



International Relations and Defence Committee

Corrected oral evidence: The UK's future relationship with the US

Wednesday 12 March 2025

11.25 am

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Members present: Lord De Mauley (The Chair); Lord Alderdice; Baroness Blackstone; Lord Bruce of Bennachie; Baroness Coussins; Baroness Crawley; Lord Darroch of Kew; Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie; Lord Grocott; Lord Houghton of Richmond; Baroness Morris of Bolton; Lord Soames of Fletching.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 26 - 34

Witnesses

I: Dr Leslie Vinjamuri, Professor of International Relations at SOAS, University of London and Director, US and the Americas Programme, Chatham House; Dr Kori Schake, Senior Fellow and Director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute.

Examination of witnesses

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri and Dr Kori Schake.

Q26 **The Chair:** Good morning. Thank you so much for joining us. Particularly if it is before breakfast, we are even more grateful. I was going to apologise to you for us being late, but perhaps that has given you time to have a cup of coffee.

Our session is being streamed live on the Parliament website. A transcript will be taken, and we will make sure that you receive a copy of it afterwards. Perhaps you could briefly introduce yourselves and, then, if you would not mind, we will go straight into questions, as we are quite short of time.

Dr Kori Schake: I lead the foreign and defence policy team at the American Enterprise Institute.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I am a friend of Kori Schake. I direct the US and Americas programme at Chatham House, and I am currently at the Rockefeller estate in the Hudson Valley in New York.

The Chair: Is there still a special relationship between the UK and the US? Are we of declining importance? How crucial are we to US intelligence gathering? How can we add value to US interests? Would you like to try to encapsulate an answer all of that?

Dr Kori Schake: I would have to answer the question in two phases. The first is specific to the Trump Administration, and the second is overall. Yes, the relationship is still special. The depth and intertwining of Britain and the US security and political establishments, in my experience of government, are and will continue to be unique.

The problem is that nobody is special in Trump world. It is not even just that the President is transactional, which he is, but there is something that I cannot analytically put my finger on. The truth is that he does not like Europeans. He feels judged. He feels unaccepted. It is like how he feels about Wall Street. You guys do not respect him in a way that he wants to be respected, and so there is an antagonism.

What Britain can do, and what the Prime Minister's visit to Washington already demonstrated, is that Britain is more accustomed than other Governments to dealing with the craziness of the United States. Demonstrating behaviour that can lead to successful outcomes for others gives you a first-mover advantage that, in particular, other Europeans but also other major American allies do not have. Leslie, maybe it looks different to you.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I would agree with much of that. There is a distinction. Is the relationship special historically? Is it grounded in enduring structures and practices that make and will continue to make it special? Yes. Are we in a moment where that special relationship is conditional on the part of the US, and subject to disruption, potentially

even on a weekly basis? Yes, absolutely. Does that mean that it will not survive the current period? I think it will, although it is very hard to predict where we go.

There are a couple of things. Karen Pierce said it brilliantly in the session where you had no fewer than four former UK ambassadors to the US. What a tremendous session that was. She said that, while we all agree that it is special, nobody really has a definition for what “special” means; we all have a different definition. That is probably right.

When the Prime Minister spoke alongside President Trump and outlined the number of issues on which the US and the UK were number one and number two and were aligned, it was an incredibly impressive list. I would add, for my own part—I am sure that Kori agrees—that it was nice that he mentioned the research universities in the US and the UK that bind these two states together. Long may the investment continue by both the UK and the US in those tremendously valuable institutions, which host students going in both directions between the US and the UK, and which, I would argue, are coming under a tremendous amount of pressure in the US.

Is the relationship special? Yes. Does that mean a variety of things to different people? Yes. Everything from national security to defence and intelligence sharing, but also the cultural and historical, are deeply significant.

In terms of what the current period means, I would add one thing to what Kori has said about Trump’s attitude towards Europeans. Chatham House took teams around Latin America, Asia and Europe before the elections to talk about how different leaders and foreign policy elites were preparing for the arrival of the next US President. It was clear to us by the end that Europe was in the most difficult position, were Trump to be elected, as he has been.

I would add that the UK is separate from Europe when it comes to the question of Trump’s, to a degree, unexplainable ire towards the continent. It is separate partly for the reasons that we have both just mentioned, but also because the trade deficit is not nearly as bad. It is certainly different today, now that we are in a potentially escalating trade war between the US and the EU. It is different because Trump has an attachment to Scotland and all of those things that we might smile about but that are tremendously meaningful. So far, the UK leadership has handled Donald Trump extremely well, which will matter for navigating the weeks ahead. The UK is set apart from Europe on a number of dimensions.

Q27 Lord Darroch of Kew: I have a question for both of you. If you look at the Trump election campaign this time around, he was quite clear about his foreign policy objectives. He talked about “tariffs” being his favourite word. He expressed at various points his disdain for NATO and his dislike of the EU. He talked about a pivot towards the Pacific and the challenge from China. He said that he was going to solve Ukraine in 24 hours.

We then get to the election. Although the overall victory was comparatively narrow, at 1.6%, if you look beneath that, Trump did better. He did not necessarily win every demographic or any state, but he did better in every demographic and in every state, so it felt like the whole country had moved a few points rightwards.

This is a question on which you have to be speculative. Is this just a four-year blip that can be attributed to, perhaps, the ineffectiveness of the Democrat candidate last time around, or to the mistakes of the Biden Administration, or is there a fundamental shift going on in America that is likely to affect how we see, co-operate with and work with them, for maybe the next decade or longer? Does "America First" also mean "America alone"? Is this the first step towards the end of multilateralism and the dismantling of the post-war international order? It is just a small question, really.

Dr Kori Schake: This taxpayer's opinion is that we are liable to overinterpret the election outcome. American foreign policy had almost nothing to do with what people were voting for. There are two things that really affected votes, and they are not specific to this election.

I see some continuity from the rise of the Tea Party in the early 2000s, which is that many Americans like their local government, they like their state government, but they feel that they have no ability to affect their federal Government. This is about kicking the federal Government into understanding what people are worried about.

American elections are a yes-no, and 70% of the country was unhappy with the direction of the country. I do not think that multilateralism has a lot to do with it. I do not think America and the world has a lot to do with it. It is mostly, "What is going on? Washington spends all this money. The national debt is enormous. Nobody is listening to me, so I am going to keep kicking whoever is in office until somebody listens to me".

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I would wholeheartedly agree with that. I would add that we all know that there was a year of elections, and that one enduring lesson that came from that was that incumbents were kicked out.

I would argue that there were two rounds of elections in the US where Covid was a game changer. One was for Donald Trump 1.0, who was doing very well until Covid hit, and it quite likely lost him the election. The second one was this recent election, where the post-Covid economic policies proved to be inflationary, not without many benefits, but in a way that it made it hard for the public reaction to those positive benefits to catch up in time and to factor in the fact that the rate of inflation had come down. The election, as Kori said, was not about foreign policy, but foreign policy was absolutely on the ballot.

The second thing that I would argue is that it is a little bit by the by. We could tell various stories. I am at a conference at the moment being sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment, and it is all about multilateralism.

There are many folks here from the Biden Administration, and we spent much of last night talking about why it was that the election was lost. You can tell a story about Kamala Harris, as you intimated, Lord Darroch, but the fact is that we have President Trump now and, in my view, that will be a gamechanger.

We will not emerge from this period with the same America or the same set of attitudes, and that will matter not only at home; that will matter in America's global engagements. We should refrain from anticipating or creating a teleological narrative of where we land. This is a highly fraught, phenomenally dynamic and extraordinarily disruptive period. Americans who oppose much of what is going on are very slow to respond, but there is now engagement.

It is, day by day, I would argue, a very rapidly evolving environment. A piece two days ago, I believe in the *Washington Post*, said that even Donald Trump seems to be taking account of some of the political pushback that he is receiving. Certainly in terms of what is affecting many people here in the US, which is the DOGE agenda that is hitting universities, as well as the foreign relations agenda, there is a lot to play for. What people do at home and abroad will have a tremendous impact, because it is such a dynamic period.

Lord Darroch of Kew: Those were really excellent answers, thank you.

Q28 **Baroness Morris of Bolton:** Welcome to both of you. Following on from that, if we are seeing the end of multilateralism or the world order as we know it, how might we in the UK best deal with that? I do not know if you read what we were talking about last week with the ambassadors, but at one stage we were talking about Saudi Arabia and the pivotal role that it is going to play in the Middle East—it looks very much as if that is happening at the moment with Ukraine—given our good relationships there and with the US.

On Monday, the UK joined the US-Bahrain Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement to build security across the Middle East, given America's close relationship with Bahrain in terms of the fifth fleet, and also with us. I wonder if this is going to be more of a way that we can transact international relations with the US through other countries where we have joint good relationships.

Dr Kori Schake: There is a lot to that. You are right: I did notice that the first international meeting that the Trump Administration wanted to hold was with the Pacific quad. Smaller groupings work well. More flexible arrangements work well. The unpleasant truth is that what is different in the Trump Administration is that he is genuinely uninterested in the security arrangements of the last 80 years, and is genuinely desiring to lift the restraints on the most aggressive uses of American economic, political and military power. Where previous Presidents have gotten soft power and co-operative advantages from the restraints, he just does not see those as advantages, and so finding ways where Britain can help deliver smaller conclaves is smart strategy.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I could not agree more. This is a moment, again, of disruption. The sweet spot is to see it as an opportunity. America no longer feels bound by norms. It no longer feels bound by shared values. It no longer feels bound by multilateral commitments. There is certainly a “for worse” element to that, but there is also something very liberating. When you are liberated, there is always an advantage—working bilaterally, transactionally and mini-laterally, looking for what works, being flexible and nimble.

This is a US that is going to be, as it has been, engaging internationally, not always in ways that we all appreciate, but is going to be very much distracted by domestic politics. It might not prove to be the case, but I would anticipate that that level of domestic distraction is going to grow, not shrink. As it grows, the scope for UK leadership in these ways will also open up. It is extremely important. It will be noticed and valued.

Dr Kori Schake: If I may add one other thing, the reductions in the number of foreign service officers, the closing of consulates and the cutbacks in experienced government workers in the intelligence community and other parts of the bureaucracy are going to blind the United States in an important way. If Britain can help the United States Government see what is happening in the world, that would be enormously influential. It would give you important leverage.

Q29 **Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie:** Dr Schake, you have just pre-empted my question, because I wanted to come back to the DOGE agenda and the impact of the internal cuts and the cuts to bureaucracy. How are they going to affect the US’s ability to exert influence on the international stage? What opportunities, therefore, does the UK have? You just mentioned that the UK has a leadership opportunity there. Are there any other practical things that you can see, or are we too early in the DOGE agenda? We have just had a session that told us that it is incredibly popular and is polling in the high 70s. Where do you think we might land on this?

Dr Kori Schake: The fundamental thing to understand about the American Government is that they were created by people who distrust government, so we are all going to get an enormous civics lesson. You have seen the polls. Some 80% of Americans want the Government to keep their hands off their healthcare, not realising that Medicaid and Medicare are government-run programmes, so everybody is going to get a big civics lesson.

Out in the world, the distrust of the United States because of Trump Administration behaviour is going to affect intelligence sharing. It is going to affect what other Governments and diplomats are willing to tell the United States. The risk of provoking the President’s ire is going to be such an unsettling factor that there will be lots that the British Government know that the United States Government will not.

What I noticed about the British establishment, both in the Government and in business, is that what you guys are good at but nobody else has

figured out how to do is understanding Washington so well that you can figure out who the people are who know how to hit the levers in the system, even if they do not have an important job title or do not look to be in an influential position. That is going to be really important knowledge as DOGE blazes through and talented people choose to leave or are forced out of the system.

This is going to be a very White House-centric Administration, because the President wants to be the baby at every christening, the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral. Nobody else can reliably speak for the President, and nobody can reliably deliver the President.

As the dust settles on the Administration, in terms of figuring out who in the Defense Department knows what is in the legislation that Congress is going to pass to fund the Government on Friday, I bet that there are five people in the Pentagon who know that. Britain will be well poised to know who those five people are, and that will be an enormous source of power, because nobody can get through to the President, but those people will find a way.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I would add, if I may, to exactly what Kori said about the value of having very deep relationships, not only at the senior level but at the working level of civil servants across the bureaucracies. Folks will know who is leaving because of the DOGE efforts. People will know who is staying, and the people who are leaving are valuable because they will know who is staying. Those very long relationships over decades will really be important and come into operation.

On the popularity of DOGE, I agree with Kori, of course, and would just add that, currently, people do not know exactly what is going on yet. They will read the headlines. I have been across the country a lot since the inauguration, on the west coast and in the middle, and lots of folks are saying, "Yes, those folks in Washington are bloated".

The line that I really smile at is, "The rest of us have always had to deal with job insecurity. Why is it that these folks thought that you could have a permanent and very well-paid job for life, in an extremely nice part of the country? They are crazy, right? Most Americans are always dealing with having a job one day and not the next, so welcome to the world". There is a little bit of that as well, but, again, the effects are not yet felt. We do not yet know what the level of pushback will be.

We have seen some indications of where the courts will come down, with the recent Supreme Court decision that USAID had to deliver that \$2 billion to contractors, but there will be many more cases that will work through the courts. We do not know how the President will respond to the judgments of the court. I sat in on a conversation in Chicago just a few days ago, where a Republican, who is a lawyer, argued very vehemently against the validity of the legal finding of the Supreme Court. This is going to be an ongoing, protracted and divisive movement.

The other thing, just finally, which is one of my deep concerns, is that I have gotten numerous emails from parents of students and PhD candidates losing their positions as researchers, and recent graduate students from America's leading public policy schools having their jobs suddenly taken away, because the DOGE cuts are hitting them.

There is going to be disruption between UK and US students, I would imagine, because the target on America's universities is big. They are now coming for Columbia University. They are not only taking away the \$400 million of grant money, but ICE has entered the campus. They have a list of students who they want to remove. This is going to have a very important impact on the broader relationship as well.

Q30 **Baroness Blackstone:** Can you tell us what you think the key areas of alignment and divergence are between the US and the UK in foreign policy?

Dr Kori Schake: That is a good question.

Baroness Blackstone: It is a big one. I am sorry.

Dr Kori Schake: The key area of alignment is definitely the defence of both countries. A key area of disalignment is that the Trump Administration is genuinely unconcerned about the security of continental Europe, which is a big, disruptive change. Discontinuities are predominant. Namely, Britain needs an open global economy, which the Trump Administration is not interested in, so there is a major economic disruption inherent in how Trump thinks about it.

On continuities, I am really struggling, because, even though we are just seven weeks in, we are looking at the end of the American security guarantees. None of them is stable or reliable in a Trump Administration. They are breaking things that it is going to take at least a generation to rebuild. Leslie, I hope that you have a more thoughtful answer than I did.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I can intuit what the question was, based on Kori's reply, but I struggled to hear it.

Dr Kori Schake: It was about continuities and discontinuities between Britain's and America's interests.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: We tend to talk about Britain and America, and we are in a period where we need to be aware of the difference between the Trump Administration, or the presidency, and the United States. The presidency is one part of the United States. It gets to the fact that there are structural continuities, and there are things that are continuous or discontinuous because of this particular President. That distinction really matters, because it gets to the aberration question. If something is a structural continuity, it is probably going to survive beyond this Administration.

To Kori's point about the US economy, it is not just Trump. We all know that the US economy is a more closed economy. It is less trade-

dependent. It is a larger internal market. Everybody wants access to American consumers, but the United States has that access. That is continuous. The disruptive part is that Trump is amplifying and changing the nature of how he uses access to that market and economic statecraft.

The one thing that is most unclear, though, in the broader relationship over alignment or not is the question of China. I am sure that Kori can say a lot about this, but it is not clear that US and British interests with respect to China—again, I am not 100% sure that I am answering the exact question—will continue to be one of alignment and continuity. That is a really big question.

Dr Kori Schake: That is right. For example, I do not believe that President Trump would come to the defence of Taiwan. I do believe that he would trade Taiwan to China, as though it was ours to trade, in order to get a trade deal. We are looking at that level of disalignment of interests and of discontinuity.

I agree with Leslie that, ordinarily, I would count on Congress to rein the President in, but, for at least the coming year and a half, that is not likely to be the case. Given the way that Congress fell in line on the President's priorities, whether it is confirmation of manifestly unqualified people or the budget deal that is coming through Congress this week, the President is holding enormous sway that the constitution did not imagine the President being able to have over Congress.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I probably differ with Kori on this. I just want to make sure that I say that, since this is a matter of public record as well. I do not think that we know, but, so far, on the question of Taiwan, I am probably reading Donald Trump as using his threats in order to get a better deal but then backing off.

So far, in a number of cases with respect to Canada and Mexico—and there is a question mark over Greenland, and we are waiting to see on Ukraine—we have seen a very intolerable and severe threat walked back when the President feels that he is getting some of what he wants. My guess is that he will push very hard for things that he wants from Taiwan, not least financially, but that he will not, ultimately, withdraw US support. Again, this is complete guesswork.

Q31 **Lord Houghton of Richmond:** Just continuing that a bit, but in the European theatre on the defence issue, you have said, between you, that Trump is genuinely unconcerned about the security of continental Europe, and that US security guarantees are no longer stable. I would wholly admit to the fact that Europe has been taking a free ride on American taxpayers' generosity about external security guarantees for far too long, but where do you think that this might end?

Is the response that the European pillar of NATO, if I could put it that way, is making to pressure from Trump starting to satisfy Trump's deep-seated concern, or will he push further and further, even to the abandonment of Europe and, potentially, the extraction of America from

NATO's Article 5 security guarantees and all of that? Is he in the process of being sated or might it yet go much further and be much worse? To be honest, most informed opinion on defence issues in the UK said that even 2.5% of GDP is nowhere even close to where we need to get in order to attempt to re-establish conventional deterrence across Europe.

Dr Kori Schake: You ask a really important question, and I wish I could give a different answer than I am going to, which is that there is no sating his expectations. American defence spending is 3.2%, and he is demanding 5% from Europeans in order to have any American support. I would not be surprised to see, as a shot across the bow, the Trump Administration decline to nominate a candidate to be Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

If I were running the British defence review, I would be looking very seriously at the decision that was made in the 1990s that Britain would always operate militarily with American assistance. I really do think that it is that deep a breach with 80 years of successful American policy.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I will just weigh in on this as well and add that it depends also on external factors. Trump will also be taking into account what Russia does and how the negotiation with Russia over the question of a ceasefire goes, but also what comes after that. Any of these factors could change his view when it comes to support on defence and participation in NATO. It is variable.

Again, the one thing that we know about President Trump is that he changes his mind. He has some pretty strong views and ways of operating, but he changes his mind. If I were in a position to make decisions, and I were a country other than the US, such as the UK, I would not sit around waiting or hoping, for a couple of reasons.

One is because he is unreliable and unpredictable, as is Russia. Also, I would not want to be in this kind of abusive relationship, quite frankly. The abuse is going to continue. If what follows Donald Trump is in a similar vein or mode, I would not want to put Britain's population, security, future and prosperity in the hands of a Government that are this volatile and often, quite frankly, this rude, crass and unreliable. I would not want Britain's security to depend on that.

It is an interesting and somewhat academic question today. It is not a very academic question in the weeks ahead, but it is an inherently unknowable question. When something is that deeply uncertain, you have to plan for it not to be there, regardless of whether it turns out to be.

Q32 **Lord Bruce of Bennachie:** You called it an abusive relationship. I was going to say, "Do manners matter?" and you have taken it a stage further. President Trump's attitude towards his supposed friends and allies is contemptuous, dismissive and downright rude, and yet he expects them somehow to crawl back to him in ways that make us feel admiring of our Prime Minister at the moment but extremely worried that, on occasion, he looks as if he is having to say what he does not want to

say, or not say what he does want to say, in order not to antagonise the President.

The point at the end of the day is that the world is going to be reshaped. How is America going to react when, first of all, most of the world is not going to like them and, secondly, they are going to take steps to, therefore, make themselves less dependent on America's influence, in any which way they can, in particular for Europe to get its act together?

My final point is that President Trump seems to want to say to Britain, "You can have a relationship with us, as long as you do not have one with Europe". Sentiment in the UK would say, "We do not trust you at all. However flawed Europe is, even allowing for Brexit, we think that we have better friends across the channel than we have across the Atlantic". How do we deal with that?

Dr Kori Schake: You have just answered your own question, which is that, as unsatisfying as alternatives may be, the reliability question that Leslie raised is the right one. I agree with you about the consequences. Trump's people seem to think that American power is not enabled by the likability of American choices, and that is just fundamentally mistaken. Only hard experience is going to disabuse them of that, but it is going to take a generation to reconstruct an attitude where people do not think that we are the bad guys. We are being the bad guys.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I would add that I do not think that Britain should choose between the United States and Europe. It is a false and unmakeable choice, but there is a big difference between choosing and diversifying and investing across multiple partners. Running away from a bad situation into a bad situation is also something that partners of abusive partners are known by psychologists to do. It is not the right thing to do. I am not suggesting that Europe is a bad partner. I am just suggesting that Britain should be weighing up its own interests and thinking very carefully about who to work with.

It is very important to differentiate between President Trump and the Administration and the United States. They are not one and the same. The United States is a phenomenally large, diverse and complex country. Even in a period where Trump is being individually abusive in his words and his lack of stability and stable commitments, there are still multiple relationships with states across the economy and society. You know them better than anyone, and those should be invested in, because I do not think that they need to or will disappear.

The future is very uncertain. We could have 12 years of this in one form or another, or we could have quite a significant change in two years, and especially in four years. Investing in a relationship while guarding against being dependent on it is a very tricky balance, but one that has to be struck.

Q33 **Lord Grocott:** There is so much material that you have given us. Thanks very much indeed. I have noted down so many things while you have

been speaking, but one of the things that I picked up, to quote you, Leslie, was your assessment that “the scope for UK leadership” will grow. You also talked about UK leadership having handled Trump well. It is always music to the ears of a Brit when we think that our importance will grow.

As you know well enough, we had a pretty intense argument in this country about the merits or otherwise of being members of the European Union. A lot of the strong proponents of Britain’s membership of the European Union said that, should Britain leave, Britain’s influence in the world would inevitably diminish. It was enjoying membership of a hugely powerful economic group. It was now out on its own in a rough old world, and people would not take much notice.

I just wonder where you are on this spectrum. We now hear a British leader who is having a distinctive voice in international affairs, and you speak about it growing. If it is true that people are listening to the UK in some respects, so far as the United States is concerned, is that simply because we have the negative advantage, in President Trump’s eyes, that we are not members of the European Union, or is it something rather more positive, in that a country is able to speak its mind to a greater degree and quickly, without going through whatever bureaucratic hoops have to be jumped through? Where do you see Britain’s position in that context?

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I do not want to be misunderstood as making the argument that Britain’s role and its adept handling of President Trump is because it left the European Union. I would not argue that. In the US, with the exception of some in the current Administration, most people think that it was an own goal and has harmed the UK considerably across many dimensions, and are very glad to see the UK moving to establishing a more productive relationship with Europe. That is extremely advantageous.

It is also unfair to say that the UK did not have a separate role, even when it was part of the European Union, on matters of foreign security, defence and intelligence policy, but also on broader social issues. I like to point to knowledge exchange, universities and the rest of it, because I come, in part, from that sector. Britain has always had an independent relationship with the United States, and that is certainly true now.

Keir Starmer and his team’s managing of very difficult politics over the last few weeks, and doing so brilliantly, is not because the UK is outside of the European Union. It is also true that, although that might not, in my view, have been the right way for Britain to go—I do not hold a UK passport at this point in time, so I did not vote—it does not mean that it does not come without some advantages.

Clearly, on the question of tariffs and of Trump’s assessment of trade deficits and of a highly regulated market in the European Union, as opposed to one that is seen to be and is more flexible, more innovative and more deregulated, there is a lot more scope and admiration for the

UK, which helps, but, again, it would be unwise for Britain to make its choices about its economy and its relationship with Europe solely, or even primarily, on the basis of what it hopes to accomplish with President Trump, because he may well not deliver, regardless of where the UK positions itself with respect to Europe.

Britain's relationship with Europe, in my view, as an insider outsider, should be really one that is carefully considered on its own terms with respect to the economic, political, social and other advantages and disadvantages that attach to that relationship.

Q34 **Baroness Coussins:** How seriously should we take Trump's declared ambitions in relation to Canada, Greenland and the Panama Canal?

Dr Kori Schake: He is quite serious about Canada and Greenland. The Panama Canal might prove an interesting example. Manoeuvring American-owned companies into taking a role in the management of the ports around the canal appears to have sated him for the moment, but this is just dangerous nonsense and has genuine consequences. It is going to get the Liberals re-elected in Canada. It is going to make Canadians boycott American goods.

The way to understand the Trump Administration is that they are not that bound by American national interests either. This is a reality TV show. I am not kidding. That is what the President said at the end of his humiliation of Volodymyr Zelensky. President Trump said, "This is going to be great television". That is the way to think about the danger that he is posing, and he is posing it to American security as well.

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri: I think that President Trump is serious about Greenland and about the Arctic. He is serious about the western hemisphere. He has an intuition, not a strategy, about the importance of hemispheric power. That does not extend to a commitment to a spheres of influence view of the world. He does not want to cede other US interests.

I do not think that he has thought deeply about hemispheric power, sea lanes or access to critical minerals, but he looks at a map. He understands a bit about climate change and what it will open up in the Arctic. He understands a bit about Russia and China. He thinks, "That would be a nice and strategically important place to have, and I want it".

How far it goes is not clear, but he going to push really hard to see if he can get others to do what he wishes them to do to align with US interests. If an opportunity becomes available to get more serious about altering borders, it is hard to even say, because it seems so outlandish, but I do not think that it is beyond the pale to consider that it could happen in Greenland.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed, both of you. You have been extremely interesting and informative. We are very grateful. We will make sure, as I said earlier, that you get a copy of the transcript of our session. Our session is now closed. Thank you very much indeed.