paris, Moscou et Nairobi avant de prendre la tête
du MI6. *Au fil du temps, entre Américains et Britanniques
se sont forgées une très profonde confiance, ainsi que de
135 nombreuses relations personnelles. Au quotidien, on se dit
les choses, que l'on soit d'accord ou pas, en toute
indépendance.* »

Entre chancelleries et gouvernements, la relation spéciale
signifie des décennies de proximité. « *Quand je travaillais
140 à Downing Street [en tant que principal private secretary
de Tony Blair, équivalent de chef de cabinet], j'avais un
téléphone qui appelait directement le bureau du conseiller
à la sécurité nationale à Washington*, assure l'ex-
ambassadeur en France, Sir John Holmes. *Quand quelque
145 chose se passait dans le monde, les premiers que nous
appelions étaient les Américains. C'était, dans une large
mesure, vrai aussi pour eux. Nous avons eu nos
dissensions, mais, entre diplomates, spécialistes du
renseignement et militaires, nous restons très proches.*
150 *Cette proximité n'a pas disparu avec Donald Trump.* »

« Partenaire subalterne »

La complicité entre Margaret Thatcher et Ronald Reagan
est connue. Arrivés au pouvoir presque concomitamment
(1979 pour la Bretagne, 1981 pour l'Américain), ils
155 partageaient une aversion à l'égard de l'Union soviétique,
une passion pour le libéralisme économique. Lui fut « *le
second homme le plus important de [s]a vie* » après son
mari, disait la « Dame de fer ». Elle était « *formidable* »
aux yeux du 40^e président américain. Les rapports entre
160 Downing Street et la Maison Blanche n'ont pas toujours
été fusionnels. Lors de la crise de Suez, en 1956,
Washington mit fin aux illusions de Londres et de Paris,
qui voulaient reprendre militairement le canal de Suez
nationalisé par le président égyptien Nasser, en les

165 obligeant à battre en retraite. Cet épisode humiliant signa la fin des rêves de grandeur de l'Empire britannique.

Dans les années 1960, les relations étaient très tendues entre la Maison Blanche et Downing Street, le président Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) reprochant au premier ministre Harold Wilson (1964-1970, puis 1974-1976) de ne pas envoyer de troupes britanniques combattre au Vietnam aux côtés des Américains. Cette guerre fait figure d'exception : le Royaume-Uni a répondu présent à quasiment tous les engagements militaires américains des quatre-vingts dernières années : la Corée, l'Irak, l'Afghanistan... Des dizaines de milliers de soldats britanniques ont combattu à côté des Américains, et des milliers y ont laissé leur vie.

En février 1945, à la conférence de Yalta, Churchill avait sa place à côté de Roosevelt et de Staline à la table des vainqueurs. L'année suivante, dans son discours de Fulton, le dirigeant britannique mettait encore Etats-Unis et « *British Commonwealth and Empire* » (« l'Empire et le Commonwealth britanniques ») sur un pied d'égalité. Avec l'émancipation progressive des colonies britanniques, dans les années 1960, puis l'accélération des coupes dans les dépenses militaires du Royaume-Uni avec la fin de la guerre froide, la relation spéciale s'est fortement déséquilibrée. Avec un budget militaire de 81 milliards de dollars (74,33 milliards d'euros) en 2024, contre 968 milliards de dollars pour les Etats-Unis, Londres ne joue plus dans la même catégorie que Washington. Certes, le MI6 et le GCHQ (le service de cybersécurité britannique) demeurent très respectés par la CIA et la NSA (l'agence gouvernementale américaine chargée de la cybersécurité). Mais, de plus en plus, « *les présidents américains contemporains considèrent la Grande-Bretagne comme un Etat client relativement utile, un partenaire militaire subalterne et une porte d'entrée vers l'Europe* », estimait Simon Tisdall, rédacteur en chef adjoint et chroniqueur au *Guardian*, dans un article signé peu avant la visite d'Etat de Donald Trump à Londres, en 2019.

Soutien cher payé

« *Quand j'étais à Washington, nous pouvions encore déployer une division [environ 16 000 soldats] sur le terrain* », assurait Sir David Manning, l'ambassadeur à Washington entre 2003 et 2007, lors d'une audition de la commission aux relations internationales de la Chambre des lords, le 5 mars. « *Pendant la guerre en Irak [lancée par les Etats-Unis en 2003], parce que nous en avions les moyens, nous avons fait toutes sortes de choses qui ne nous ont peut-être pas vraiment enthousiasmés, parce que les Américains nous l'avaient demandé, ajoutait-il. Il est très douteux que nous puissions le faire à nouveau aujourd'hui.* » Lors de cette même audition, Sir Peter Westmacott, ambassadeur à Washington entre 2012 et 2016, a, pour sa part, témoigné qu'« *il y a dix ans, quand [il] étai[t] à Washington, le secrétaire à la défense, le chef d'état-major interarmées et le président des Etats-Unis [lui] disaient tous : "Vous n'êtes pas là où vous devriez être. Nous apprécions le fait que le Royaume-Uni soit un*

allié loyal, souvent inconditionnel, mais les capacités de vos forces armées ne sont pas celles que nous souhaiterions » ».

Depuis la fin de la guerre froide, l'attention des Etats-Unis s'est progressivement tournée vers la zone Asie-Pacifique. Côté britannique, on craint que l'isolationnisme américain – une constante de l'histoire du pays – reprenne le dessus. Après tout, l'alliance des deux Etats dans les années 1940 n'allait pas complètement de soi. Les Britanniques ont mal vécu d'être expulsés, en 1946, du programme nucléaire Manhattan. Ils n'ont pas oublié l'annulation brutale, en 1962, par le président Kennedy, du programme américain des missiles aérobalistiques Skybolt, sur lesquels ils comptaient pour maintenir une dissuasion nucléaire aérienne (ils ont finalement opté pour une dissuasion assurée exclusivement par une flotte de sous-marins, équipés de missiles Trident). Londres a aussi payé cher le soutien militaire américain : en 1940, en échange de 50 destroyers vieillissants de l'US Navy, Churchill dut donner accès aux Américains à une dizaine de bases militaires de l'Empire. La location à long terme à l'armée américaine de l'île Diego Garcia, dans l'archipel des Chagos, en plein océan Indien, est aussi un héritage des années 1960, quand le Royaume-Uni facilitait l'accès de ses territoires d'outre-mer aux Etats-Unis pour mieux s'assurer de la permanence de leur soutien. Aujourd'hui, Londres est prêt à verser au moins 9 milliards de livres sterling (10,77 milliards d'euros) au gouvernement de Maurice, qui réclame la souveraineté sur ces îles, pour que la base américaine Diego Garcia puisse s'y maintenir.

« Changement sismique »

Le rapprochement avec l'Europe continentale, impulsé au début des années 1970 par le premier ministre Edward Heath (1970-1974), participe d'un double acte pour Londres. En adhérant à la Communauté économique européenne (CEE) en 1973, le Royaume-Uni limite sa dépendance aux Etats-Unis et rend la relation spéciale plus attractive aux yeux des Américains, en faisant valoir ses connexions européennes. « *Les Britanniques voulaient pouvoir dire aux Américains : "Nous n'avons plus d'empire, mais il nous reste le Commonwealth et nous travaillons avec les autres Européens, c'est un atout pour vous"* », explique l'historien James Ellison, spécialiste des relations internationales à l'université Queen Mary de Londres.

Se présenter comme un « pont » entre les Etats-Unis et le reste du continent européen est une constante de la diplomatie britannique. C'est bien pour cela que les présidents américains Barack Obama et Joe Biden ont vu d'un mauvais œil le Brexit, qui diminuait l'avantage qu'ils pouvaient tirer des connexions continentales de leur allié britannique. A contrario, Donald Trump a applaudi le Brexit et ne cache pas sa détestation de l'UE. « *Elle a été créée pour harceler les Etats-Unis* », a-t-il lancé, le 26 février – une contrevérité, Washington ayant encouragé la formation de la CEE, considérée comme un gage de paix et de prospérité pour l'OTAN. Et s'il traite Londres avec

un peu plus d'égards que Bruxelles, s'il adore la famille royale et apprécie l'Ecosse (dont sa mère est originaire), la relation spéciale n'en est pas moins en crise.

Son assise « *a été la confiance et les valeurs partagées*, a souligné l'ex-ambassadeur David Manning, le 5 mars, à la Chambre des lords. *Aujourd'hui, la question est de savoir [si c'est toujours le cas]. Il est très difficile de l'affirmer. Il semble qu'il y ait eu un changement sismique [aux Etats-Unis]* ». Selon ce diplomate, qui représenta aussi son pays auprès de l'OTAN : « *Pour le Royaume-Uni, puissance de taille moyenne, il est important qu'un ordre international fondé sur des règles existe. Je ne pense pas que ce point de vue soit partagé à Washington. Cette administration voit le multilatéralisme d'une manière complètement transactionnelle et, à moins qu'il ne lui soit utile, elle le considère comme un obstacle.* »

Le diplomate a même évoqué le risque que les accords de sécurité mutuelle soient contestés, y compris le partenariat dans la dissuasion nucléaire. Ces scénarios sont « *très hypothétiques, mais nous devons y faire face* », a-t-il suggéré. Que deviendraient les « Five Eyes » si Donald Trump concrétisait un rapprochement avec la Russie, aux antipodes des positions britanniques et européennes ? Les services de renseignement continueraient-ils à s'échanger des informations ? Les « Five Eyes » ont, jusqu'à présent, beaucoup apporté aux Britanniques. « *Nous avons fermé des centres de renseignement dans des pays, comptant sur la présence des Américains pour savoir ce qu'il s'y passait*, affirmait, en février, Rory Stewart, ex-diplomate et secrétaire d'Etat au développement international de Theresa May, sur le podcast "The Rest Is Politics", qu'il anime avec Alastair Campbell, l'ancien chef de la communication de Tony Blair. *L'architecture des ["Five Eyes"] repose sur la CIA, on compte sur elle pour les endroits où nous sommes moins présents.* »

Ne pas tourner le dos à Washington

Dans ce contexte inquiétant, de nombreuses voix – experts ou députés du Parti libéral démocrate britannique – appellent le gouvernement Starmer à accélérer son rapprochement avec l'UE. Le leader travailliste a promis à son arrivée à Downing Street, en juillet 2024, une « *relance* » des relations avec Bruxelles, après des années de tensions liées au Brexit. En février, il s'est dit prêt, comme Emmanuel Macron, à envoyer des troupes en Ukraine pour sécuriser un éventuel traité de paix. Il a aussi pris l'initiative avec le président français d'une « *coalition des bonnes volontés* », encourageant d'autres pays volontaires à soutenir Kiev, militairement ou financièrement. Pour autant, Londres refuse de tourner le dos à Washington. « *Les Européens, notamment les Français, leur ont souvent demandé de choisir entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis, mais les Britanniques s'y refusent, car le lien transatlantique est essentiel à la sécurité nationale*, explique Sir John Holmes. *Nous devons le préserver aussi longtemps que possible, même si Trump est complètement imprévisible.* »

Renoncer abruptement à la relation spéciale exposerait trop les vulnérabilités du Royaume-Uni. Des années lui

seront nécessaires pour développer une défense plus autonome. Keir Starmer, qui refuse de critiquer ouvertement Donald Trump, l'a dit sans détour, le 2 mars, quelques heures avant de recevoir à Londres une première réunion de sa « *coalition des bonnes volontés* ». « *La relation spéciale est la plus étroite qu'il puisse y avoir entre deux pays*, a-t-il alors insisté. *Ce n'est pas juste une expression agréable : notre défense et notre sécurité sont si indissociables que la relation est centrale pour notre sécurité nationale.* »

Jusqu'où ira le Royaume-Uni dans son soutien aux Etats-Unis ? « *Comme Poutine, Trump n'est pas fiable, et je ne voudrais pas, si j'étais chef de gouvernement, mettre le sort d'une population entière entre les mains de son administration, placer les citoyens dans cette sorte de relation abusive [où il peut faire du chantage à un pays], analysait, le 12 mars, Leslie Vinjamuri, spécialiste des Etats-Unis à l'Institut Chatham House, lors d'une audition à la Chambre des lords. *C'est pour cela que nous avons besoin d'un plan [pour davantage d'indépendance vis-à-vis de Washington].* »*

360 « Aucun doute pour l'avenir »

Le gouvernement Starmer maintiendra-t-il son refus de condamner M. Trump si ce dernier tente de mettre à exécution son plan pour Gaza – qu'il dit vouloir convertir en « *Riviera du Moyen-Orient* » ? S'il accepte un accord de paix en Ukraine trop favorable à Poutine ? Ou s'il presse encore plus le Canada (qui partage le même roi que le Royaume-Uni) de devenir le « *51^e Etat des Etats-Unis* » ? Les citoyens britanniques n'apprécieraient certainement pas. Donald Trump n'est guère populaire dans le pays : 78 % des personnes interrogées par l'Institut YouGov, début mars, au Royaume-Uni, considèrent le président américain comme « *une menace* » pour la paix et la sécurité de l'Europe.

Evi Aspinall, la directrice du groupe de réflexion londonien British Foreign Policy Group, est pourtant persuadée que « *cette relation spéciale survivra quoi qu'il arrive, à moins que Donald Trump ne fasse quelque chose de fou, comme d'envoyer des troupes attaquer l'Europe* ». « *Le plan du gouvernement britannique est de tenir, pointe-t-elle. L'Europe n'est pas encore capable de jouer ce rôle de leader mondial qu'occupent les Etats-Unis, et nous n'allons pas nous tourner vers la Chine ou la Russie pour trouver un puissant allié.* »

Sir John Scarlett partage cette conviction : « *Nous devons garder la tête froide et mettre les choses en perspective. L'administration Trump n'est là que depuis six semaines, nous ne savons pas comment les choses évolueront dans les mois qui viennent. Il est dans l'intérêt très fort du Royaume-Uni, de l'OTAN, des démocraties libérales de nous coordonner et de collaborer.* » « *Nous aurons des moments difficiles, prédit encore l'ex-patron du MI6, mais je n'ai aucun doute sur l'avenir de la relation spéciale. J'ai travaillé dans son cadre pendant quasiment toute ma carrière, je sais que notre collaboration faite de respect et d'expériences communes durera, quelles que soient les configurations politiques.* »

Text 12 What Special Relationship?

The New York Times, April 9, 2025

By Geoffrey Wheatcroft

Mr. Wheatcroft is a British journalist and the author of "Churchill's Shadow: The Life and Afterlife of Winston Churchill." He wrote from Bath, England.

Having told the young men of Harvard in 1943 that the British and the Americans were united by "the ties of blood and history" (that "blood" was dubious), Winston Churchill went further in 1946, again on American soil. In his famous "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Mo., he proposed "a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and empire and the United States."

British politicians have been beguiled by the idea ever since. The latest is Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who said recently that the two countries were uniquely "intertwined." With a sense of dull inevitability, he insisted that the British-American special relationship was flourishing and professed admiration and a liking for President Trump, which nobody can really believe.

His reward for this egregious flattery was a 10 percent tariff on British goods imported to the United States in the round of duties announced by Mr. Trump last week.

It's true that Britain was not punished as much as the European Union (20 percent) or Switzerland (31 percent), let alone the British territory of the Falkland Islands (a ferocious 42 percent — what's that about?), but 10 percent is merely the base line Britain shares with Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, neither of which claim to have any special relationship with Washington.

Mr. Trump has said that the prime minister is very happy with the tariff, which seems unlikely and is rather contradicted by a BBC report that the Starmer government was far from pleased but relieved that it wasn't worse.

Gerhard Schröder, a former German chancellor, might not have been the first to say that the special relationship was special because only one side knew it existed. Is it too much to hope that the tired and foolish phrase might now be given a rest?

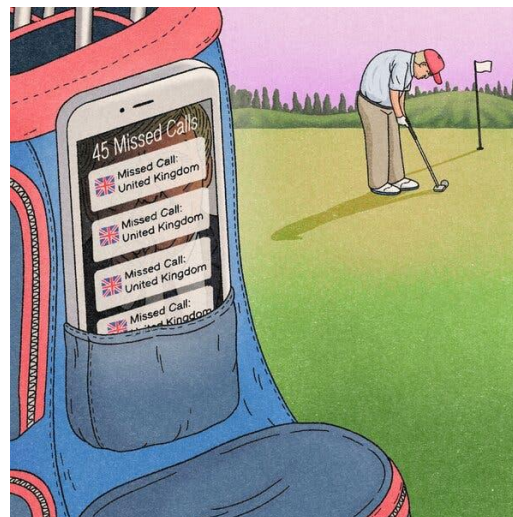
Certainly the United States and Britain are bound by defense treaty, intelligence sharing and common language.

But then, NATO always included France, Italy and Denmark and now includes Poland and Finland as well.

The intelligence sharing embraces Australia and Canada (yes, the 51st state Mr. Trump covets), and the supposedly unique tie of language means far less now that English is the global lingua franca, spoken daily by well over half a billion people.

History makes it clear that the relationship was special in an unpleasant way. When I hear "The Star-Spangled Banner," I take modest patriotic pride in recalling that the

Credit...Alex Gamsu Jenkins



"rocket's red glare" came from British projectiles during the War of 1812 and in thinking of our brave lads in red coats burning the Capitol. (I dare say some Americans wouldn't mind if we came back and gave it another go.)

After 1918, the Americans were implacable in pursuit of the huge sums London had borrowed to finance World War I, to the bitter resentment of Churchill, among other Englishmen. In 1928, Churchill's wife, Clementine, wondered whether he might move to become foreign secretary, although she then added, "But I am afraid your known hostility to America might stand in the way."

By 1940, when Churchill was leading his country at a time of supreme danger, the hostility was forgotten as he tried cajolery and flattery to lure President Franklin D. Roosevelt into the war. He was without success until December 1941, when the choice was taken out of his hands by Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor and Hitler's declaration of war on the United States.

The date of Churchill's Harvard speech was no accident. As historians have observed, it occurred when global leadership was passing to the United States from the British Empire, thanks to the explosive transformation of the American economy brought by war and the emergence of America as a superpower while Britain languished as an indigent American dependency.

The change greatly pained Churchill, but he salved his feelings by ingeniously if implausibly proposing that the two nations were really one. As the British historian Max Hastings wrote, “The notion of a ‘special relationship’ was invented for reasons of political expediency by Winston Churchill, who then became the first of many prime ministers to discover it to be a myth.” Since then, one prime minister after another has nevertheless flaunted the phrase, and one prime minister after another has been disabused of its validity.

Some Americans actively disliked it. When Dean Acheson, President Harry Truman’s secretary of state and an Anglophile in dress and manner, learned that State Department officials were working on a definition of this special relationship, he told them to stop immediately.

Acheson was one of the creators of NATO in 1949, with the Americans and the British the leading partners. And yet this mutual defense pact did not make them special friends outside “the North Atlantic area” that the treaty specified. In 1956, Prime Minister Anthony Eden’s British government, in secret alliance with France and Israel, sought to topple Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt’s president, in the Suez Canal crisis, until the Eisenhower administration pulled the rug out from under them. Ten years later, Harold Wilson, the Labour prime minister, sinuously avoided sending British troops to fight in Vietnam as President Lyndon Johnson very much wanted. One might add that Eisenhower and Wilson were both quite right.

In the 1980s it was widely supposed that there was an intimate bond between President Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. She liked him personally and shared his free market and anti-Communist convictions, but she had her private misgivings. Shortly after Reagan was

inaugurated in 1981, Thatcher was talking about the new president with Lord Carrington, her foreign secretary, when she tapped the side of her skull and said, “Peter, there’s nothing there.” Later she was enraged by Reagan’s opéra bouffe invasion of Grenada, whose head of state was Queen Elizabeth II.

Twenty years later there was certainly a relationship between President George W. Bush and the man he called “my closest friend and partner on the world stage,” Prime Minister Tony Blair. And see where they landed us, special partners in a catastrophic invasion. Any intimate British-American relationship should have met its nemesis in the sands of Iraq.

Even then, still suffering from the same delusion, Mr. Starmer sat in the Oval Office in February groveling before Mr. Trump. The performance culminated in his theatrical gesture of producing an invitation from King Charles III to visit England, which Matthew Parris, a journalist and former Thatcher aide, called “a cheap, embarrassing and degrading stunt, undoubtedly painful to the king.”

Since at least one poll has found that a clear majority of British people have a negative view of Mr. Trump, a state visit by him and his wife, Melania, could well have an effect far from what he hopes. It might be less like the popular 2009 visit of President Barack Obama, and the first lady, Michelle Obama, than that of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu of Romania, when Buckingham Palace staff were reportedly told to lock up the valuables.

Rather than invoke a mythical special relationship, Mr. Starmer might do better to recall the wise words of a predecessor, Lord Palmerston, who said that England has no eternal friends and no eternal foes, only eternal interests. Has any serious nation, including the United States, ever followed any other principle?

About the Special Relationship, see also :

- **What is the special relationship? | CNBC Explains**

The Special Relationship explained to kids 😊. July 2018

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PVeNj1qjp8&ab_channel=CNBCInternational

- **The Special Relationship - Timeline**

<https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-35783309>

<https://www.history.com/news/america-britain-special-relationship-alliance>

- **Michael Cox – LSE Blogs - The end of the UK-US special relationship?** October 31st, 2024

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-end-of-the-uk-us-special-relationship/>

- **MPs have more confidence in the US-UK “special relationship” than British public, according to Ipsos poll**

<https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/mps-have-more-confidence-us-uk-special-relationship-british-public-according-ipsos-poll>

- The White House website “Fact Sheet” on [the U.S. – U.K. Special Relationship](#)

- **From the Office of National Statistics - [UK trade with the United States: 2024](#)**

A closer look at the goods and services the UK trades with the United States.

- **BBC Verify - [How will the latest Trump tariffs affect the UK?](#)**

