



International Relations and Defence Committee

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

Wednesday 17 September 2025

3 pm

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

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Questions 145 - 154

Witness

I: Rep Jim Himes, Democratic Congressman for Connecticut's 4th congressional district, House of Representatives.

Examination of witness

Rep Jim Himes.

Q145 **The Chair:** Welcome, Congressman Himes. Thank you very much indeed for finding the time to talk to us.

Rep Jim Himes: Good morning. Thank you very much for having me this morning.

The Chair: Can you hear us adequately?

Rep Jim Himes: Yes, I can hear you well. I cannot see anyone but I can hear you. Thank you.

The Chair: Even if you could see us, you would probably see a long, distant spectre of a whole lot of people, which may not be terribly helpful.

Rep Jim Himes: I can now see the Chamber.

The Chair: I have just been telling my colleagues that there are quite a few people lined up outside. We let the public into our sessions. You will be aware that your President is currently visiting us. There is the possibility that there may be some disruption, so there may be a hiatus while we have to sort that out.

Rep Jim Himes: When I join in that disruption, I promise to do so in a way consonant with the dignity of the House of Lords.

The Chair: I suspect some of my colleagues may be doing the same, but they will of course maintain their dignity too. Thank you so much for joining us. As you know, we are keen to talk particularly about the special relationship, if indeed you think there is one. From a US perspective, what does the UK bring to the relationship? Is it really that special?

Rep Jim Himes: Thank you for the question, Lord De Mauley. I am delighted to be with you this morning—or this afternoon, for you. As you know, I am one of the two chairmen of the US-UK friendship caucus. I have spent years working on issues of common interest, particularly in the realms of national security and trade, including with four or five of your ambassadors; I think I saw Lord Darroch on the committee.

I am very much a believer in the special relationship. There is probably an order of magnitude more partnership—by which I mean visits and meetings like this one—between the US Congress and Westminster than there is with any of our other European allies. That may be good or bad, but it is certainly reflective of the special relationship.

I would highlight three realms. National security, where I think the relationship is absolutely second to none. By way of anecdote, I know that Sir Richard¹ spoke with the former D/CIA probably on a daily basis.

¹ Sir Richard Moore, chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)

You now have a new leader there. I anticipate that the Five Eyes partnership and the bilateral relationship in security will be maintained.

We are in a rough patch economically because our President is obviously using tariffs to achieve non-economic goals, but I think that the economic relationship is important too. Whatever you think of the President's visit, the next few days will probably be very constructive in that regard.

Lastly, culturally, for a people—I refer to us—who are naturally a little isolationist, it is so much easier to maintain the relationships with our British friends than with our other allies. You start out well ahead in terms of the nature of our bilateral relationship.

Q146 Baroness Blackstone: You obviously have lots of experience of talking to voters, no doubt including talking to them about how they view Britain and our relationship with the US. Could you tell us whether you detect a fairly clear difference between Republican and Democrat voters, or voters who lean in one direction or the other, and whether you see any generational difference? Is there a shift as far as young people are concerned?

Rep Jim Himes: Thank you, Baroness. That is a very interesting question. I think the answer to your question is yes. We have almost lost the World War II generation, but they obviously had very immediate and personal relationships forged during World War II. That generation has largely gone, but their children have not. They would today be people in their 70s or 80s. I think there is a natural affinity associated with that next generation.

In the interests of time, I invite you to tease out any element of what I am about to say. I have reflected on where the fault lines lie. Right now, isolationism primarily lives in the Republican party. That shifts over time, but MAGA is fundamentally isolationist. You see the scepticism that our Vice-President, for example, manifests. That is very real. Yes, it is a generational thing. I think that older Republicans would be much less isolationist than the Vice-President's generation and my own.

There is another fault line that I have mentioned to four or five ambassadors over time. While I think Westminster and the Government are conscious of it, it is underemphasised. In the Democratic party there is an intense focus on all issues Irish. I was pushing this years ago in the Biden Administration. Biden is of Irish heritage. When I was pushing a US-UK bilateral trade agreement, I ran into a great deal of friction associated with concerns about the economic and political stability of Ireland, particularly in the context of Brexit. I very quickly note that the maintenance of the Windsor protocol and continued progress in Stormont are critical on the Democrat side of the aisle. I think those are the partisan and generational differences that you asked about.

Baroness Blackstone: Given those generational differences and the fact that there is probably more scepticism among younger people about the nature of the special relationship—it is a long time since the Second

World War and all of that—do you see that as some threat to our co-operation and our work together, and the so-called special relationship, or do you think it will all be ironed out in the end and that eventually there will be a Democratic presidency, and maybe the Democrats will even take over in Congress next time?

Rep Jim Himes: I have an interest in this, but that outcome—at least in the House—is more likely than not. Fundamentally, even though I observed that isolationism lives most actively in the MAGA movement—again I will not rehash the Irish issue—I do not think that partisan changes of government have any meaningful or lasting effect on the special relationship.

While for my children's generation—the 20-somethings of the world—World War II and the Cold War alliances are matters of ancient history, this is a very culturally attuned generation. I do not need to tell you that they live on Instagram and TikTok. In some ways that is an advantage for the relationship. It is much more likely that my two daughters will share British influencers than French, German or Italian influencers. I do not think there is a fundamental cultural or generational threat to the relationship.

You did not ask about this, but let me quickly highlight it. There is room for political division. I know what the British public thinks of the current President. I know what the US public thinks of the current President. There is an understanding in the United States that Governments will come and go. I do not think any American felt differently about the relationship when Boris Johnson was PM or now that Keir Starmer is Prime Minister. There is a risk though, and let me be very blunt about this: if the partisan resonance between the Conservative party and the Reform party were really to boil over in a very visible way against the parties of the left, bilaterally, that could have an impact on the relationship. Mr Farage is not shy about coming over here. Most people really do not care, but were that to be amplified in a very substantial way and were the Reform movement to be a big part of official Britain, that could be an area of some tension.

Baroness Blackstone: Thank you.

Q147 **Baroness Crawley:** Thank you very much, Congressman. Could we look into the future, if possible, and see what trends you think there will be in the relationship in, say, a decade's time? Do you see the security relationship strengthening? Do you see our defence and international goals differing or becoming stronger and more cohesive with the US?

I am interested in some polling that was done by the Marshall Scholars Association. It polled quite a good representative number of US citizens. While the majority thought that there was a significant special relationship with the UK, when they were asked about the relationship as far as trade and business were concerned, China came out way before us. Would you like to comment on that and perhaps do a bit of future-gazing?

Rep Jim Himes: I guess I am not surprised by that. I would have to see the question that was asked. Obviously, US-Chinese trade is probably at least an order of magnitude larger than US-UK trade, so that does not surprise me.

I would give a more optimistic answer today than I would have five years ago about the fundamental strength of the security relationship. The reason I say that, of course, is Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which transformed the way Europe thinks about its own security. Of course, there is China as well, although thank goodness we are not involved in a conflict with China. I cannot see any other circumstance than one in which we are side by side with the British with respect to Russia and with respect to China.

There will be minor irritants. I remember how unhappily several years ago the message, particularly from some of my Republican colleagues, was received about not using any Huawei technology in British networks. I put that in the category of a minor irritant. I suspect the British public may be in a very different place on Israel-Gaza from the American public, but again I put that in the category of relatively minor irritants. The fundamental partnership alliance vis-à-vis Russia and China will become more important and not less. My own view is that our challenge there is figuring out how to be complementary rather than duplicative. I think that will make the partnership stronger. My own view—I would certainly get an argument on this—is that the British are in some cases better than we are on things like human intelligence and training troops in regions of conflict. That is being played out in Ukraine right now.

I think the underlying relationship will remain strong, with some irritants, and we need to focus on being complementary to each other rather than duplicative.

Baroness Crawley: Thank you very much.

Q148 **Lord Darroch of Kew:** Congressman, it is great to see you again. Thank you very much for doing this. I want to ask two supplementaries, if I could, to the question that you have just been asked. The first is this.

One of the things that in my days in the foreign service used to keep the communication channels humming between Washington and London was our presence around the EU table and our role in formulating EU policy in determining EU outcomes. Of course, post Brexit we do not have that any more. Do you think it already affects, or may affect in the future, our value in Washington, the importance that we have in the eyes of the US Government and our significance in the United States? That is the first question.

The second question is much more existential. You can get your crystal ball out again, if you are able to. Do you think there are aspects of Trumpism that will persist and carry on whether or not the Republicans win the next election? In other words, the things that the Trump Administration are saying are representative of an America that has

changed or shifted a bit. For example, I noted that during the Biden Administration some of the tariffs on China were not lifted. They persisted through that Administration. I wonder whether the Democratic party is basically in a place where you think there may be a role for tariffs in the future. Another example is that there is quite a hard edge to the America First policies of this Administration. I wonder if there is more of a mood of nationalism in the US that will have to be reflected in a future Administration, whatever the political complexion.

One last example is that there is a reluctance, completely understandable in the wake of Afghanistan and Iraq, to put American boots on the ground overseas in dangerous places. Actually, there probably is in the UK as well. Do you think that is something that has also changed America basically for the duration?

Rep Jim Himes: Thank you, Lord Darroch. Those are very good questions and hard to answer briefly. My own view—I suspect this is shared by most Americans—is that, from an economic standpoint, Brexit weakened the UK. If you were to talk to Wall Street leaders, they would tell you, “We used to have no reservations about, without thought, putting our people and headquarters in the City. Now we think Frankfurt, Zurich and Paris, for obvious reasons”.

On the political side, even on the left here there is suspicion of the EU. I am a left-leaning internationalist. I go to Brussels and I want to turn around and leave very quickly just because of the bureaucracy, the wheeling and dealing and the compromises that must be made. I do not know that many Americans would say that Brexit was a good idea for the UK ‘net net’, but the fact that Britain now stands somewhat alone has some advantages.

I meant to highlight this earlier, but when we think about the future of artificial intelligence, we will do that with the British, partly because you stand apart from the EU and partly because it was the UK that gave rise to DeepMind. There is obviously spectacular talent in that regard. When we work out the regulation and global protocols that will exist around artificial intelligence, I think it will be done in partnership with the British far faster than it will be done with any of our other allies, in Asia or in Europe.

With respect to Trumpism and what resonates, the more thoughtful elements of my party are thinking about what we can do differently. Let me start by saying that many people would perceive that the Democratic party walked away from the blue collar working class. I do not happen to agree with that, but that is certainly the perception. More broadly, there is an intense focus on the economics of people who are dislocated.

That points me back to artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence will not dislocate just workers in factories. In fact, it may dislocate radiologists, lawyers and accountants more rapidly than it dislocates blue collar workers. That focus is going to be intense. The left here will dial back its focus on cultural issues. I think a lot of political observers here looked at

Boris Johnson and said, "That's the recipe". When the Conservative party wins in Manchester and Birmingham with a right-leaning cultural message and a left-leaning economic message, that is something we can learn from politically. Those elements are likely to continue beyond MAGA.

The question of isolationism in our engagement will change, certainly in style. Very few people are comfortable with the President's style, effective as it may have been in getting our German allies and others to move towards the 2% on defence and above. The style will change, but, as we always have, the country will swing between moments of isolationism and moments of international engagement.

Lord Darroch of Kew: Those are fascinating answers, Congressman; thank you.

Q149 **Lord Soames of Fletching:** Congressman, good afternoon and thank you very much for joining us. Everyone is asking you to use your crystal ball, I am afraid. I suspect mine has already been shot. Looking to the future, what opportunities for UK-US co-operation do you foresee, irrespective of who is in the White House? What are the areas in the future where we are going to break new ground? Secondly, to what extent do you see the UK, if at all, as a bridge between the United States and the European Union?

Rep Jim Himes: Thank you, Lord Soames. I will take the second question first. Is the UK a bridge to the European Union? My reflexive answer is to say no, just because I think that the economic realm—trade in particular—and the defence realm, is where we will continue to beat up on Spain and Italy. Some of us will do it politely and some of us will do it less politely. Those are likely to be bilateral conversations or US-EU, US-NATO conversations. I do not think that the model of the UK as the bridge to the EU is one that is natural politically or for people in business here in the United States.

In terms of what we might do in the future, I will say what I said before. In our legislatures and in our Government, we need intentionally to take up the question of how we work in complementary fashion with the British. The United States needs to be comfortable that we do not put trainers on the ground in central Ukraine because the British are doing it so well. We need the kind of relationship that we have with MI6, where we are comfortable not trying to build a HUMINT² operation in countries where there is much more of a historical legacy of British presence than we might have. By the way, let me acknowledge that we have an awful lot of work to do there. If I was sitting in MI6 right now thinking about sharing critical information with the CIA, I would have an internal conversation with myself. I think that is a challenge for Five Eyes.

Lastly, Lord Soames, I say this because I think it is really important. Not every one of my colleagues but an awful lot of my colleagues, and an awful lot of Silicon Valley and other innovators, need to go to Cambridge

² Human Intelligence

to see the new Cavendish centre there, to build the partnerships in research and development and basic research that we need to double down on. It is obviously not just Cambridge. There are all sorts of threads that we can pull that we might not even see. I will give you an example. Many of you have met Avril Haines. She was in our intelligence community for many years, culminating in her role as Director of National Intelligence under President Biden. She is taking up a fellowship at All Souls. I do not want to impose too much on Avril, but that alone is a bridge. There are a dozen such examples where we could strengthen both policy and academic and research bridges if we were intentional about it.

Lord Soames of Fletching: That is very helpful; thank you very much.

Q150 **Lord Bruce of Bennachie:** Thank you for your thoughtful answers. Foreign policy issues do not seem to drive American voter opinion as strongly as perhaps they do elsewhere. I wonder whether there is any resonance among the wider public—I am sure you have your own views—about the way President Trump is both behaving towards allies and excessively antagonising adversaries. I am thinking of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation summit and the fallout with India, which seems to have strengthened the unity of that organisation, while our own alliances appear to be somewhat fragmented. That is a concern that affects the debate, certainly in the UK. Does it have any resonance or impact among voters concerned that America is endangering alliances and antagonising potential adversaries? How do you think that will play out, in terms of the Republicans' potential and, obviously, whether the Democrats have a means of addressing it?

Rep Jim Himes: An excellent question. There are a lot of directions in which we could go with it but let me answer quickly. The answer is no. Very rarely does foreign policy impinge on the voting decisions of the American electorate. There are exceptions. In fact, I am an exception because I probably would not have been elected in 2008 but for the shocking unpopularity of then President George W. Bush because of the American public's disgust with, and exhaustion over, the Iraq war.

In moments of crisis, like the way the country felt about the Iraq war in 2007-08, it impinges, but that is very rare. I know that is odd to European ears. It is just that we have 3,000 miles of ocean in either direction and, by and large, the Canadians and the Mexicans do not enter into national security calculus all that often. The answer to your question is no, except in moments of crisis. You could imagine events that would cause the American public to really sit up and focus. Were there an invasion of Taiwan, for example, and were the US Government to follow through on its Biden-era pledges to defend Taiwan, all of a sudden that issue would move very much to the forefront of voters' minds because there would be the prospect of thousands of US casualties. Generally speaking, the answer to your question is no.

There are two more quick points about the atmosphere. The vast majority of Americans are uncomfortable with the ham-handed rhetoric that President Trump uses. The vast majority of Americans also have the

sense that the United States security guarantees in the Pacific and in Europe have been very expensive and, to some extent, have come at the expense of the local school and the highways and the bridges. That is the instinct. You could call it isolationist if you want. I think it is a legitimate instinct, even for an internationalist like myself, but it is very real. An awful lot of Americans are saying, "Wait a minute, tell me again why we are sending \$100 million next month to Ukraine but the bridge that I drive over to get to work collapsed?" That will continue to be very real for logical reasons. It is also, frankly, because voters here do not spend a lot of time thinking about the fact that on a per capita basis the UK and Germany are contributing considerably more to Ukraine than the United States is.

Q151 Lord Grocott: On trends in foreign policy, and maybe points of friction between the UK and the US, I do not think anyone will argue much but that the most dangerous part of the world for most of the last 80 years has tended to be somewhere or other in the Middle East. A specific issue that is coming up in the next few weeks will be Britain and a number of other countries recognising a Palestinian state.

There are two things. First, could you say a few words about your views on American foreign policy in respect of recognising a Palestinian state? Secondly, given that the issues around this have been so dominant for so long in many ways, are there any recognisable trends or changes, maybe in US foreign policy towards Israel and Palestine, which go back a long way, to put it mildly, including the Suez war and goodness knows what else? Do you have any comments on those?

Rep Jim Himes: That is a fascinating question. The answer to your question is that there is a real change dynamic afoot in the United States. I cannot give you precise numbers, but I can give you directional numbers. For the first time in Israel's history the majority of Americans have a negative view of Israel. I understand that the city of New York is the largest Jewish city in the world. For the first time in my lifetime, when polled, the majority of New Yorkers—I want to be careful about my language—were not anti-Israel but had a negative view of Israel.

The way Israel has conducted the Gaza war has had a profound impact on our politics. As I said to Lord Bruce, that does not mean that the American middle class is reading Thomas Friedman and coming up with sophisticated proposals, but the weather has changed fairly dramatically here politically. Sadly, it has partisan overtones. They are not even overtones; it has partisan branding in the sense that the Republican party remains 100% pro-Israel, right or wrong, whereas the Democratic party is split. There is a variety of reasons for that, including the fact that Jewish Americans have traditionally voted very heavily in favour of the Democrats. I think the Republicans see political advantage and are trying to winnow that advantage away. None the less, there is a dramatic change in sentiment in the United States.

With respect to the recognition of Palestine, let me just speak for myself because it is an enormously contentious topic in this building. Because in

the United States the Palestinians have no advocacy, and because the pro-Israel voice has been so strong, ranging from AIPAC³ on the right to slightly to the left with groups like J Street⁴, I may not support publicly or explicitly the United States calling for the recognition of Palestine; there are a lot of odd questions. But I actually think it is quite healthy for the UK and European and other countries to articulate what would be regarded as a sort of unconventional view in the United States. That is my own view. Again, I may not call for the US to recognise Palestine, but I am glad, in the absence of what I perceive as adequate US even-handedness, that Europe is stepping in.

Lord Grocott: Thank you very much.

Q152 **Lord Houghton of Richmond:** One of the problems of asking a late question is that it is in tatters by the time I get to it because most people have asked bits of it. Can I return you, therefore, to the issue asked earlier about potential future frictions in foreign policy and defence terms? You gave the somewhat reassuring and sanguine answer that America and Europe and Britain would still stand together. I speak as someone whose background is military and who was Chief of the Defence Staff. We often participated in joint talks with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff. Even back in 2015, then Vice-President Biden was dispatched to our lunch with a message from President Obama: "Please take this message back to your Prime Minister. We Americans hold you, Britain, to a higher account. You have to start to take more responsibility for the security of Europe".

An element of that has now been reinforced by a potential threatening to loosen the security guarantees of America to Europe. You said—again, this was echoed in what President Biden told us back in those days—that middle America was fed up with spending 3.7% of the biggest GDP on earth and being the external security guarantor of three regions of the world, south-east Asia, the Middle East and Europe, all of which were perfectly capable of affording it themselves. At the most recent NATO summit in The Hague, we sort of dodged the bullet and got away with it; future promises on money to be spent and all that appear to have appeased President Trump. The simple fact is that, if you look at the detail of what the British Government are going to spend, it is not much different for about another six or seven years into the future. We need to re-establish conventional deterrence against Russia tomorrow, not in eight years' time. Should we adopt a policy that complements America more, that actually eases the pressure on your responsibilities, or else we might still be heading for a period of distinct friction, which is a reflection of American attitudes and is not centred on one particular party?

Rep Jim Himes: First, the talk that you hear about the possibility that the US would not live up to its Article 5 obligations is extremely fringe. Our President says whatever comes into his mind. He often is influenced by whoever was the last adviser in the room. I understand how important

³ American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group.

⁴ A non-profit liberal pro-Israel group.

that is. The rhetoric out of the Oval Office when it suggests that the United States might not defend deadbeat countries, or however Donald Trump articulates it, is extremely fringe. There are 435 Members of the House of Representatives. I can tell you that 10 of them, maybe 15—2% or 3%—would not ardently argue for abiding by our treaty obligations in NATO and other treaty obligations. It is a very fringe point of view. That may seem odd in the context of the President's equivocation on Russian drones over Poland, but the commitment to the security guarantees is extremely strong. It is true in Asia, excepting Taiwan. Taiwan is in a category by itself, given what would be involved in the United States getting involved in a military conflict with China over Taiwan.

Again, I reassure you. Of course there will be friction. It has not come up yet, but the answer is making AUKUS work—all of AUKUS, not just submarines, but the pillar 2 research, innovation, et cetera—and a focus on complementarity. I will not go there again because I have said it several times. I am very conscious of the British political elements of that. Do you spend money on what you are extraordinarily good at—better than we are—or do you spend money on another aircraft carrier when we have almost a dozen of them? It is that sort of conversation that we need to have together. Obviously, I do not in any way mean to impinge on British sovereignty in saying that.

Regarding irritants, I mentioned Ireland and complementarity. Let me highlight one that is small but real, especially given who occupies the Oval Office and the vice-presidency right now, because it has not come up yet. You see it in the media right now: issues of free speech. Those of us who have followed the UK for a long time know that we are different, remembering the days of the Troubles in Ireland, which is another on the list of irritants. Even to this Anglophile internationalist, to see protesters being arrested on the streets of London because they happen to support a pro-Palestinian group is immensely toxic to American sensibilities. By the way, do not let me climb up on a soapbox; our Government are currently guaranteeing free speech for everybody on the right. I am not saying that we are virtuous; I am just saying that some of the imagery with respect to arrests made for pro-Palestinian protesters lands very hard on the American psyche.

Lord Houghton of Richmond: Thank you for that very good answer. It is actually very reassuring. You touched on AUKUS. Might you develop that a little bit? There is a review going on. There is a concern that in the short term at least, while Taiwan is an issue, to gift submarines to the Australians is not what America or the President would wish. Do you think AUKUS will survive the review?

Rep Jim Himes: Yes, I do, but do not take that as 100% certainty. The principled and substantial objections to AUKUS articulated by Jack Reed of Rhode Island have largely been dealt with. Then you have Elbridge Colby's review in the Pentagon. You will have to ask my Republican friends for better visibility on that, but everyone I know in the orbit of that review tells me that it is not going to negatively impact AUKUS, and

that Colby is somewhat isolated in the Pentagon and in the Administration as a whole. Again, I am not your best messenger on what is happening in the more ideological realms of the Pentagon.

- Q153 **Baroness Coussins:** I would like you to set aside for a minute matters of foreign policy and defence. Can you identify any other issues of potential friction that might put a strain on the US-UK relationship? I am thinking of disengagement from multilateral organisations such as the WHO and perhaps other parts of the UN, climate change, and restrictions on academic and scientific research. You may want to comment on any of those and add other issues to the list. Perhaps you could also say whether you think there would be any concrete differences between the US and the UK on those issues depending on whether there was a Republican or a Democrat in the White House.

Rep Jim Himes: If Ireland and trade and defence complementarity are primary issues and free speech is a secondary issue, to me, those feel secondary or tertiary in their impact on the relationship. I think that all Americans understand that for obvious reasons our European partners will always be more committed to multilateral institutions perhaps than we appear to be, and that that instinct will be emphasised when we have rightward-leaning Governments and de-emphasised when we have leftward-leaning Governments. For example, I do not know the context or the platform, but, were the UK formally to call for a Palestinian state, there would be a week's-worth of grumpy commentary in the US, but it would not have any lasting effect, in my opinion.

You did not ask this question, but I see what is happening here with the second state visit. Apparently, the entire British military turned out for our President. That will give the UK Government a great deal of leverage with our President. It may be impolite to say it, but I know what is happening, and I do not blame the Government or the Prime Minister for doing it. I hope it turns into the ability of the Prime Minister and HMG perhaps to influence the President on these matters. If a Labour Prime Minister can have the President's ear, and when the topic of multilateralism comes up at the United Nations the President of the United States is actually listening to Prime Minister Starmer because he got a really good meal at Windsor Castle, that is a good outcome. Sorry. If you ask an American to testify, you are going to get blunt pragmatism.

- Q154 **Baroness Morris of Bolton:** Congressman, good morning. I have very much enjoyed your very thoughtful and amusing contributions. You touched on a number of important ties between the UK and the US. If you could offer just one recommendation to strengthen them, what do you think that might be? It is like that horrible exam question at the end when you are asked one very specific thing.

Rep Jim Himes: Let me be very specific and pragmatic and leave the realm of grand theory. Inasmuch as you have influence, send a spectacular envoy to Washington. All of your ambassadors have been terrific, including Lord Darroch. Karen was beyond superb. She had both the Trump and the Biden Administration under her purview, and she did

absolutely brilliantly with both. That really matters. Your next envoy needs to invite the Vice-President, who lives 150 metres from the British Ambassador's Residence, over for an evening of wonderful dinner and whisky and cigars and build that relationship. If it has not been clear, the instinct in the Administration to be anti-British and anti-Europe very much lives with the Vice-President, in my opinion. It does not live with our Secretary of Defense. It does not live with Marco Rubio. It lives with the Vice-President. That is a very specific recommendation. Karen Pierce was superb because she understood that human element. There was a period when I was invited to two events a week at the British embassy. That may seem silly, but it matters, especially to Administrations like this one that are ideologically a little unmoored. It really matters. The stumble with the last ambassador is not a good thing, but it can be very quickly remedied by sending somebody of Karen Pierce's capability and human instincts to Washington.

The Chair: Congressman Himes, we have really enjoyed our session with you. Thank you very much. Thank you for being so open. It has been extremely helpful.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear.

Rep Jim Himes: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.