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The 'special relationship': Preparing Britain and America for a new era

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Forewords

Defence is at the heart of the relationship between the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). We fought two world wars together, and we have been side by side in most conflicts since. Our shared values helped to create the open international order, under which world trade has grown and democracies have flourished since the end of the Cold War.

Differences of view across the Atlantic are not new. Challenges closer to home shape each of our priorities, and there have long been American concerns about the equitable sharing of the defence burden between allies. Today, Britain rightly sees Russia as the main threat to the Euro-Atlantic area; America is unsurprisingly concerned with the growing military and economic power of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Indo-Pacific. Both of us must deal with the increasingly hostile coalition between the PRC, Russia, Iran and North Korea.

The UK and US have long had a deeper and broader military and security partnership than other allies. Britain needs to be ready to increase its commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) if and when any American troops and assets are more urgently required to defend their own homeland. We should also collaborate more closely with the US on emerging technologies, critical minerals and munitions.

This valuable Report from the Council on Geostrategy reviews the state of the UK-US relationship today. It pulls no punches about what needs to be done to reinforce that relationship and make it fitter for purpose in the new geopolitical age that we must face together. I hope that His Majesty's (HM) Government will seriously consider each of its recommendations.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Fallon KCB

Secretary of State for Defence (2014-2017)

Member of the Advisory Board, Council on Geostrategy



Forewords

The relationship between the US and UK, often referred to as the ‘special relationship’, has long been a cornerstone of international diplomacy. It has weathered numerous challenges and celebrated many shared triumphs, particularly throughout the 20th century and the first quarter of the 21st century.

This timely Report accurately captures many of the challenges confronting the alliance today, as well as what keeps the two countries so closely tied together. Without agreeing with everything in the Report, I do agree with *many* of the important facts raised and the recommendations which follow, although I do want to emphasise that I am writing this foreword in a personal capacity.

The US is focusing more and more on the Indo-Pacific and the PRC’s global hegemonic aspirations. That is a fact, and an uncomfortable one for the UK, which continues to downgrade the importance of that threat as it spends less and less on defence. For London, Washington’s concerns are of secondary importance to Russia, while the PRC only seems to be considered – if at all – as a source of investment and trade to London.

The strategic importance of the alliance cannot be overstated. Yet, it is crucial to recognise that the world is undergoing rapid transformations. Geopolitical shifts, technological advancements and economic realignments are reshaping the international landscape. These changes necessitate a reassessment of the traditional dynamics between America and Britain.

Specifically, this Report recommends:

- **Interests over values:** The two nations must consider what geostrategic factors bring them together and check to see that they are still aligned.
- **Trade:** The two must ensure that a new trade order supports their principles and their national interests while dealing with distortions in the global economy caused by the PRC.
- **Converging interests:** The two countries are increasingly concerned with rebuilding capability in their defence industrial base.



- **Diverging interests:** The two powers must take note that they are increasingly focused on different regions.

I think the Council on Geostrategy has provided a balanced and insightful perspective, acknowledging both the enduring strengths of the special relationship and the new challenges which must be navigated. I hope that governmental readers on both sides of the Atlantic will take note of the points raised here to ensure that the alliance is both fortified for these challenges and embracing of these opportunities. Let us no longer take this very special relationship for granted.

Adm. (rtd.) Harry Harris

24th Commander, United States Pacific Command

United States Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (2018-2021)



Executive summary

CONTEXT

- While historical foundations and ties have helped to reinforce the ‘special relationship’ between the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US), it was common geopolitical interests which bound the two nations together. Chief among these has been to prevent others from dominating the most industrialised and productive regions of Eurasia.
- As a result, both countries have co-constructed the prevailing international order. Their strength, determination and foresight after the Second World War created alliances and institutions which saw the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the enlargement of that order and the offshoring of manufacturing have empowered adversaries while weakening UK and US strategic industries.
- Geopolitical changes, especially growing Russian and Chinese aggression, as well as political and strategic changes in Britain and America, have led to fresh questions being asked about the future of the special relationship.

QUESTIONS THIS REPORT ADDRESSES:

- What were the fundamental interests which brought the UK and US together, and do they remain cogent?
- How can the two reinforce convergent interests while simultaneously managing divergent interests?
- How can policymakers within the two countries redefine the alliance for a new era of geopolitics and revision of the international order?

KEY FINDINGS

- In the 2020s, areas of converging interests include:



- **Accepting limits on globalisation:** This convergence is currently implicit rather than explicit, though both countries recognise the need to rectify the negative impacts which globalisation has had on their own economies and societies.
- **Rising to the geopolitical challenge:** Both countries express aspirations of leadership and have shown the will to address systemic challenges, although to differing degrees in their respective theatres.
- **Rebuilding the defence industrial base:** Both nations have identified an urgent need to rebuild production capacity and invest in future technologies.
- Areas of diverging interests include:
 - **Theatre priority:** For the first time in decades, there is a strong possibility that the UK and US will prioritise different regions, with Britain focused primarily on the Euro-Atlantic and America on the Indo-Pacific, though both also retain an interest in the Middle East.
 - **Threat precedence:** The UK's stance towards the People's Republic of China (PRC) frustrates Washington, while London worries about a softer US approach towards Russia.
 - **Cooperation preference:** The two countries are somewhat divided on their approach to multilateral institutions, including on climate change and trade arrangements.
- These areas of divergence notwithstanding, Britain and America have made similar diagnoses of the geopolitical problems they face, even if they are starting to focus on them from different directions. The two nations also share clarity of purpose in many areas: they require closer and continued strategic dialogue to realign growing divergences.
- One problem, particularly for the UK, is that while US power has surged ahead, the UK, like many other allies, has fallen behind. Britain has a special interest in strengthening itself – economically, diplomatically and militarily – otherwise its voice will weaken in Washington.



- However, each country is likely to remain the other's most powerful ally well into the 21st century. This necessitates closer cooperation. While the US has other important allies and partners, none of these look set to be more powerful than the UK by the early 2030s, especially if British naval and deterrence capabilities are regenerated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To repurpose the special relationship, the UK and US should:

- 1. Create a new vision of the future of the international order:** Britain and America largely agree on the damage done to their economies and industrial bases by neoliberal economic policies. But they lack a vision and strategy to respond. To chart a way forward with the support of a wider group of key allies, they should:
 - Review the level of rival co-option occurring in existing geoeconomic organisations in order to create new ones where necessary, to deal with trade abuses and to coordinate sanctions more effectively;
 - Explore ways of establishing a new geoeconomic order, designed to reinforce the prosperity and resilience of free and open countries, which seeks to limit the ability of adversaries to compete at the geoeconomic level;
 - Strengthen the alignments between the UK and US scientific and technological bases to generate collaboration on regulations for emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Quantum technologies, behind which like-minded partners can follow.
- 2. Plan for a modulated multi-theatre posture:** There have been signs from American officials that the US will be far less focused on European security. To mitigate the impact of an American reprioritisation away from Britain's primary theatre, the two governments should:
 - Work together – and within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – to create a clear timeline for the move of key US assets from Europe to the Indo-Pacific theatre over the next five to ten years. The aim should be to allow the UK



and other allies to replace those assets in an orderly manner, rather than during a geopolitical emergency in the future;

- Prepare for the UK to provide leadership and enhanced deterrence in Europe;
- Reinforce UK support for US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) in the Indo-Pacific;
- Develop strategic dialogues on the most pressing issues to foster alignment on key national priorities;
- Forge a better understanding of how and where both nations could contribute to a simultaneous multi-front crisis if one were to materialise.

3. Coordinate military production: There is consensus in both countries that greater defence industrial capacity is needed to deter and contain aggressors. The realisation that adversaries are now fielding Chinese technologies will help shape priorities. The UK and US should:

- Commit to spend at least 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence by 2030, with 3.5% on military capabilities and 1.5% on strategic infrastructure, as per the recommendation of Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO;
- Ensure that there is clear direction and prioritisation for transatlantic defence industrial collaboration;
- Prioritise rare earth metal supply chain cooperation; continued PRC control over this vital supply chain is simply not sustainable for future UK-US military industrial expansion and operations;
- Support efforts which contribute to leadership in critical technologies;
- Build up the production and co-production of munitions at the bilateral, minilateral and multilateral levels;
- Cooperate more on co-sustainment, particularly to enable British shipyards to support the US Navy.



If the population of the English-speaking Commonwealths be added to that of the United States with all that such co-operation implies in the air, on the sea, all over the globe and in science and in industry, and in moral force, there will be no quivering, precarious balance of power to offer its temptation to ambition or adventure. On the contrary, there will be an overwhelming assurance of security.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Fulton, Missouri, 6th March 1946



1.0

INTRODUCTION



Is the United States (US) becoming a less reliable ally? Is it relinquishing its focus on the Euro-Atlantic theatre? British policymakers have asked these questions since the ‘special relationship’ began. From the McMahon Act of 1946, whereby America temporarily locked the United Kingdom (UK) out of continued nuclear collaboration, to the Suez and Vietnam crises, the alliance has weathered its storms. Because of the shared geostrategic interests of the two powers, their deep and pervasive alliance remained firm.

Since America’s 2011 ‘pivot’, however, there have been signs that the US will increasingly prioritise the Indo-Pacific region.¹ While the impact of the developing Israeli strikes on Iran remains unclear, Pete Hegseth, US Secretary of Defence, made the new American priority very clear in his first major speech to allies:

We still believe that the “N” in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] stands for North Atlantic and that our European allies should maximise their comparative advantage on the continent...And as our allies share the burden, we can increase our focus on the Indo-Pacific, our priority theatre.²

The rise of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is too great a geopolitical challenge for the US to divide its forces and defend allies which have the capacity to generate the means, but lack the will, to defend themselves.

As they come to terms with the new geopolitical reality, no British (or European) policymaker can say they have been taken by surprise. Donald Trump, President of the US, has been particularly strident in rebuking the inadequate levels of British and European defence spending. But American leaders have cautioned that it is unsustainable for the US to assume over 65% of NATO’s total defence spending for years.³ In the words of Robert Gates, then US Secretary of Defence, in 2011: ‘Future US political leaders – those for whom the Cold War was not the formative experience that it was for me – may not consider the return on America’s

¹ Hillary Clinton, ‘America’s Pacific Century’, *Foreign Policy*, 11/10/2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

² Pete Hegseth, Speech: ‘Remarks by Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth at the 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore (As Delivered)’, Department of Defence (US), 31/05/2025, <https://www.defense.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

³ The collective defence spend of the 32 NATO allies was US\$1.51 trillion (£1.12 trillion) in 2024. Of this, the US accounts for US\$997 billion (£739 billion). See: ‘SIPRI Military Expenditure Database’, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 01/06/2025, <https://milex.sipri.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



investment in NATO worth the cost.’⁴ 15 years have passed since then. With the growing Chinese challenge in the Indo-Pacific, this long-signalled reprioritisation certainly seems to be taking shape: whatever the outcome of the current Israel-Iran conflict, America will no longer cover the cost of subsidising the defence of its European allies.

This affects the UK too. British spending on defence has declined from 7% of NATO’s total in 2014 to just 5.4% in 2024; over the same timeframe, Britain has also fallen from the second largest to the third largest overall spender in the alliance, and has dropped from third to tenth place in terms of the percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocated to defence.⁵ If its military capabilities continue to dwindle, or are overtaken by other allies, the UK’s position as America’s special ally will come into question. As the Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, one of the most highly regarded American think tanks, points out: ‘Although the US-UK alliance will continue to be quite important for both parties, the peerless value of that pairing both in Europe and globally can no longer be assumed.’⁶

With the publication of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), His Majesty’s (HM) Government hopes to prove Britain’s worth to its allies and partners, especially the US. In the words of the review: ‘The United States...is the UK’s closest defence and security ally, reflecting a longstanding and common interest in contributing to global security in this era of strategic competition.’ It also acknowledges: ‘The US is facing a major strategic challenge, with two near-peer nuclear competitors in the form of China and Russia.’ In response to this, the SDR recommends:

The UK should work with it to maximise the relationship’s potential as a force multiplier in renewing deterrence: modernising their respective military forces; leveraging the UK’s niche capabilities and overseas bases; connecting the Euro-Atlantic with key allies in the Indo-Pacific to strengthen collective security in both regions; and building collective defence industrial capacity.⁷

⁴ Robert Gates, Speech, ‘Reflections on the status and future of the transatlantic alliance’, Atlantic Council, 10/06/2011, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵ Data calculated from ‘SIPRI Military Expenditure Database’, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 01/06/2025, <https://milex.sipri.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁶ Hal Brands et al., ‘Critical Assumptions and American Grand Strategy’, Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 24/03/2017, <https://csbaonline.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁷ ‘The Strategic Defence Review 2025: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad’, Ministry of Defence, 02/06/2025, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



But it is not clear whether British politicians and strategists fully realise the extent to which the geopolitical situation has changed and how much effort will be required to lead in the Euro-Atlantic. If Britain wants the relationship with America to remain strong – even special – then it needs to resource its support of US interests more appropriately, while also leveraging America’s resources in support of its own. Ultimately, it needs to start with reducing the gap in defence capabilities between the two nations – difficult, but not impossible.

1.1 Aim and structure

With these issues in mind, this Report aims to provide a hard-headed appraisal of the UK-US relationship, and cuts through any fuzzy notions, as well as disregarding shrill media discourse on President Trump, in order to assess the fundamental elements of the British-American partnership better. This study therefore focuses closely on shared interests and seeks to chart their convergence and divergence since the alliance’s formation during the Second World War. The following research questions drive this study:

1. What were the fundamental interests which brought the UK and US together, and do they remain cogent?
2. How can the two reinforce convergent interests, while simultaneously managing divergent interests?
3. How can policymakers within the two countries redefine the special relationship for a new era of geopolitics and revision of the global trading order?

In answering these questions, the study begins by identifying and outlining the shared interests and enablers of the alliance in a historical context, before assessing the national strategies of the two countries over the last decade. It then looks at where interests align or differ, before offering analysis on how each nation will retain strategic significance to the other into the 21st century. As it does so, it offers a number of policy recommendations to help alliance managers on both sides of the Atlantic prepare for a new era of the strategic relationship.



2.0

THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT



The special relationship was not a historic inevitability. While the two nations share a common language, culture and historical inheritance, these did not prevent them from fighting two wars against one another or from competing for influence. They only started to see one another as allies when their interests began to align in the late 19th century, not least as Germany, Japan and Russia industrialised and developed mechanised armed forces with which to dominate Europe and Asia. As offshore powers, the UK and US relied heavily on access to open seas and foreign markets, with the First World War giving a foretaste of the challenge they would face if a continental European state became too strong.

But it was the Second World War which showed them that they shared the same *fundamental interests*. In the words of Nicholas Spykman, the late Professor of International Relations at Yale University, in 1942:

The position of the United States in regard to Europe as a whole is...identical to the position of Great Britain in regard to the European Continent. The scale is different, the units are larger, and the distances are greater, but the pattern is the same. We have an interest in the European balance as the British have an interest in the continental balance.⁸

After the war, London and Washington, after initial blips, realised they needed to work together to maintain order in the ‘rimlands’ of Eurasia (see: Map 1), especially in Europe.⁹ This ultimately led to a broader global strategy, which embraced a two-track approach: first, to contain the Soviet Union and its proxies, when necessary beyond Europe, including in Asia; and second, to prevent the resurgence of the ‘autarkic, radicalising impulses’ of the pre-1945 period, particularly in the countries they had liberated from German and Japanese occupation.¹⁰

⁸ Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York City: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1942), p. 98.

⁹ Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York City: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1944), p. 52.

¹⁰ Hal Brands, ‘The Renegade Order: How Trump Wields American Power’, *Foreign Affairs*, 25/02/2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



MAP 1: HISTORICAL FOCUS OF BRITISH-AMERICAN GEOSTRATEGY¹¹

¹¹ Adapted from: Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, p. 52.



2.1 Historical foundations of the special relationship

While their interests aligned, both Britain and America shared a number of common attributes, which also made it easier for each to understand the other. These included:

- **Shared geographies:** Both powers straddle the North Atlantic. By working together, Britain and America have exploited and multiplied their geographic positions to leverage influence in Europe, while also building up a network of overseas bases to support access to other theatres, particularly the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Maritime power:** One an island state and the other a continent surrounded by ocean, the two nations learnt to work with their geographic disposition. By leveraging sea power, Britain and America could maintain access to, and to prevent hostile powers from taking control of, key regions and markets.
- **Connected economies:** The British and American economies have been heavily intertwined since the colonial era. During the 19th century, British capital was vital to America's industrialisation, while the two countries emerged as the leading market economies of the 20th century. Underpinned by stable national legal environments based on common law, London and New York emerged as command centres for the global economy.¹²
- **Technological pioneers:** Both nations are acutely aware of the relationship between great power status and technological innovation. British and American inventions have driven the three industrial revolutions: (i) mechanised manufacturing, (ii) electricity and chemistry, and (iii) the information and communications technology (ICT) revolution.
- **Common institutions:** The UK and the US have developed robust democratic institutions, underpinned by the rule of law and stable

¹² 'World Cities 2024', Globalisation and World Cities, 2024, <https://gawc.lboro.ac.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and 'Global Power City Index 2024', Institute for Urban Strategies, 2024, <https://mori-m-foundation.or.jp/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



two-party systems, which have helped both countries evolve organically and survive numerous internal and external shocks.

Besides their shared interest in preventing a hostile state from gaining control over the rimlands of Eurasia, the two allies have attempted to craft an international order to reflect their historical foundations. Their strategy after the war was not merely one of containment: they also sought to buttress power with principle in the new international order. The Atlantic Charter, signed in 1941, offered a new vision for the post-war world; it provided the principles which would feed into the establishment of the United Nations (UN), the Bretton Woods system and, most importantly of all, NATO. While there were disagreements throughout the Cold War, the two allies worked together within a number of collective groupings – in the Five Eyes intelligence network, in NATO and in the American alliance network in Asia – to see the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

2.2 The alliance in the post-Cold War era

In the initial haze of the post-Cold War euphoria, Britain and America promoted globalisation around the world. Nations once under the Soviet yoke were integrated into the Euro-Atlantic economy, while the UK and US contained rogue states – such as Iraq and Serbia – with military force, and confronted Islamist extremism in Afghanistan. The resulting post-Cold War order has been more complex, more international, more productive, and certainly more inclusive of former foes, than any which preceded it.

Economically, however, the two countries did not share the same trajectory. For the first 15 years after the Soviet collapse, save for some disruption in the late 1990s – the so-called 'dot-com bubble' – the British and American economies saw rapid growth. The UK's economy grew particularly strongly, to the extent that it reached US levels of GDP per capita by the mid-2000s. However, the Great Recession of 2007-2009 hit Britain very hard, and subsequent governments in London reduced investment in national infrastructure, research and development (R&D) and defence to uphold high levels of welfare spending.

By the 2020s, the US had pulled ahead of the UK by a significant margin. As Table 1 shows, in 2005, America's economy was 5.12 times larger than Britain's, while American GDP per capita was approximately



the same size. Estimates for 2025 place the American economy at 7.95 times larger and US GDP per capita at 1.62 times larger than the UK's – an increase of over 55% for both. Alongside the economic malaise, Britain's decision to cut investment in defence to dangerously low levels after 2010 also took its toll, resulting in reduced mass and military capabilities. These changes in relative power occurred despite the American population increasing only marginally – i.e., 2.3% – over that of Britain's over the same timeframe.

TABLE 1: US RELATIVE TO UK POWER (MULTIPLES LARGER)

Indicator	2005	2025	US increase (2005-2025)
Population ¹³	4.88	4.99	2.3%
GDP ¹⁴	5.12	7.95	55.3%
GDP per capita ¹⁵	1.04	1.62	55.8%
Defence spending ¹⁶	8.65	12.20	41.0%

Nevertheless, the alliance between both countries remained close. The UK and US continued to cooperate under a slew of different prime ministers and presidents during the 2010s and early 2020s, which culminated in the New Atlantic Charter in 2021 – to celebrate the 80th

¹³ For data, see: 'Total population by sex (United Kingdom and United States)', United Nations Population Division, 2024, <https://population.un.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

¹⁴ For data, see: 'World Economic Outlook (April 2025)', International Monetary Fund, 04/2025, <https://www.imf.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 'SIPRI Military Expenditure Database', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 01/06/2025, <https://milex.sipri.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



anniversary of the Atlantic Charter – and the Atlantic Declaration in 2022.¹⁷

2.2.1 NATIONAL STRATEGIES COMPARED (2015-2025)

Since 2015, British and American strategy has refocused on geopolitical competition rather than the previous post-Cold War emphasis on rogue states and political and religious extremism. In the UK, this shift began with the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review. Coming shortly after the Russian annexation of Crimea, it highlighted the ‘resurgence of state-based threats; and intensifying wider state competition’ as well as the ‘erosion of the rules-based international order’.¹⁸ The 2021 Integrated Review took this a step further in recognising the ‘intensification’ of geopolitics and the requirement for a more activist approach to shaping the international order. There was also a marked shift in the view of the PRC as a ‘systemic challenge’ rather than just an economic opportunity.¹⁹ The 2023 Integrated Review Refresh reaffirmed much of the Integrated Review’s analysis, but took stock of the consequences of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine which began in February 2022.²⁰

The US has also published a number of strategies over the last decade, the most significant of which is the National Security Strategy (NSS), published in 2015, 2017 and 2022. The 2015 NSS came as the Obama administration’s ‘pivot to Asia’ – first announced in 2011 – progressed. It identified the shifting centre of geopolitical gravity towards the Indo-Pacific, but was reluctant to highlight directly how state-based competition was returning in force. Despite the pivot, it retained a focus on the continued threats of terrorism and growing Russian aggression.

The 2017 NSS represented a step change in US thinking, however, highlighting the PRC alongside Russia as the most serious challenges to American power and interests. One of the most significant sections outlined how these threats ‘require the United States to rethink the

¹⁷ See: ‘The New Atlantic Charter 2021’, 10 Downing Street, 10/06/2021, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and ‘The Atlantic Declaration’, 10 Downing Street, 21/06/2023, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

¹⁸ ‘National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015’, Cabinet Office, 23/11/2015, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

¹⁹ ‘Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy’, Cabinet Office, 07/03/2021, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

²⁰ ‘Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world’, Cabinet Office, 13/03/2023, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



policies of the past two decades’, ‘policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and the global trading system would turn them into benign actors’.²¹ Though even more heavily focused on the Indo-Pacific, the strategy still maintained that Europe remained an area of importance for the US, and one where America would maintain its presence. A recurring feature was for the desire for US allies to assume more burden-sharing.

Despite political differences, the 2022 NSS was remarkably similar in tone to the 2017 NSS, differing only in its emphasis on multilateralism. The 2022 NSS identified the single most important challenge as the fact that ‘the post-Cold War era is definitively over and a competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next’, with the key priority being ‘outcompeting China and constraining Russia.’²² It went on to explain that the US wanted to create a ‘free, open and prosperous’ international order, but that despite intensifying competition, it did not desire to create ‘a world in which competition escalates into a world of rigid blocs’.²³

The UK and US will each introduce new national security and defence strategies over the next 12 months; the first part of Britain’s has just been released in the form of the SDR.²⁴ The review takes the challenge of geopolitical competition to its logical conclusion – direct attack on the British Isles – and advances a ‘NATO First’ but ‘not NATO only’ approach (see: Box 1).²⁵ The SDR will be followed by a UK National Security Strategy in June 2025. The US plans to publish new national defence and national security strategies in late 2025 and 2026, respectively – Interim Defence Strategic Guidance has already been circulated within the American system, but has yet to be released.²⁶ *The Washington Post* quotes from a copy of the internal memorandum in which Hegseth asserts: ‘China is the Department’s sole pacing threat, and

²¹ ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America’, The White House, 12/2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

²² ‘National Security Strategy’, The White House, 10/2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

²³ ‘National Security Strategy’, The White House, 10/2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

²⁴ ‘The Strategic Defence Review 2025: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad’, Ministry of Defence, 02/06/2025, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ On 1st May 2025, Hegseth released a memorandum ordering the US Department of Defence to compile a National Defence Strategy by 31st August 2025. See: ‘Memorandum for all Department of Defence personnel – Subject: National Defence Strategy’, Department of Defence (US), <https://media.defense.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



denial of a Chinese *fait accompli* seizure of Taiwan – while simultaneously defending the US homeland is the Department’s sole pacing scenario.²⁷ This is not to say that America will not have other interests, but that those in the Indo-Pacific will be increasingly the priority.

BOX 1: SDR: KEY POINTS

1. **‘IF YOU WANT PEACE, PREPARE FOR WAR’:** Britain’s adversaries – particularly Russia and the PRC, but also Iran and North Korea – are ‘working more in alliance with one another’. Their collaboration is challenging the foundations of the prevailing international order, while the British Isles are not immune from direct attack, especially from Russia.
2. **‘NATO FIRST...BUT NOT NATO ONLY’:** The UK will step up its commitment to NATO through additional contributions to extended nuclear deterrence and through the ‘Atlantic Bastion’ concept – sea control in the North Atlantic. The Middle East and the Indo-Pacific are supplementary but still important regions for the UK, not least as two of the country’s key military programmes – AUKUS and the Global Combat Aircraft Programme (GCAP) – involve Indo-Pacific partners. Through AUKUS, the Royal Navy plans to procure up to 12 large nuclear attack submarines (SSNs) for use across both theatres.
3. **NUCLEAR ‘BEDROCK’:** Given that ‘Russia’s increasing reliance on nuclear coercion will be the central challenge for the UK and its NATO allies in the coming decades’, the British nuclear deterrent will be modernised and potentially expanded after ‘commencing discussions with the United States and NATO on the potential benefits and feasibility of enhanced UK participation in NATO’s nuclear mission.’
4. **‘DEFENCE DIVIDEND’:** Britain needs to reform and rebuild its defence industrial base alongside greater innovation in exploring and adopting new military technologies. The UK will move to ‘always on’ munitions capacity so that production can be ramped up in the event of an

²⁷ Alex Horton and Hannah Natanson, ‘Secret Pentagon memo on China, homeland has Heritage fingerprints’, *The Washington Post*, 29/03/2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



emergency. Over 7,000 cruise missiles will be manufactured to enhance Britain's 'deep strike' capability.

5. **'THE INTEGRATED FORCE':** The British Armed Forces will move from a multi-domain mindset to one integrated by default to ensure that the different branches of the military work together more seamlessly.



3.0

EMERGING CONVERGENCIES AND DIVERGENCIES



Through a combination of the comparison of recent national strategies, recent statements by key political and military figures, recent actions, and off-the-record conversations with both American and British officials, it becomes clear where UK and US strategic policy is converging and diverging.²⁸ In terms of convergences, the two nations appear ready to reappraise the value of globalisation and free trade, embrace the logic of geopolitical competition and regenerate their respective defence industrial bases. In terms of divergences, Britain and America are starting to assign different priority to geopolitical theatres, adversaries, and multilateral deals and climate change.

3.1 Convergences

Globalisation and free trade: Throughout most of the post-Cold War era, both the UK and US embraced a number of economic ideas. The first was that they could relinquish ‘productive force’, namely the capacity to manufacture at scale.²⁹ The second was that markets knew best what economic activity should be prioritised. As Michael Boskin, 15th Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors to George H. Bush, allegedly stated in the early 1990s: ‘Potato chips, computer chips: what’s the difference? A hundred dollars of one or a hundred dollars of the other is still a hundred dollars.’³⁰ Britain and America assumed they could:

- Focus on higher value economic activities, particularly in the service sector, such as finance and the design of software and internet applications;
- Offshore manufacturing to the PRC and other countries to reduce costs;
- Coax emerging powers, particularly the PRC, into becoming – in the words of Robert Zoellick, then US Deputy Secretary of State – ‘responsible stakeholders’ in the global economy.³¹

²⁸ In research for this study, the authors consulted with over 30 current and former officials and military officers from varied backgrounds from both sides of the Atlantic.

²⁹ John Bew, ‘The rise of machinepolitik’, *The New Statesman*, 05/12/2024, <https://www.newstatesman.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

³⁰ Clyde V. Prestowitz, ‘Beyond Laissez Faire’, *Foreign Affairs*, 87 (1992), p. 67.

³¹ Robert Zoellick, Speech: ‘Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?’, Department of State (US), 21/09/2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



As they grew wealthier, these newly industrialised powers would then generate new markets for British and American high value services, creating a virtuous circle of economic growth and innovation.

In recent years, however, the US – more so than the UK – has started to realise that the PRC has no intention of becoming a ‘responsible stakeholder’. The first Trump administration, and then the Biden administration, grasped that the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) five-year plans and innovation and technology strategies were being designed to capture global markets in the disruptive technologies which will shape the future of the global economy.³² America’s Secure and Trusted Communications Networks and CHIPS and Science acts of 2019 and 2022 represent efforts to shut the PRC out of the American market while regenerating the US industrial and technological base.

The UK has yet to embrace the implications of the CCP’s mercantilist strategy fully, and continues to treat the PRC as a trade partner, which it sees as supportive of British economic growth. This is partly due to Britain’s historic and often ideological predisposition to free trade, but this is changing. Sir Keir Starmer, Prime Minister, has said that ‘old assumptions can no longer be taken for granted’ on trade, and Darren Jones, Chief Secretary to HM Treasury, stated that ‘the era of globalisation has ended’.³³ Clearly, there is some convergence in both countries on the idea that poorly regulated globalisation and free trade have had negative effects on both nations’ economic and geopolitical wellbeing. The diagnosis on both sides of the Atlantic is the same, but the proposed solutions, for now, await further development.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UK-US RELATIONS

1. Britain and America have some level of convergence on negative aspects of the current trade system, but they diverge widely on what to do about them.

³² For example, see: ‘中国制造2025’ [‘Made in China 2025’]; ‘“十四五”国家信息化规划’ [“The 14th Five-Year Plan” for National Informatisation’]; and ‘国家创新驱动发展战略纲要’ [‘Outline of the National Innovation-Driven Development Strategy’]. For translations, see: Centre for Security and Emerging Technology, Translations, No date, <https://cset.georgetown.edu/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

³³ See: Keir Starmer, ‘The world as we knew it has gone. Nobody wins from a trade war’, *The Telegraph*, 05/04/2025, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and Jennifer McKiernan, ‘Globalisation era has ended, says Treasury minister’, *BBC News*, 06/04/2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



2. The US – with strong bipartisan support – has already begun forging ahead in its response to the PRC, without the UK.
3. Continued ambiguity on UK economic policy towards the PRC risks undermining the special relationship and contributing to a worsening of the global trade system.

Geopolitical competition: Both the UK and US have made similar diagnoses of the current geopolitical picture and the key trends which will define international relations over the coming years. Just as Russia and the PRC have taken advantage of globalisation, they have also expanded their military capabilities and their capacity to engage in forms of economic and discursive statecraft. Rather than becoming ‘responsible stakeholders’, Russia and the PRC in particular have spent years – since at least the mid-2000s – learning to subvert democratic societies, penetrate non-aligned countries and challenge or even take control of elements of the prevailing international order.

Recent British and American strategies and analysis recognise that the next ten years will be particularly dangerous: the PRC and Russia, alongside Iran and North Korea – known as the ‘deadly quartet’, ‘CRINK’, or ‘axis of upheaval’ – are now understood to be coordinating their efforts in the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, compounding their revisionist capacity.³⁴ Long-term trends – particularly demographic ones (for example, the size of the working age population in the PRC will fall by around 280 million by 2055) – mean that Beijing’s window of opportunity may start to close by the mid-2030s.³⁵ The PRC is cognisant of the fact that it faces long-term economic and demographic challenges, and is working hard to minimise adverse effects. However, the UK and US are both aligned on their thinking that even after this ten-year window, strategic competition will not disappear.

³⁴ See, for example: James Rogers, ‘Rise of the CRINK?’, *Britain’s World*, 24/10/2024, <https://www.britainsworld.org.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025), David Hughes, ‘Russia, China, Iran and North Korea are “deadly quartet” – defence review chief’, *The Independent*, 16/07/2024, <https://www.independent.co.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and Andrew Kendall-Taylor and Richard Fontaine, ‘The Axis of Upheaval’, *Foreign Affairs*, 05/06/2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

³⁵ ‘Global Strategic Trends: Out to 2055’, Ministry of Defence, 27/09/2024, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



IMPLICATIONS FOR UK-US RELATIONS

1. Strategists and policymakers in both countries agree on the geopolitical nature of the current system, but are still adapting to the new reality.
2. Both nations broadly agree on the problematic nations – the CRINK – but are beginning to prioritise Russia and the PRC differently.
3. Without greater dialogue at the political and official levels, the UK and US may decouple on differing threats perceptions of Russia and the PRC by default.

Defence industrial base: The UK and the US allowed their defence industries to atrophy in the aftermath of the Cold War, a point which hit home in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.³⁶ There are now hurried efforts to rebuild this capacity given that Ukraine's defence efforts have shown how important access to a wide industrial pool is to sustain a high-intensity conflict. In the debate regarding 'guns versus butter', it has been clear for years that the two are not mutually exclusive: a country can have both, as the defence industry contributes to R&D in the civilian economy, highly skilled labour and foreign sales revenues.³⁷

For decades, there have been close connections between the British and American defence sectors. According to the British-American Business Network, US headquartered companies spend on average £5.23 billion in the UK each year, and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) spends on average over £5.9 billion with the US each year (an average of £3.5 billion each year directly with US headquartered companies plus £2.4 billion on Foreign Military Sales and International Collaborative Agreements).³⁸

Consequently, Britain has long sought to maintain a genuinely Euro-Atlantic defence industrial base, and is averse to attempts to create a European Union (EU)-only one. While the recent UK-EU trade deal lays

³⁶ James Landel, 'Ukraine War: Western allies say they are running out of ammunition', BBC News, 03/10/2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

³⁷ Andrew Dorman, Matthew Uttley and Benedict Wilkinson, 'A Benefit not a Burden: Security, Economic, and Strategic Value of Britain's Defence Industry', The Policy Institute, King's College London, 04/2015 <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

³⁸ 'Stronger Together: How US-UK Cooperation Contributes to the Revival of the UK's Defence Industrial Base', British-American Business Network, 03/02/2025, <https://www.babinc.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



the groundwork for potential future British access to the €150 billion (£126.5 billion) loan instrument called ‘Security Action for Europe’ (SAFE), London continues to view access to the vast US defence industrial base as key to its own security as well as transatlantic cohesion. The technological advances being made in America reinforce Britain’s interest in avoiding the disintegration of the transatlantic defence industrial market. The difference in investment in this area is stark: the US Department of Defence’s R&D budget for 2024 was US\$140 billion (£103.4 billion), compared to a combined EU member spend of €11 billion (£9.2 billion) – for reference, the MOD’s R&D budget in 2023 was £2.6 billion.³⁹

Over the last few years, there have been promising signs of progress in relation to interoperability and interchangeability at the level of design within the framework of the Atlantic Declaration, as well as the National Technology and Industrial Base (NTIB), a US-led project to integrate Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK into the American defence industrial ecosystem. Equally, AUKUS has led to International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) barriers being reduced, and presents a template for increased innovation in disruptive technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum technologies and hypersonic weapons. Both countries are working towards similar defence industrial goals (sometimes bilaterally, but also with other countries), including building supply chain resilience, in particular regarding critical minerals.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UK-US RELATIONS

1. The requirement to rebuild the defence industrial base is a matter of national priority for both countries, yet the UK has still to commit to set timelines for spending increases.
2. There is a need for greater funding initiatives to support defence industrial expansion, in particular access to cheap finance.
3. The Atlantic Declaration covers the defence industry, but there are still gaps which should be addressed in a future UK–US trade deal.

³⁹ See: ‘Defence Budget Overview’, Office of the Under Secretary of Defence (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, 04/04/2024, <https://comptroller.defense.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and ‘Research and development expenditure by the UK government: 2023’, Office for National Statistics, 09/04/2025, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



3.2 Divergences

Theatre priority: During the Cold War, the UK and US feared the potential consequences of Soviet domination of the entire European continent – the world’s most heavily industrialised region – and both prioritised the Euro-Atlantic. Today, this prioritisation remains unchanged for Britain: while London knows Russia lacks the power base from which to dominate Europe like the Soviet Union once could, it still sees the Kremlin as the most ‘immediate’ and ‘pressing’ threat.⁴⁰ As an archipelago off the northwestern coast of Europe, the UK would feel the consequences of Russian aggression in the Euro-Atlantic far more than the US would.

But, for Washington, Europe is now a theatre of secondary importance; America expects Europeans to take the lead in deterring Russia. The Indo-Pacific is the priority region. This has been a trend since 2011, when Barack Obama, then President of the US, promised a ‘pivot’ to Asia.

Under the Biden administration, the US grew increasingly reluctant to provide military aid to Ukraine. This is because a vigorous debate broke out in Washington over the efficacy of providing certain munitions to a European partner when the PRC’s surging power threatened America’s ability to uphold its interests in the Indo-Pacific. The Trump administration looks set to embrace this perspective fully.⁴¹

But, more than that, America’s westward economic orientation is also driving its refocus on the Indo-Pacific. On independence, the US was entirely Atlantic-facing. While the construction of transcontinental railways and the Panama Canal gave the country a Pacific vocation, its economic centre of gravity remained Atlanticist. In recent years, though, just as the economic gravity of the Indo-Pacific has eclipsed that of the Euro-Atlantic, the economic weight of America’s Pacific seaboard has grown considerably: California’s economy is now, by some margin, the largest of any state in the US; it would rank fourth in the world if California was an independent country (behind the US, the PRC and Germany, but ahead of India, Japan and the UK).⁴² California is now home to three of the world’s top ten most economically powerful cities – Los

⁴⁰ ‘The Strategic Defence Review 2025: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad’, Ministry of Defence, 02/06/2025, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁴¹ ‘US wants UK military to focus more on Europe and away from Asia’, *Financial Times*, 07/05/2025, <https://www.ft.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁴² ‘California is now the 4th largest economy in the world’, Governor Gavin Newsom, 23/04/2025, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



Angeles, San Jose and San Francisco – and many of the advanced industries which will be key to future growth, such as those clustered in Silicon Valley.⁴³

IMPLICATIONS FOR UK-US RELATIONS

1. For the first time since the Second World War, Britain and America may no longer share the same understanding of the priority theatre.
2. This is not a short-term blip. The US looks set to conduct its long-signalled military reprioritisation from the European continent, the exact shape of which will remain to be seen, but one which the UK will need to factor further into its strategic posture with NATO allies.
3. There is a growing need for both countries to be able to ‘surge’ their assets into Europe and the Indo-Pacific respectively, should a geopolitical contingency emerge.

Threat precedence: Related to the diverging views on theatre priority is a growing bifurcation on approaches to the key adversaries in each theatre, namely Russia and the PRC. In previous years, the US still viewed Russia as an adversary to be constrained, even if it was not the primary priority.

However, there appears to be a shift in American strategy underway: the US desire seems to be to slow down the pace at which Russia-PRC ties are deepening, potentially even offering incentives to try and drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing. For its part, the UK appears to be doing the opposite, attempting to offer incentives to the PRC to improve relations and draw it away from Russia.

Since 2021, HM Government has described Russia at first as a ‘direct’ and ‘acute’ and then as an ‘immediate’ and ‘pressing’ threat to the security of the British Isles, as well as the wider European security architecture.⁴⁴ The UK has an interest in seeing Russia’s imperialist

⁴³ See: ‘Global Cities Index 2025’, Oxford Economics, 2025, <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁴⁴ See: ‘Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy’, Cabinet Office, 07/03/2021, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and ‘The Strategic Defence Review 2025: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad’, Ministry of Defence, 02/06/2025, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



ambitions defeated and contained. A softer American position on Russia is extremely unnerving for European NATO members; although the US position on NATO is perhaps more justified than the panic would suggest.

On the other side of Eurasia, the US is deeply concerned with the PRC's sustained and substantial expansion and modernisation of its armed forces, as well as the risk of a conflict with the PRC over Taiwan. In addition, America has long held serious concerns over Chinese espionage and active measures inside the US and its allies and partners. Many European countries – Britain included – have for many years seen access to the Chinese market and Beijing's deep pockets as an easy 'fix' to sluggish economic growth and infrastructure development. They have long downplayed the dangers to national security posed by Chinese influence operations inside the UK or investment in sensitive sectors. Given expanding Chinese technological and military prowess, a soft British and European position on the PRC remains deeply frustrating to Washington.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UK-US RELATIONS

1. The differing approaches towards adversaries are a far more serious divergence than differences on theatre priority; continued divergence along these lines could erode trust between the UK and the US.
2. The importance of continued transatlantic cooperation, relative to the value that any potential wedge strategies between Moscow and Beijing could achieve, is being overlooked.
3. There will be a major crisis in US–UK ties and US–NATO ties if allies remain neutral in a military exchange between the US and PRC. This could risk the entirety of the relationship.

Preference for cooperation: The US has long had a complicated relationship with multilateral institutions such as the UN, even though it played a decisive role in their creation. America tends to ignore or sideline multilateral institutions if it views them as infringing upon its sovereignty or national interests, whereas the UK is strongly attached to multilateral institutions – most recently going so far as to treat advisory



rulings as binding (such as in the case of the British Indian Ocean Territory).⁴⁵

While it is true that Britain and America are in broad agreement that trade distortions caused by globalisation have disproportionately affected their manufacturing sectors, there is yet to be agreement on the solution. Since 2016, both parties in the US have looked askance at multilateral trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and become increasingly disillusioned by trade bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This is partly because of the impact which these groupings have had on offshoring American manufacturing and on the blue collar sector, and partly because the overriding ‘winner’ of this trend has been the PRC. The US has embarked on a campaign of resetting trade relations by setting tariffs against those trading partners which unfairly penalise American goods. It is notable that the Biden administration maintained many of the tariffs on the PRC set in the first Trump administration, showing that this shift is not partisan.

By contrast, the UK – in part because it is less able to sustain growth through domestic consumption than the American economy – clings to the idea of multilateral trade blocs and treats the dissipation of its manufacturing sector as a domestic, not foreign policy, issue. While it left the EU in 2020 as a result of the 2016 referendum, trade factored very little in the debate; ‘Leavers’ cited identity and immigration as the most important reasons for wanting to withdraw.⁴⁶ Britain has not abandoned multilateral trade groupings; indeed, it has pursued such groupings since leaving the EU, and seeks closer relations with the bloc.

Climate change is another area of divergence, whereby the US administration has prioritised economic growth and energy autonomy while pulling funding from US Government departments, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as support for numerous international climate-related institutions and agreements. In contrast, the UK remains heavily vested in multilateral agreements which emphasise climate change, and the Labour government has re-emphasised the goal of Net Zero inherited from previous Conservative governments, announcing new legislation relevant to Net Zero such as the Great British Energy Bill and the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Bill.

⁴⁵ Yuan Yi Zhu and Tom Grant, ‘Sovereignty and Security in the Indian Ocean’, Policy Exchange, 27/10/2023, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁴⁶ Harold Clarke, Matthew Goodwin and Paul Whiteley, *Brexit: Why Britain really voted to leave the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).



Within this divergent view on the importance of multilateralism, however, there is some convergence on the growing value of minilateralism. Over the last two decades, both Britain and America have established a number of minilateral groups – such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, AUKUS, the Joint Expeditionary Force, and the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral – to further their security interests in smaller aligned groups.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UK-US RELATIONS

1. The UK and US have very different preferences for multilateralism and different understandings of climate change. These are unlikely to be bridged soon.
2. Given divergences, both London and Washington will have to consider which disagreements in multilateral institutions and on multilateral issues are worth downplaying and which ones would represent red lines for each other.
3. Both countries see eye-to-eye on minilateralism. There are opportunities for the further development of AUKUS or the establishment of new minilateral organisations.



Cooperation and joint leadership is as essential today as ever – both internationally and for the security and prosperity of our people at home. To achieve this, we must keep pace with changes in the world around us and adapt our alliance to them.

ATLANTIC DECLARATION

Washington, 21st June 2023



4.0

REPURPOSING THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP



Given the potential for further divergence between the UK and US – particularly over theatre priority and the prioritisation of adversaries – is their deep and pervasive relationship, forged during the tumultuous 20th century, starting to come undone? To no small extent, this depends on what London and Washington make of the alliance in the years ahead. The two countries retain a remarkably similar understanding of the problems they face, despite their increasingly different priorities. Most, if not all, of the historical foundations which helped to cement the special relationship remain in place, even if some have become less important than they once were. The two countries look set to remain each other's most powerful ally well into the 21st century.

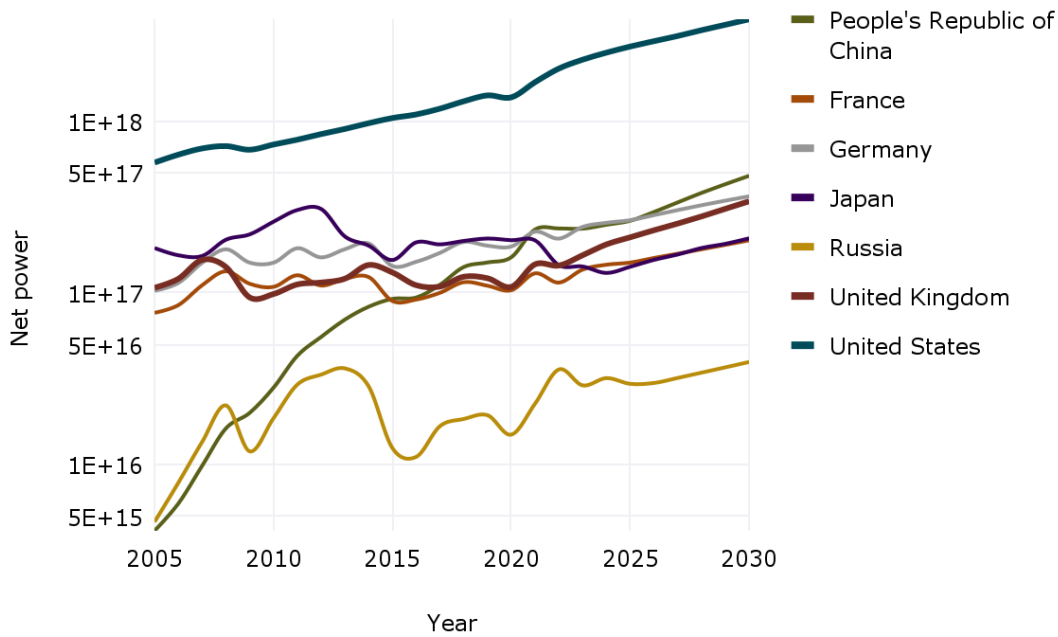
Despite gloomy prognosis after the Great Recession, US power did not decline. Measuring national power is a difficult task with multiple different approaches – each with their own merits – but taking GDP as the most basic indicator, US power troughed in 2011 when its share of global GDP reached a low point of 21%; since then it has risen considerably to almost 27%.⁴⁷ If looked at through the lens of 'net power' – the resources which remain after accounting for subsistence, welfare and security costs – despite a rapid spurt in the growth in Chinese strength during the 2000s and 2010s, America's overall lead has continued to hold (see: Graph 1),⁴⁸ even if the US needs to regenerate its manufacturing force.

⁴⁷ For data, see: 'GDP, current prices', International Monetary Fund, 04/2025, <https://www.imf.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁴⁸ 'Net power' is measured through GDP (a proxy for gross power) x GDP per capita (a proxy for technological and organisational sophistication). For the methodology and analytical superiority of this measure of national power, see: Michael Beckley, 'The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters', *International Security*, 01/11/2018, <https://direct.mit.edu/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



GRAPH 1: NET POWER OF THE MAJOR POWERS



While the UK's net power has declined in relation to that of the US, its prospects look better than those of Germany, Japan and France, three other important American allies – to say nothing of Russia's. HM Government should compound this lead by focusing on its mission to strengthen the UK's power base.⁴⁹ Previous British governments attempted to stimulate economic growth with mixed success. The good news is that the UK's economy has very recently picked up: in the first quarter of 2025, Britain had the fastest growing economy of the Group of Seven (G7).⁵⁰ Leveraging the close relationship with the US – by far the largest and most technologically powerful economy on Earth – through mutual collaboration on investment and technology sharing will be one route for the UK to accelerate these efforts. America should also take note: absent robust US economic engagement and investment, it will be easier for the UK to look to the PRC for opportunities.

But how could the UK and US strengthen their relationship? There are three main areas: creating a new vision for international order,

⁴⁹ 'Kickstart economic growth', *Labour's Manifesto*, 2024, <https://labour.org.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵⁰ 'GDP international comparisons: Economic indicators', House of Commons Library, 16/05/2025, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



preparing for a modulated multi-theatre posture and coordinating military production.

4.1 Create a new vision of the international order

There is growing recognition in British and American policy circles that the international order (particularly the global trading system) is harming British and American interests.⁵¹ The post-Cold War attempt to transform Russia and the PRC into ‘responsible stakeholders’ by including them in, for example, the WTO and by inviting Russia to join the G7, has not worked. Russia has resumed its imperialist ambitions, challenging the central tenets – self determination and national sovereignty – of the United Nations Charter. And the enduring subversion of the WTO system by the PRC, which has long since abandoned its pre-accession commitments to reform its state-owned enterprises, has caused major market distortions and trade imbalances.

This is not merely a result of domestic driven growth policy, but rather the result of careful Chinese strategy. This study cannot go through the numerous strategic documents which lay out the PRC’s mercantilist approach towards technology, but, needless to say, there is an increasing awareness in the US and – to a growing degree – in the institutions of the EU that Beijing is not playing by the rules. For example, the solar energy sector reveals the PRC’s playbook clearly: by subsidising its industries in the 2000s, the PRC had achieved 80% of all stages of global solar panel manufacturing and 97% of cell manufacturing capacity by 2022.⁵² Other strategic sectors where this approach has worked include the steel sector, machine tools, semiconductors, shipbuilding, 5G telecommunications, electrical vehicles, autonomous vehicles and AI.

The uncomfortable truth is that for 30 years, British, North American and European economic policy has fuelled the modernisation and militarisation of Russia and the PRC. Designing new trade institutions and limiting access to the critical parts of the UK and US economies will help both countries to regenerate their industrial capacity and ability to uphold the international order. To some extent, the two have already jettisoned aspects of the neoliberal economic ideology which advocated the removal of national barriers to the flow of capital,

⁵¹ ‘Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy’, Cabinet Office, 07/03/2021, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵² ‘Special Report on Solar PV Global Supply Chains’, International Energy Agency, 2022, <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



goods and people in the pursuit of free trade, and have put in place laws and politics designed to secure economies from malicious investment, to prioritise domestic reshoring and to prioritise supply chain security.

Any sort of systematic economic break, especially with the PRC, will be difficult, but in the long term, a *sectoral decoupling* will be needed. It is time that Britain and America, alongside their closest allies and partners, develop new architectures which fulfil a number of functions. Firstly, they should provide a space for collective countermeasures, as existing institutions gum up through Russian and Chinese obstruction. Secondly, they should allow a space for new economic dialogue and trade rules. An insistence on defending the carcass of the WTO is no longer viable; it merely empowers the PRC by failing to address Chinese practices which distort the global economy.

There were earlier efforts – one only need think of the calls of John McCain, late US Senator, in 2007 for a ‘League of Democracies’ or Boris Johnson’s attempts to transform the G7 into the ‘Democratic Ten’ (D10) – to provide a new vision for the international order. Dismissed at the time as being unrealistic, these proposals proved prescient. While Britain and America cannot impose a new international order without others, they can provide intellectual inspiration and provide greater impetus. By working together to generate new institutions, the UK and US should rally their Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific allies and partners behind a new, more exclusive vision of order – one which embraces greater minilateralism and efforts to exclude disruptors and those who seek to secure an unfair advantage.

4.1.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review the level of revival co-option occurring in existing geoeconomic organisations in order to create new ones where necessary, to deal with trade abuses and to coordinate sanctions more effectively.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Develop new minilateral institutions which supplant and replace those which are increasingly ineffective, building on the lessons of failed attempts to do so in the past (such as with the League of Democracies and the D10).
 - **EXAMPLE:** Turn the proposed Defence, Security and Resilience Bank into an institution which crowds in investment from like-minded countries, to enable cheap



finance for rearmament (as one of the first of the new minilateral institutions).⁵³

- Explore ways of establishing a new geoeconomic order designed to reinforce the prosperity and resilience of free and open countries, which seeks to limit the ability of adversaries to compete at the geoeconomic level.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Establish a bilateral Deep Sea Mining Cooperation Framework (similar to the UK-EU North Seas Energy Cooperation) to explore cooperation on deep sea nodule mining. Once established, this framework could be opened to trusted partners, supporting joint efforts to find alternatives to the PRC for critical minerals.⁵⁴
- Strengthen the alignments between the UK and US scientific and technological bases to generate collaboration on regulations for emerging technologies (such as AI and Quantum technologies) behind which like-minded partners can follow.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Establish an annual UK-US ‘Corridor and Valley’ Summit between HM Government’s Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation and the Policy Director of the US Office of Science and Technology to discuss ways of fostering greater collaboration between the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor and Silicon Valley.⁵⁵ Over time, this could be widened to include like-minded partners, such as the other NTIB members (Australia, New Zealand and Canada).

4.2 Plan for a modulated multi-theatre posture

Despite the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict, there are strong indicators that US policymakers are going to refocus American forces in the Indo-Pacific. The PRC’s military modernisation and naval buildup has simply become

⁵³ ‘The Mission of the DSRB Development Group’, Defence, Security, and Resilience Bank, No date, <https://www.dsrb.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵⁴ Though the Indo-Pacific has more plentiful known deposits of polymetallic nodules, some of these are located within the Exclusive Economic Zones of the UK and US – including Bermuda – in the Atlantic (as well as some in international waters). For a map of known locations, see: ‘Map of the week – Deep-sea mineral resources’, European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet), 29/11/2019, <https://emodnet.ec.europa.eu/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵⁵ Pippa Crerar and Heather Stewart, ‘Reeves plans to create ‘Silicon Valley’ between Oxford and Cambridge’, *The Guardian*, 28/01/2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



too great a threat to ignore.⁵⁶ Consequently, as the SDR has recognised, there must be a new division of geographic responsibility. This is captured with the framing ‘NATO First’, but ‘not NATO only’: in other words, the UK prioritises the Euro-Atlantic theatre while remaining aware of the connectivities between it and other theatres.⁵⁷ A new allied strategy of denial is needed to prevent the CRINK powers from dominating vital geographies of British and American strategic interest in and around Eurasia.

While the long-term impact of the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict is unclear, America’s growing focus on the Indo-Pacific will have serious implications for NATO, which has, since the Cold War, become more and more dependent on US capabilities, particularly critical enablers such as command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR). As the SDR points out, the UK will need to learn to work with the US in a different way; Britain has to assume a greater responsibility for providing ‘deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic, with a force optimised for warfighting to protect and defend NATO territory and allied populations against attack’ while still working with America and the ‘Indo-Pacific Four’ (IP4) – Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand – in the Indo-Pacific.⁵⁸

Similarly to the efforts of Ernest Bevin, then Foreign Secretary, who led the creation of NATO in the late 1940s, Britain should draw its European allies together and align them behind deterring Russia on the northern and eastern fronts of NATO where the threat is most acute.⁵⁹ Greater coordination will be needed with Germany and Poland so that the modernisation and expansion of their armed forces – primarily their ground forces – dovetails with the UK’s agenda. The value which Britain can add is by focusing on providing heavy naval and air forces, as well as the modernisation and expansion of its nuclear deterrent to include a sub-strategic element.⁶⁰ As the SDR acknowledges: ‘As the US confronts

⁵⁶ For more on the PRC’s naval modernisation, see: Kevin Rowlands and Edward Hampshire, ‘The Chinese navy: From minnow to shark’, Council on Geostrategy, 07/12/2022, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025) and Emma Salisbury, ‘China’s PLAN: Maritime dominion beyond the South China Sea’, Council on Geostrategy, 20/05/2024, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵⁷ ‘The Strategic Defence Review 2025: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad’, Ministry of Defence, 02/06/2025, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ See: Paul Mason and James Rogers, ‘Trump, Ukraine and Russia: What would Ernest Bevin do?’, *Britain’s World*, 17/02/2025, <https://www.britainsworld.org.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁶⁰ For more on this, see: Marc De Vore, Paul Mason and James Rogers, ‘Why Britain must expand its nuclear arsenal’, *The Spectator*, 10/05/2025, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



the unprecedented challenge of facing two near-peer nuclear powers, Russia and China, the UK must explore how to support the US and its NATO allies in strengthening extended deterrence across the Euro-Atlantic.’⁶¹

For its part, America should promote British leadership in the North Atlantic as it focuses more on the Indo-Pacific. As the CRINK powers expand cooperation in Ukraine in pursuit of broader objectives, both London and Washington will need to understand how the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific are more tightly bound. Here, AUKUS is not only about deterring the PRC in the Indo-Pacific, but also strengthening Britain’s nuclear submarine force, both in size and technological sophistication. Due to the location of the British Isles, this force will have as much of a Euro-Atlantic focus as an Indo-Pacific one.

It will benefit both powers to create ‘surge’ capabilities in each respective theatre in the event of a crisis, while also maintaining the ability to intervene in the Middle East. This means further extending the UK’s military footprint to the western Indo-Pacific and amplifying British relations with regional partners, such as the Indo-Pacific Four. Similarly, it means maintaining American personnel in NATO command and control elements while bolstering sustainment hubs for US forces in Europe, should they need to surge in. Furthermore, theatre cross-pollination complicates the decision making of adversaries.

4.2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work together – and within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – to create a clear timeline for the move of key US assets from Europe to the Indo-Pacific theatre over the next five to ten years. The aim should be to allow the UK and other allies to replace those assets in an orderly manner, rather than during a geopolitical emergency in the future.
 - **EXAMPLE:** The latest NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) already aims to reduce the overall share of targets borne by the US.⁶² Both governments should push for a NDPP

⁶¹ ‘The Strategic Defence Review 2025: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad’, Ministry of Defence, 02/06/2025, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁶² Pierre Vandier and Angus Lapsley, ‘Why NATO’s Defence Planning Process will transform the Alliance for decades to come’, Atlantic Council, 21/03/2025, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



- ‘refresh’ which reflects a more urgent timeline and a more significant American reduction.
- Prepare for the UK to provide leadership and enhanced deterrence in Europe.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Explore options for re-establishing a British sub-strategic nuclear deterrent, potentially through the procurement of F-35A Lightning II Joint Combat Aircraft equipped with nuclear gravity bombs.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Informally agree for the US to support the transition of any American command roles – if Washington chooses to relinquish any – to British officials and officers, while keeping the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) as a US held position.
 - Reinforce British support for US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) in the Indo-Pacific.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Establish a small but permanent British consulate in Honolulu, Hawaii – in keeping with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand – and staff it with senior diplomatic and military personnel to manage the liaison with INDOPACOM and US strategy in the Indo-Pacific.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Coordinate on battle management systems – such as the UK’s Digital Targeting Web and the INDOPACOM Mission Network – which are currently under development so that forces remain interoperable in both theatres.
 - Continue the recently created UK-US Strategic Dialogue, focusing on the most pressing issues to foster alignment on key national priorities.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Initiate Track 1.5 working groups on the CRINK states and economic statecraft to draw together UK and US policymakers, who might otherwise focus on different theatres and issues, to discuss the coordination and responsibility of roles.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Develop linked inter-agency units within the British and American governments to counter CRINK information operations and project the shared UK-US vision and narratives around the world.
 - Forge a better understanding of how and where both nations could contribute to a simultaneous multi-front crisis – involving the Euro-Atlantic, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East – if one were to materialise.
-



- **EXAMPLE:** Form a UK-US planning group to conduct a suite of senior-level Table Top Exercises to inform multi-front crisis contingency plans.
- **EXAMPLE:** Increase strategic dialogues, planning, and even exercises between NATO and the IP4.

4.3 Coordinate military production

Since the end of the Cold War, Britain and America have both underinvested in the productive force needed to compete with their rivals. Take shipbuilding, for example: over the last 25 years, the abilities of both the UK and US to manufacture warships has reduced immensely. While both have declined as major shipbuilders since the end of the Cold War, allies such as Japan and South Korea retain some capacity and have been exploring ways to support US shipbuilding.⁶³ Today, however, the PRC's shipyards have surged ahead in productive force, from building just 5% of the world's ships in 2000 to over 50% today.⁶⁴ Worse, courtesy of the PRC's 'military-civil fusion' approach, the large Chinese state-owned shipyards can switch readily from producing merchant to naval vessels. In 2024, these shipyards produced over 180 times more vessels than all of America's shipbuilders combined.⁶⁵ American and British warships still tend to be larger and more sophisticated, but at the rate the PRC can build, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) may overtake the US Navy in terms of modern metrics of naval power, including the number of available vertical launch systems, by the late 2020s.

While the UK and US have begun to take steps to rebuild their industrial capacity, the scale of the challenge remains enormous. Part of the problem has been the drawdown in investment in defence, especially in Britain, to dangerously low levels. As shown in Graph 2, during the Cold War, both countries spent far more as a percentage of GDP on defence: between 1949-1989, the US averaged 7.8% (compared to 3.4% today) and the UK averaged 6.3% (compared to 2.3% today).⁶⁶ New British and American defence spending commitments range between 2.5% and 5% of

⁶³ Mouyin Jin 'South Korea courts US shipbuilding partnership amid push to crack down on Chinese tonnage', *Lloyd's List*, 06/03/2025, <https://www.lloydslist.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁶⁴ Matthew P. Funaiolo, Brian Hart and Aidan Powers-Riggs, 'Murky Waters: Navigating the Risks of China's Dual-Use Shipyards', Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 25/03/2025, <https://features.csis.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

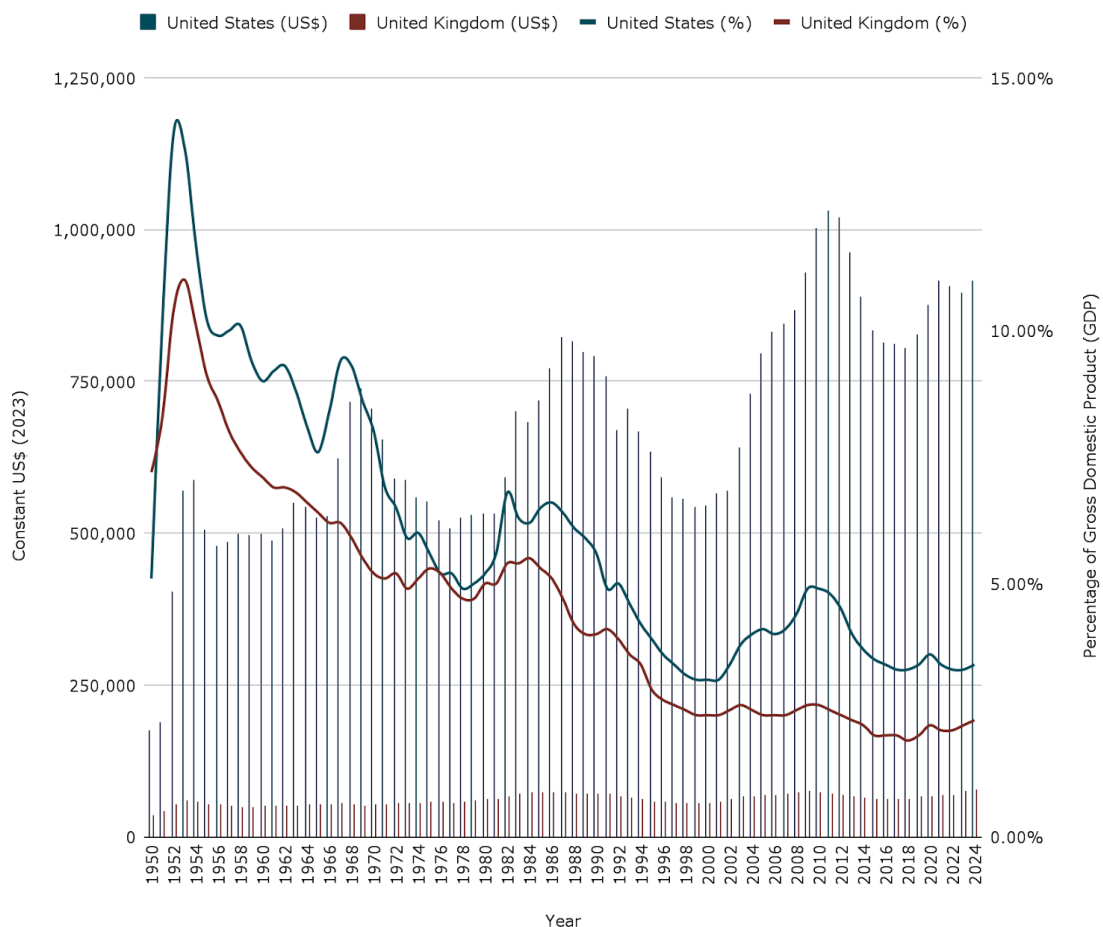
⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Figures calculated from: 'SIPRI Military Expenditure Database', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 01/06/2025, <https://milex.sipri.org/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



GDP, with the latter figure being Trump's preference.⁶⁷ Even if every penny or cent is squeezed from this new investment, however, it will still take some time until the money begins to manifest in production lines – and in Britain's case, HM Government does not plan to invest 2.5% of GDP on defence until 2027, or 3% until 2034.⁶⁸

GRAPH 2: UK AND US DEFENCE SPENDING SINCE 1950



As the UK and US begin to reinvest in defence, their strategic documents make clear the need to rebuild defence industrial capacity. However, while much should take place at the national level, there are clear areas where the two countries can cooperate more closely at the

⁶⁷ 'What Trump said about Canada, Mexico, NATO and Gaza hostages at news conference', Reuters, 07/01/2025, <https://www.reuters.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).

⁶⁸ Harry Farley and Damian Grammaticas, 'Healey expects UK to spend 3% of GDP on defence by 2034', BBC News, 31/05/2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



bilateral level, and other areas where they might act as force leaders in multilateral and minilateral forums.

There is currently a shift underway in Europe, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which seeks to position defence industrial integration around institutions of the EU, such as the 2024 Defence Industrial Strategy, the 2030 Readiness Plan and the SAFE financing instrument. While Britain should seek to be a node in the various overlapping efforts to integrate defence industrial markets, it should double down on its 'NATO First' approach, reinforcing the centrality of NATO initiatives such as the Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge and the Defence Production Action Plan.

As the SDR notes, the UK is in a unique position to maintain the core of the defence industrial base around NATO, since it is well integrated into both the North American and European defence markets. It has been a member of the US-led NTIB since 2016 – which has special UK-US tracks – and is a member of AUKUS. It uses a large number of US platforms, and the two countries have pooled their capabilities in a number of systems, such as the F-35 Lightning II Joint Combat Aircraft. Their R&D efforts overlap in many areas. British industry has privileged access to the American market in ways which others lack. The UK is also a leading partner of European defence organisations and initiatives, such as the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation, and a leading voice in the NATO Support and Acquisition Agency and the Ukraine Defence Contact Group. Finally, as a major contributor to the conflict in Ukraine, it has developed a strong reputation among key European states.

4.3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Commit to spend at least 5% of GDP on defence by 2030, with 3.5% on military capabilities and 1.5% on strategic infrastructure, as per the recommendation of Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO.⁶⁹
 - **EXAMPLE:** In its upcoming Defence Investment Plan, HM Government should outline incremental increases year by year in defence spending to hit these figures, alongside a clear outline of expected investment areas. Australia's 2024

⁶⁹ See: Andrew Gray and Lili Bayer, 'Exclusive: NATO's Rutte floats including broader security spending to hit Trump's 5% defence target', Reuters, 02/03/2025, <https://www.reuters.com/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



Integrated Investment Programme could serve as a template.⁷⁰

- Ensure that there is clear direction and prioritisation for transatlantic defence industrial collaboration.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Ensure that the coming UK defence industrial strategy builds on current efforts and outlines clear strategic lines for transatlantic efforts.
- Prioritise rare earth metal supply chain cooperation; continued PRC control over this vital supply chain is simply not sustainable for future UK-US military industrial expansion and operations.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Invite Britain to join the US-Australia bilateral discussion on rare earth supply, or begin a separate UK-US track.
- Support efforts which contribute to leadership in critical technologies.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Double down on UK-US minilateral efforts such as AUKUS Pillar II, the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, and consider British membership of the Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR).
 - **EXAMPLE:** Create a Defence Industrial Base 2+2, which might meet on the sidelines of PIPIR or the Shangri-La Dialogue, to include the national armaments director and a senior defence policy official from each side. This could help the two countries to combine strategic direction with industrial policy.
- Build up the production and co-production of munitions at the bilateral, minilateral and multilateral levels.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Conduct a joint analysis of the capabilities which will provide utility in both Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific contingencies and draw up a priority list for co-production. Track which systems will best counter Chinese technologies, which are being fielded by an increasing number of adversaries.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Explore the possibility of contracting out US Navy auxiliary construction to British shipyards so that American shipyards might focus more exclusively on warship shortfalls.

⁷⁰ '2024 National Defence Strategy and 2024 Integrated Investment Programme', Australian Government: Defence, 17/04/2024, <https://www.defence.gov.au/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



- Cooperate more on co-sustainment, particularly to enable British shipyards to support the US Navy.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Sign agreements which enable British shipyards to provide additional Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul options for the US Navy deploying in the North Atlantic or Baltic.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Arrange a US Navy dry dock repair facility in a UK shipyard. This would revitalise British shipping and labour forces, while also maintaining the ability to surge American naval power into the North Atlantic in the event of a crisis.



5.0

CONCLUSION



Since the early 20th century, the UK and the US have been architects, defenders and reformers of the prevailing international order. But they were drawn together in the face of a common threat to their key theatre. There are doubts today that the ‘perfect understanding’ – as Harry Truman, then President of the US, once stated – between the two countries is still in place.⁷¹ Yet, a reading of history shows that every generation of British policymakers since the mid-20th century has been troubled by the uncertainty of which direction the US might take. The 2020s are proving no different. This study has sought to assess the fundamental nature of the special relationship: if it was built on closely aligned interests, then what are those interests today, and what geopolitical factors will shape the bilateral relationship in the future?

5.1 Key findings

The findings of this study – derived from wide-ranging discussions with officials and experts from both sides of the Atlantic – is that in the background, the operational relationship across the intelligence, military, political, and economic spheres has worked so well as to have been taken for granted. Though many interests remain convergent, this assumed alignment has led to many supporters of the alliance missing growing divergences in key areas. As mentioned, these include growing differences over theatre prioritisation, a different threat perception of the PRC and Russia, and a differing approach towards multilateralism and climate change.

The good news is that, despite new governments of disparate political positions, both the UK and US have formed remarkably similar diagnoses of the problems with the world today: of the short-term and long-term threats posed by peer and near-peer adversaries; of the dislocation caused by globalisation; and of the desperate need to rebuild military capabilities and invest in the technologies of the future. Both nations are equally aware that the coming years will be crucial in deciding the future shape of the international order.

⁷¹ For the full statement, see: ‘I welcome this opportunity to remind my countrymen that the maintenance of a perfect understanding between the people of Great Britain and the United States is of great importance to the peace of the world – it is of the greatest importance to the peace of the world.’ See: Harry S. Truman, Speech: ‘Remarks in Arlington Cemetery at the Unveiling of the Statue of Sir John Dill’, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, 01/11/1950, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/> (checked: 20/06/2025).



5.2 Final reflections

It is absolutely vital that the UK and US work closely together to extend the free and open international order from the Indo-Pacific to the wider world. As the world's leading democratic powers, they have a special responsibility to provide leadership. By reinforcing areas of agreement and mitigating areas of disagreement, a new joint approach can be established, behind which other allies might coalesce. We hope that this study plays its part in outlining how this process can be kick-started. But Britain and America must hurry. Their adversaries will not wait.



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