

# London Evening Standard

## US-UK relations 'face biggest challenge for decades with Donald Trump as President'

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Donald Trump's term as US President will usher in the most strained relations between the US and UK for decades, experts have warned.

Professors said Britain should brace itself for a “bumpy-ride” in transatlantic relations under a Trump presidency, with one describing him as the “most difficult and erratic president we may ever meet.”

Mr Trump's apparent “equivocal” stance toward European collective security through NATO, his protectionist economic policies and his calls for closer relations between the US and Russia have left British professors unnerved.

Professor Adam Quinn, an expert in American foreign policy at Birmingham University, said Mr Trump's inauguration on Friday represented a “potential turning point in the US relationship with the liberal world order” and by consequence for the US-UK special relationship.

Donald Trump's inauguration: What actually happens?

He told the Standard: “If the US plays a less important role in European security it might lead to instability and possibly even conflict in Europe and place a burden on Britain it may not want or be able to bear.”

Tim Oliver, an expert in transatlantic relations at the London School of Economics (LSE), said Britain had to navigate a relationship with a president whose worldview is closer to China and Russia's than it is to Britain's and who constantly “changes his mind”.

Mr Oliver told the Standard: “Trump has no consistent opinions. I don't think he knows what he wants to do or where the UK fits into it.”

For Mr Oliver this “unpredictability”, combined with Theresa May and Mr Trump's “clash of personalities”, means a Trump presidency could “easily see the most strained relations between the US and UK for a long time.”

Xenia Wickett, head of the US programme at Chatham House, agreed that “Trump is going to be much harder for the UK to manage.”

She told the Standard: “Firstly the international norms and systems such as NATO and the World Trade Organisation, which the US have been a part of and led for many decades, are no longer inviolated by Trump.

“Secondly he expects other nations to step up more (for example contribute more to NATO) which will also be true for the UK.

“Thirdly he values unpredictability, which makes diplomatic relations hard for any ally.

“And finally Trump has a personality which is less amenable for the British people.”

She added: “The UK is very much between a rock and a hard place in a world where the EU is less amenable and the US is tougher.”

But Ryan Bourne, an economist at the Cato Institute in Washington DC, disagreed saying a Trump presidency should be seen as “a big opportunity” to strengthen ties with the world’s largest economy.

While he argued Mr Trump’s protectionist policies might damage the global economy he said by backing a US-UK trade deal the future president was offering an “olive branch” to the UK that should be taken.

He told the Standard: “I think this trade deal should be seen as a huge opportunity for Britain in this post Brexit environment and Britain should look to capitalise on the fact that Trump appears to admire Britain very highly.”

Kathleen Burk, an expert in Anglo-American relations at University College London, agreed that Mr Trump’s pro-British stance might strengthen the so-called UK-US special relationship.

She said the “special-relationship” was based on military, intelligence and financial cooperation; established partnerships which are in many cases “fully-entwined” and would “be there once Trump and May have gone.”

She told the Standard: “On top of this Trump sees Britain as a safe ally. A lot of Trump’s people are anglophiles and the American public like Great Britain.

“This means the unpredictability of the US’s approach to all of its relationships under President Trump is not the case with Britain.

“As for the UK, sticking with the US means continuing to be an ally of the most powerful country in the world, so it’s in both their interests.

“As far as fundamental relationships go I think the Anglo-American one is pretty safe.”