

The Evolution of US-UK Relations

by Geopolitical Futures - July 3, 2020

beginnings



1584
 The first, short-lived British colony in Virginia is organized

1607
 Permanent English settlement begins

July 4, 1776
 The United States declares its independence from Great Britain

1783
 The American Revolutionary War ends with Great Britain recognizing U.S. independence

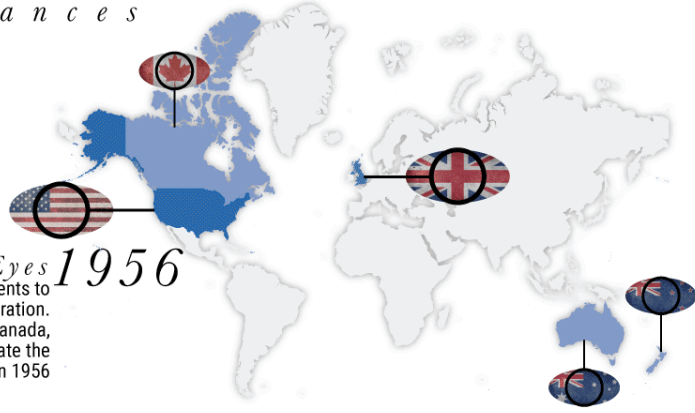
1785
 The two countries establish diplomatic relations

1812
 The U.S. declares war on the United Kingdom with the onset of the War of 1812

1815
 The two countries reestablish relations

alliances

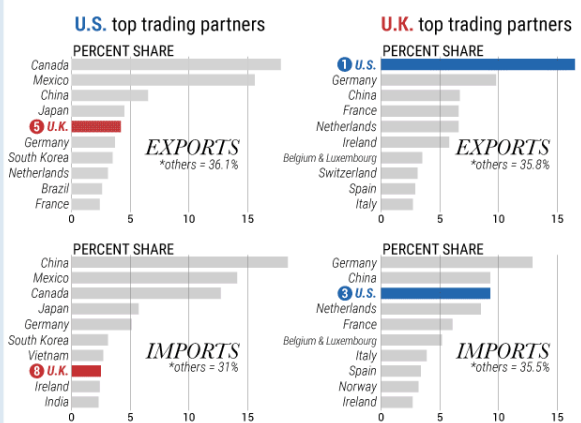
1941
The Atlantic Charter
 The U.K. and U.S. sign the Lend-Lease Act, which provides the U.K. with the necessary materiel to block a German invasion and gives the U.S. access to all British naval bases in the Western Atlantic, and the Atlantic Charter, which reflects their shared vision for the post-WWII world



1956
The Five Eyes
 The U.S. and U.K. sign a series of agreements to enhance security and intelligence cooperation. The agreements are extended to Canada, Australia and New Zealand to create the Five Eyes alliance in 1956

strong trade relations **2018**

The U.S. and U.K. are consistently among each other's top 10 trade partners



2017-20 free trade talks

July 2017
 The U.S.-U.K. Trade and Investment Working Group is established to provide commercial continuity for U.S. and U.K. businesses, workers and consumers as the U.K. leaves the European Union, and to explore ways to strengthen trade and investment ties

March 2018
 The working group holds the inaugural meeting of the new U.K.-U.S. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Dialogue

July 2018
November 2018
July 2019
 The working group and SME dialogue continue to meet regularly, laying the groundwork for an ambitious and wide-ranging potential free trade agreement once the U.K. has left the European Union

May 2020
 The U.S. and U.K. launch formal negotiations on a free trade agreement. Talks continue online and are to be held every six weeks. Both sides are keen to move forward quickly to counter the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

Sources: U.S. Embassy & Consulates in the United Kingdom, BBC, Office for National Statistics, Encyclopædia Britannica, ITC, Office of the United States Trade Representative, Reuters, RNZ, UK Defense Journal

(click to enlarge)

The bilateral relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is among the strongest in the world today. But the two countries got off to a rocky start. That was to be expected, though, since the American colonies declared independence from and fought a war with the U.K. However, the end of the war did not mark the end of hostilities. After losing the American colonies, the U.K. continued to build its empire throughout the world and did not give up on efforts to maintain a foothold in North America. During the 19th century, when the British Empire reached its peak, the U.K. controlled the Atlantic Ocean. There was a serious possibility that it, along with other European powers, could recolonize the Americas. The U.K. therefore continued to pose a threat to the United States even after independence.

It was not until World War II that the United States and the United Kingdom established the close alliance we know today. In the first half of the 20th century, the U.S. feared the emergence of a European power that could dominate the Continent. After World War I, it tried to strike a balance between Germany and France to prevent either from becoming too powerful. It failed. With the outbreak of World War II, the German threat reappeared. France fell to Germany, and the U.S. turned to the U.K. to form a partnership aimed at stopping the Germans; they ultimately defeated Germany in the war.

Their partnership turned out to be a strong and lasting one as the two countries had many long-term interests in common. Since WWII, they have expanded their military and intelligence cooperation, backing one another in international conflicts with military deployments. Politically, many of their long-term strategic interests continue to overlap, regardless of what parties are in power. Economically, they have a robust trade relationship that has taken on a new level of importance because of the U.K.'s departure from the European Union. Their relationship has come a long way.

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