

Starmer has to make a choice: his 'policy' is unsustainable

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:36 am

Right across the political spectrum there is a consensus that Keir Starmer has to make a decision on which side he will support in the rapidly opening split between Donald Trump's USA and the European Union.

The European Union did not wish to split with the USA. That is not because the EU has been exploiting the US, as Donald Trump would claim to be the case. There is no evidence to support that idea. Instead, it is because almost every EU member state had presumed until the moment of Donald Trump's inauguration that they and the USA shared a broadly similar world outlook, even when it came to such unpalatable US policies as that on Gaza.

Now it is apparent to just about everyone but the Prime Minister of the UK that this is no longer the case. For whatever the reason, and there is much to speculate about on that, it is clear that Donald Trump is now pursuing three meta-narratives that underpin his foreign policy. These are that he will:

- * Support Russia, and its policy agenda, most especially when it comes to Ukraine.
- * Seek to undermine the European Union.
- * Drive for US geographical expansion, including at cost to NATO and EU countries.

To pretend that this is not the case is, now, absurd. Trump has now been in office for long enough, and his behaviour has been consistent enough, for it to become very clear that these three things are his policy agenda, and that he is utterly indifferent to the consequences flowing from them, whether they be for the people of Ukraine, the territories that he wishes to annex, the people of the EU, or people anywhere else in the world. He is, of course, also utterly indifferent to the interests of the people of the USA, who are undoubtedly going to be seriously harmed by this agenda.

What is also clear is that this policy agenda is so extreme that there is no room for ambiguity in anyone's reaction to it. There can now be no rational belief in the idea that was sustainable for a week or two after the inauguration that Trump might have by accident, and irrationally, upset the accepted order but that this was all in the interest

of making an initial impression. It is now very obvious that the agenda has always been deliberate, and is not going to change.

For example, whether Trump is simply a Russian asset, or an agent, does not make any difference. What is clear is that there is really nothing more that he could do to advance the Russian cause, including against Ukraine, than he is already doing.

Similarly, it is clear that his intentions with regard to geographical extension of the USA are serious.

And with tariffs against the EU appearing ever more likely, and the commitment to NATO not only abandoned, but actively reversed, the EU is clearly in Trump's sightlines.

Or, I should add, all of this is clear to absolutely everyone except Keir Starmer. He is still, in classic New Labour Blairite style, dithering as to where he stands on Trump, hoping beyond all hope that Trump might really be his friend, and that the EU will in that case see him as the means of access to the US which they themselves have lost.

There is only one potential consequence of this, which is that Keir Starmer will end up looking like a bigger fool than he already does.

Starmer is not leading some grand alliance, as he wants to think. The EU can act by itself, with France and Germany taking the lead. That has become very clear over the past week.

Starmer also has no special access to Trump. That is obvious to anyone.

And if anyone believed he could read the diplomatic mood correctly, events within 24 hours of his visit to Washington only a little over a week ago have proved otherwise.

The so-called Special Relationship is over.

Trump could not care less about Starmer.

And the only influence the UK might now have can only be secured as an outlier to EU policy.

That is where we stand now. The UK is a weird little island in a four-way world power split between the USA, Russia, China and the EU. Some other BRICS states, like India and South Africa, almost certainly have more power and influence in this set up than we do.

Starmer, however, wants to pretend otherwise. He is a liability as a result.

What we need to do is work out where we stand in the new world order. The questions are:

- * Do we ally with Europe?
- * Do we move towards independence, with the advantages that supplies - including a radical rethink of our defence strategy?
- * Do we represent that distinct voice in the UN?
- * Or is our role to line up with France and Germany as the fight against fascism demands, something that our Foreign Office appears never to have been able to comprehend as an option?

There may be other options on the table, but siding with the USA is not one of them. People in this country would not tolerate that. In that case, I cannot see those other alternatives, immediately. But what I can say is that being Trump's friend is not an option - because he has no friends, barring Putin - and we all know that won't last, with untold consequences.

Starmer might have to make a decision, and we all know how much he hates doing that.