**Press review – May 19-25, 2025**

* **UK foreign policy**

**Slide 2 – Keir Starmer signed an important deal aiming at bringing the UK and the EU closer**

Keir Starmer has vowed his EU reset deal will deliver cheaper food and energy for British people, heralding a “win-win” as he sealed the high-stakes agreement with concessions on youth visas and fishing.

Starmer emphasised the tangible benefits the deal would do for Britons, including cheaper food in supermarkets and an end to passport queues at European airports with [a deal for travellers to use European e-gates](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/17/uk-on-verge-of-deal-with-eu-to-let-britons-use-european-passport-e-gates). No 10 hopes both can be clinched within a year.

The deal also paves the way for the UK’s return to the Erasmus university exchange programme, and the creation of a youth mobility scheme that would allow young people access to the EU through work, study, au pair or travel.

UK ministers have insisted the scheme will be capped and time-limited, similar to those deals struck with Australia and New Zealand. But officials said there were hard negotiations yet to be done on whether the capped numbers would be from individual member states or EU-wide.

Acknowledging for the first time the damage done by [Brexit](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/eu-referendum) to Britain’s trade, Starmer said the deal to remove restrictions from agrifood trade would give a boost of £9bn to the UK economy. In a government briefing, No 10 said it would redress the 21% drop in exports and 7% drop in imports seen since Brexit.

It is the third deal Britain has struck this month, after agreements with [India](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/06/uk-and-india-agree-trade-deal-after-three-years-of-negotiations) and [the US](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/08/trump-and-starmer-confirm-breakthrough-us-uk-trade-deal).

The chancellor, Rachel Reeves, one of the biggest Europhiles in the cabinet, said Monday’s agreement was “the best deal with the EU for any country” and would show “Britain now is the place to put investment and do business, because we’ve got preferential deals with the biggest economies”.

But the price for the trade boost was controversial. The UK will grant EU fishers access to British waters for an additional 12 years, an eleventh-hour concession from the UK three times as long as it had originally offered, which led to cries of betrayal from the Conservatives and industry figures. Boris Johnson, the former prime minister who signed the Brexit deal, said Starmer was “turning this country once again into the orange ball-chewing, leather-trussed gimp”.

The National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations said it was “very disappointed” with the deal and that it “surrenders the best prospect that the fishing industry and coastal communities had for growth over the coming decade”.

No 10 said the industry would benefit many times over from the export deal which would allow some foods including shellfish to be exported to the EU for the first time since Brexit.

The wide-ranging deal struck at the Lancaster House summit on Monday includes:

* A defence pact as the first step towards securing British access to a new €150bn (£126bn) EU rearmament fund, though the UK will pay into the fund.
* Faster access for travellers who will be able to use e-gates at airports on the continent, although the timeline is unclear.
* A landmark emissions-trading deal, meaning UK exporters will avoid £800m of carbon border taxes.
* Closer cooperation on crime and migration, including access to the EU facial recognition data, a key request from Starmer.

UK officials said they had agreed the long-term fishing settlement to give the industry certainty – and that the EU had originally demanded a permanent fishing deal or to time-limit the agrifood deal, which British negotiators refused to accept.

[www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/19/keir-starmer-uk-eu-reset-deal-win-win?utm\_term=682c193546c91f11b0945cd0cdbb59d8&utm\_campaign=FirstEdition&utm\_source=esp&utm\_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition\_email](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/19/keir-starmer-uk-eu-reset-deal-win-win?utm_term=682c193546c91f11b0945cd0cdbb59d8&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email)

+ “From fishing to Erasmus: what the UK’s deal with the EU will mean”

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/19/fishing-erasmus-uk-eu-deal-keir-starmer>

**Slide 3 - Chagos Islands**: **UK signs £3.4bn deal to cede sovereignty over Chagos Islands to Mauritius**

The UK has signed a £3.4bn agreement to cede sovereignty over the [Chagos Islands](https://www.theguardian.com/world/chagos-islands) to Mauritius after an 11th-hour legal challenge failed.

Keir Starmer told a press conference on Thursday afternoon he had signed the deal and that it was “one of the most significant contributions that we make to our security relationship with the United States”.

Under the agreement, Britain cedes control over the islands to [Mauritius](https://www.theguardian.com/world/mauritius) but leases the largest one, Diego Garcia, for 99 years to continue operating a joint US-UK military base there.

The cost of leasing Diego Garcia, revealed for the first time on Thursday, is £101m a year. Ministers said the total cost of the deal would be £3.4bn​, on the basis that the value of the payments would decrease with inflation.

Speaking from the UK’s military headquarters, Starmer said there was “no alternative” to this agreement and defended its cost, saying it was “part and parcel of using Britain’s reach to keep us safe at home”. He said it was less than the cost of running one aircraft carrier for a year.

Downing Street said the deal was a “legal necessity” and backed by the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which are part of an intelligence-sharing partnership with the UK. In 2021 a UN court [gave an advisory opinion](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/28/un-court-rejects-uk-claim-to-chagos-islands-in-favour-of-mauritius) that the UK did not have rightful sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/22/high-court-judge-blocks-uk-from-concluding-chagos-islands-deal?utm_term=68300ee5af1e773f6ed957ddf37760a4&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email>

* **UK’s domestic policies**

**Slide 4 – Keir Starmer confirms U-turn on winter fuel payment cuts**

Although he had previously denied he would do so, Keir Starmer has announced a plan to loosen eligibility requirements so that more pensioners qualify, [to be introduced at the autumn budget](https://ablink.editorial.theguardian.com/ss/c/u001.Yw_JkLMEmFuifc_XG18IRyTNtZQ7fIEMgszcCSneHEAZJDnxSttupop980f_E1uLwbG5y54EPLBW6W0bEbdAxS-trdNG3GfRLDU5zsgsQYxGlCufs1kuYBsWmQjKqGLHjK_z5MUp2vDuAUIVSCacYhkcdEfVAS9edhcz8-6MD0Kkt42BzluoZsEY7QF7_yIXXM1m5Ioc2Azao4BMWsY5CJtuvVL0c1AsirbS2cN3B6TN52eLHbPLTRltfGW9KMrvgiyzm8eSntdLQ_p02FQkncVjcAQrF2VbX1VXWuq7nEPq-EMI8jaOKQRFNsWKiBAd/4gp/F6sImJ9eSsC-UWuM0PvmHw/h36/h001.XHr9qYnh4emhoOF8Gd6x2hyZDe1wxUBwltNYm-xafh0).

This isn’t a complete U-turn: fewer pensioners will receive the payment than before Rachel Reeves’s decision of 2024. But it is a very significant step. Many Labour MPs – to say nothing of the pensioners who lost out – will be wondering why the government went ahead with such a painful policy in the first place for such minimal economic gain. But even if the criticisms have been painful, Starmer insists that the change is possible because of a brightening economic outlook.

Against that optimistic gloss is the argument that Labour is acting because it knows the policy was a colossal misjudgement.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/21/keir-starmer-confirms-u-turn-on-winter-fuel-payment-cuts?utm_term=682ebd62b84dc35f33b3ea4eae162879&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email>

**Slide 5 – UK’s public sector**

Ministers are bracing themselves for a potential wave of NHS strikes in [England](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/england) after doctors denounced pay rises of up to 5.4% this year as “derisory” and threatened to take action in protest.

Teaching unions, after [teachers were awarded](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-05-22/hcws664) a 4% increase, also responded angrily at the government’s refusal to fully fund the deal and warned that it would damage the quality of education that pupils received. The largest union said it planned to take the first step towards possible industrial action.

The decision to award 1.4 million NHS staff including nurses, midwives and ambulance workers [a smaller rise – 3.6% –](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-05-22/hcws663) also provoked criticism. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said it was “grotesque” to hand doctors a bigger increase than nurses who earned less than them.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/22/teachers-doctors-england-pay-rise-nhs?utm_term=68300ee5af1e773f6ed957ddf37760a4&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email>

* **USA**

**Slide 6 – Joe Biden was diagnosed with an ‘aggressive form’ of prostate cancer**

[Joe Biden](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/joebiden), the former US president, has been diagnosed with an “aggressive form” of prostate cancer that has spread to his bones, his personal office announced on Sunday, May 18th.

The 82-year-old was seen last week by doctors after urinary symptoms and a [prostate nodule](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/12/us/politics/biden-prostate.html) were found. Biden and his family are considering options for treatment.

“While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management,” his office said. “The President and his family are reviewing treatment options with his physicians.”

This announcement came as Biden’s initial decision to seek re-election has come under renewed criticism ahead of Tuesday, May 20th’s [publication of Original Sin](https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2025/may/18/biden-book-health-original-sin?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other), a book by the journalists Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson that alleges a White House cover-up of the former president’s declining health and cognitive abilities.

Based on interviews with more than 200 aides, insiders and members of Congress, the book contains accounts of losing his train of thought, struggling to remember names, incoherent speeches and failing to recognise celebrities such as George Clooney. Aides discussed the possibility of Biden [needing a wheelchair](https://www.axios.com/2025/05/13/biden-book-wheelchair-2024-campaign-original-sin) if he won re-election due to the severity of his physical deterioration and the risk of falling.

Just two days ago Trump mocked Biden for being “hapless and cognitively impaired” in the wake of leaked audio recordings from Biden’s 2023 interview with then special counsel Robert Hur, where he struggled to remember important events. But in recent media interviews Biden has [continued to reject the idea](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/joe-biden-jill-biden-join-view-1st-joint/story?id=121555828) that he was too old to serve.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/18/joe-biden-prostate-cancer-diagnosis?utm_term=682aca0dcb5a6caf6f959703e2f217c7&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email>

* **US domestic policies**

**Slide 7 + 8 – Under pressure by Donald Trump, the House of Representatives narrowly passed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (yes, that’s the real name of this “omnibus” law, of course suggested by D. Trump)**

The law passed the House of Representatives by a 215-214 vote along party lines. Although it will dig the US debt by 3.8 trillion dollars, only 2 Republican representatives voted against it, showing Trump’s grip on the party (he had threatened them of dire consequences if this bill was derailed, even though many Republicans are traditionally staunchly opposed to creating more debt).

It now has to be considered in the Senate.

The bill would

* extend tax cuts enacted during Trump’s first term (especially for the rich)
* create several tax exemptions (but only until the end of Trump’s term)
* allow to deduce state and local taxes from the federal ones
* provide money for mass deportations and a border wall
* slash budget for Medicaid, which provides healthcare to poor and disabled Americans (as many as 5.2 million Americans could lose this safety net protection)

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/22/what-is-trump-big-beautiful-bill>

**Slide 9 – Harvard: The Trump administration halted Harvard’s ability to enroll international students.**

The Department of Homeland Security on Thursday revoked Harvard University’s certification to admit foreign students, making good on a threat by President Donald Trump and escalating his fight with the Ivy League school.

Homeland Security Secretary [Kristi L. Noem ordered](https://x.com/Sec_Noem/status/1925612991703052733) the agency to terminate Harvard’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certification, which allows U.S. universities to admit international students, for allegedly allowing “anti-American, pro-terrorist” foreigners “to harass and physically assault individuals … and obstruct its once-venerable learning environment.” The secretary also accused the university of working with the Chinese Communist Party by hosting and training members of its paramilitary group.

The decision means Harvard can no longer enroll foreign students, and existing international students at Harvard must transfer or lose their legal status, Noem said.

Noem gave the school 72 hours to turn over a list of records on international students to regain its certification before the upcoming academic year. DHS is seeking disciplinary records as well as electronic records, video and audio footage of international students who engaged in illegal activity, violence, threats to personnel or students, or protest activity on or off campus over the past five years.

If the administration follows through with the decertification, the action threatens to transform the population and culture at the nation’s oldest university, where more than a quarter of the students come from other countries. It also represents an escalation of the ongoing battle between the Trump administration and Harvard weeks after the school [refused to submit](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/04/14/harvard-rejects-trump-administration-demands/) to far-reaching policy changes and government oversight.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/05/22/trump-harvard-international-students-enrollment-revoked/?utm_campaign=wp_the7&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F42b2bfc%2F683052e095e93627b9f253ec%2F6303c41fca31ee7e6627cb27%2F20%2F107%2F683052e095e93627b9f253ec>

**Slide 10 – A Georgia abortion law requires a brain-dead woman to be kept on life support because she is pregnant.**

A pregnant woman declared brain-dead months ago is being kept on life support in Georgia until her baby can be delivered — a decision doctors made to obey the state’s strict abortion ban, according to her family.

The case raises questions about medical consent since the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, how to balance the legal status of the fetus and its mother, and the limits of medical care.

Adriana Smith, a 30-year-old Atlanta nurse, was about nine weeks pregnant when she was declared brain-dead in February, her family said. Doctors told them that maintaining life support was the only legal option because Georgia outlaws abortion after cardiac activity can be detected in a fetus at around six weeks of pregnancy. The state’s law also defines a fetus as a person with legal rights.

**Slide 11 - President Donald Trump announced a “Golden Dome” missile defense system.**

President Donald Trump announced Tuesday that the government will move forward on construction of a multibillion-dollar “Golden Dome” missile defense system that will use a constellation of satellites and space-based weapons to intercept ballistic attacks on the United States.

For months, Trump has pushed for such a system, citing increasingly sophisticated threats from countries such as Russia, China and North Korea.

“Once fully constructed, the Golden Dome will be capable of intercepting missiles even if they are launched from other sides of the world and even if they are launched from space, and we will have the best system ever built,” Trump said in the Oval Office alongside Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who later described the project as a “game changer.”

Trump said Tuesday that his administration had settled on an architecture for the project and claimed that the system could be operational within three years, before the end of his second term. Gen. Michael Guetlein, vice chief of operations for the U.S. Space Force, will oversee the Golden Dome’s progress, Trump said.

* **US foreign policy**

**Slide 12 - President Donald Trump spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday, May 19th.**

The call shut down an effort to pressure Russia into an immediate ceasefire and instead opened the way for fighting to continue during lengthy negotiations — much to the consternation of Ukraine and its European allies Tuesday.

Trump’s unwillingness to push Russia into a truce indicated that he may be stepping away from involvement in the talks, something that his team has been flagging for weeks. Trump said Monday that the conditions for a ceasefire could only be agreed by the warring parties “because they know details of a negotiation that nobody else would be aware of.”

Just over a week ago, European leaders were planning with U.S. officials [to wield new sanctions](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/05/14/russia-ukraine-talks-upend-european-push-us-sanctions-moscow/) against Russia if it did not agree to a ceasefire in Ukraine. But despite Trump’s exhortations for months that the fighting must stop immediately, the president who once promised to end the war in a day appeared not only to sidestep the European plans, but also to abandon his own call for a swift ceasefire.

In the course of Monday’s phone call, Putin managed to add a new delaying element to the process: the need for each side to draft a “memorandum” on the terms of a future peace treaty, a move that may leave Ukraine vulnerable while talks drag on.

**Slide 13 - Trump ambushed South African president with video and false claims of anti-white racism**

Donald Trump ambushed the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, by playing him a video that he falsely claimed proved genocide was being committed against white people under “the opposite of apartheid”.

The hectoring stunt on Wednesday set up the most tense Oval Office encounter since [Trump’s bullying of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/28/trump-zelenskyy-meeting-transcript). But Ramaphosa – who earlier said that he had come to Washington to “reset” the relationship between the two countries – refused to take the bait and suggested that they “talk about it very calmly”.

Trump has long maintained that Afrikaners, a minority descended from mainly Dutch colonists who ruled [South Africa](https://www.theguardian.com/world/southafrica) during its decades of racial apartheid, are being persecuted. South Africa rejects the allegation. Murder rates are high in the country and the overwhelming majority of victims are Black.

Sitting next to Trump before the fireplace, Ramaphosa forced a smile and turned to look at a big TV screen as Trump’s South Africa-born billionaire ally Elon Musk, JD Vance, the defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, and diplomats and journalists from both countries looked on.

The video included footage of former South African president Jacob Zuma and [firebrand opposition politician Julius Malema](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/10/julius-malema-south-africa-anc) singing an apartheid-era struggle song called [Kill the Boer](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/01/south-africa-spear-machine-gun), which means farmer or Afrikaner, as supporters danced.

Ramaphosa quietly but firmly pushed back, pointing out that the views expressed in the video are not government policy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/21/trump-south-africa-president-meeting?utm_term=682ebd62b84dc35f33b3ea4eae162879&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email>

**Slide 14 – Israel-Palestine conflict**

Israeli troops fired “warning shots” towards a group of 25 diplomats visiting Jenin in the Israel-occupied [West Bank](https://www.theguardian.com/world/west-bank) on Wednesday, prompting a wave of outrage and calls for an investigation from world leaders and ministers.

Footage shows a number of diplomats giving media interviews when rapid shots rang out nearby, forcing them to run for cover. The delegation comprised ambassadors and diplomats representing 31 countries, including Italy, Canada, Egypt, Jordan, the UK, China and Russia.

**Slide 15 - Two Israeli embassy staff shot dead near Washington DC Jewish museum**

The gunman, named by police as Elias Rodriguez, 30, of Chicago, approached a group of four people leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Museum and opened fire, killing Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim, who officials said were in a relationship.

The Metropolitan police chief, Pamela Smith, said the shooter had been pacing outside the museum, which is steps away from the FBI’s field office, before the shooting.

After killing the pair he walked inside, where event security detained him. The suspect yelled: “Free, free Palestine,” after he was arrested, police said.

He was not on any security watchlists and there were no heightened security threats before the shooting, officials said. The firearm was retrieved as well, officials said.

* **A.I.**

**Slide 16 - Artificial intelligence was more persuasive than humans in a new study.**

Chatbots were better at swaying opinions than humans 64% of the time [in head-to-head tests](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/05/19/artificial-intelligence-llm-chatbot-persuasive-debate/?utm_campaign=wp_the7&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F42a588f%2F682c5e604dcea14738422374%2F6303c41fca31ee7e6627cb27%2F69%2F97%2F682c5e604dcea14738422374). They debated the death penalty, abortion and other divisive topics.

AI was able to use personal information about their opponents in a subtle, effective way. Some experts fear AI’s potential to [spread lies and misinformation](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/04/17/llm-poisoning-grooming-chatbots-russia/?utm_campaign=wp_the7&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F4223641%2F682c5e604dcea14738422374%2F6303c41fca31ee7e6627cb27%2F70%2F97%2F682c5e604dcea14738422374).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/05/19/artificial-intelligence-llm-chatbot-persuasive-debate/?utm_campaign=wp_the7&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F42a588f%2F682c5e604dcea14738422374%2F6303c41fca31ee7e6627cb27%2F71%2F97%2F682c5e604dcea14738422374>

* **The environment**

**Slide 17 - climate crisis**

The climate crisis has raised the price of commodities and exacerbated famine – and only strong action on greenhouse gas emissions can [restore economic stability](https://ablink.editorial.theguardian.com/ss/c/u001.Yw_JkLMEmFuifc_XG18IRyTNtZQ7fIEMgszcCSneHEAhzD0WUI17vwhqJTqDOvEGtZqcmFS5VF-pZYZzATzGwc2ERMrDbEUP2wbI7nQjMyWopp-kDBCTDiA96CILKIBo_r4ZobevM7dYd1S1S23iwGDQcv3HUQrg_3T2itZdjAlZGd4lWn54CjOYaG_X741CQkvPQ4GHhmmwsIUtJs8RW9V3jE6w0saO4vkt7VbwWOSs1mygvYjMlfyho97wbO_vXM4obItyY-UE1le4YVfCcf0Hyw_6ISKGE5s3Uiu5sADfkRcJfHThoILQUtLsmeRCF3bxSH9cIEV2tbUWoKjSMCQrJU_5yOKwKQUDzG9-ndc/4go/V-OfAN5rQFek3B0NBUydZg/h36/h001.rZgwSLXwix7EbG9fwdMkW3Mx1cE23gnUUrw94XM_ONM), the UN’s climate chief has said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/20/only-strong-action-on-emissions-can-restore-economic-stability-un-climate-chief-says>

* **Cannes**

**Slide 18 – the Cannes Film Festival awarded its Palme d’Or to Iranian director Jafar Panahi for It Was Just an Accident**

The director has long been censored and was previously imprisoned in his home country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/may/24/iranian-director-jafar-panahi-wins-palme-dor-at-cannes-for-it-was-just-an-accident>