

# Trump victory deepens crisis of UK Labour government

Robert Stevens

11 November 2024

The election of Donald Trump as US president has accelerated the crisis of despised governments throughout Europe, none more so than Britain's Labour government led by Sir Keir Starmer.

Starmer only won July's general election due to widespread hatred of the Tory government which had been in power 14 years. He entered Downing Street with the smallest popular vote of any majority government in Britain's history, and his ratings have plummeted since then due to his backing of genocide in Gaza and austerity agenda.

Trump's threat that the US could end support for NATO unless the European powers significantly up their budgets for military spending, and his declaration that he intends to end the "loser" war in Ukraine by reaching a deal with Russia, have profoundly destabilised London. Likewise his threats to increase tariffs on all goods being imported into the US, given that this is the UK's largest trading partner, after the European Union bloc, accounting for nearly a fifth (17.6 percent) of total trade.

At the end of September, Starmer and Foreign Secretary David Lammy arranged to meet Trump at his Trump Tower while Starmer was at the UN General Assembly. This was prioritised as a bridge building exercise, especially as Lammy had previously described Trump as a "racist" and a "neo-Nazi sympathising sociopath."

These comments, made during Trump's first administration, and from the opposition benches, are a major embarrassment for Labour now it is the governing party of the central longstanding military ally of the United States and is up to its neck in the US-led wars against Russia in Ukraine and Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Moreover, it was not just Lammy who mouthed off at

Trump but virtually every leader in Starmer's cabinet—and Starmer himself, who in 2018, before taking over as party leader, said that Trump's policy of separating migrant families in detention showed he did not understand "humanity and dignity".

Starmer's now chancellor Rachel Reeves said the policy was "barbaric", while Wes Streeting, now health secretary, described Trump as an "odious, sad, little man".

Labour Cabinet Office Minister Pat McFadden, who plays a major role in Starmer's government, said in 2021—following Trump's attempted coup to prevent the election of the Democratic Party's Joe Biden—that it was "terrible and distressing" and the "culmination of the Trump [2016-2020] presidency".

Relations were soured still further by Trump filing an official complaint against the Labour Party alleging "blatant foreign interference" after 100 staffers went to America to aid the campaign of Democratic candidate Kamala Harris.

Such is the uprooting of the political set-up since Trump's election win that it is reported that Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK and a Trump favourite due to his anti-European Union (EU) message, cynically offered Labour his services in helping mend relations with Trump.

Cue the eating of humble pie amid an orgy of fawning and sycophancy. This week McFadden said he thought the new US and UK governments would "get on well... the alliance and the friendship between the US and the UK is really deep and enduring". He saw this "in government on a practical day-to-day basis on defence, security, intelligence, trade—on lots of fronts."

Angela Rayner, Labour's deputy leader who previously described Trump as a "buffoon" who has "no place in the White House", was tasked to smooth

relations with Trump's Vice President JD Vance. Rayner said after the conversation, "We spoke about our plans for the future and how we build on the special relationship between our countries."

Plans are now being made to grant Trump a second state visit to Britain. Trump was accorded a state visit in 2019 under then Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, and no other world leader has ever been given two. The *Guardian* reported that "government sources said a second state visit for Trump should not be ruled out because of three differences since 2019—the gap between his presidencies, the change of government from Conservatives to Labour, and the new monarch, Charles III."

The possibility of Trump collapsing the UK economy was an imminent threat, said Liam Byrne, Labour chair of Parliament's business committee, interviewed by the BBC's *Today* show on Monday. Plans by Trump to impose a tariff on all goods entering the US of 10 to 20 percent was "the doomsday scenario we are now confronting... If that does go ahead that is going to have a really significant impact on growth, inflation and interest rates in the UK."

The ruling elite on both sides of the Atlantic know that whatever the pretty words about the US-UK "special relationship", what counts is the military and political usefulness of British imperialism (a nuclear power) to the US on a global scale. Commentators with sources inside the Trump camp have said that he could spare Britain from trade war only on the basis that London maintains an even more firm anti-EU agenda. This is under conditions in which Starmer is seeking a post-Brexit "reset" with the main European powers, including developing anti-immigration policies as part of his "Border Force" strategy.

How to maintain this relationship was discussed during a House of Lords debate on UK military spending last week, as a host of Tory peers railed against Labour's refusal to name a date for its pledge to ramp up military spending to 2.5 percent of GDP. Hereditary Peer Lord Mountevans said the major problem was that "if the US is to continue to regard the UK as a key ally, we must maintain the fabric and capabilities of our Armed Forces."

Pressure was ratcheted up by the *Daily Mail* as part of its "Don't Leave Britain Defenceless" campaign, which issued a front page article Monday, "When Will

Labour Give Our Forces Funds They Need?" It cited Chief of the General Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, who told *Sky News*, "We're in a more dangerous world. That means we need to strengthen our Armed Forces." Also cited was former head of the Army Lord Dannatt who told the newspaper, "With Trump resuming the presidency in the US, the UK Government would be well advised to commit to 2.5 percent on defence by a definite date, well before 2029, as soon as possible."

Lord West, former First Sea Lord and a security minister under the previous Labour government, said, "There is no doubt whatsoever that the UK needs to spend more money on defence—it is well accepted. If we need to spend it, then we need to spend it now."

He complained, "They've decided they're not going to put more money into defence at the moment because they want to balance the books."

Rear Admiral Chris Parry, who worked on the Blair Labour government's defence review in 1998, said 2.5 percent should be hit "tomorrow" and "We should start buying ammunition and missiles to send a very clear signal that we're serious."

Responding to the pressure already coming from Trump before he enters the White House, UK Defence Secretary John Healey—who along with Lammy established the closest ties with the Biden administration in support of its war policies—stated on Monday, "I don't expect the US to turn away from NATO. They recognise the importance of the alliance, they recognise the importance of avoiding further conflict in Europe. But, I do say, and I've argued for some time, that the European nations in NATO need to do more of the heavy lifting."



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**