



By: TA | AP Insight

Smoothing turbulent waters - King Charles III will follow his mother's lead in celebrating US-UK bonds



The challenge for King Charles III when he embarks on next week's state visit to the U.S. is, as always, to live up to his mother's example.

The late Queen Elizabeth II wowed Congress in 1991 with a speech that celebrated the shared democratic traditions of Britain and the United States, quoted Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and highlighted the deep bonds between the two nations.

Those themes will also be at the top of Charles' agenda as he celebrates America's 250th birthday and seeks to calm tensions surrounding Prime Minister Keir Starmer's refusal to support U.S. President Donald Trump's war against Iran, said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University in Texas.

"We've got to always make the distinction that there's a difference between the government of the U.K. and the kings and queens of Great Britain, who are really always coming to try to put (on) a good face," Brinkley told The Associated Press. "Politics come and go, prime ministers, presidents, come and go, but there's something deeper about the special relationship between the United States and the U.K."

Charles and Queen Camilla will begin their four-day trip on Monday, when they will have tea with the president and first lady Melania Trump, then tour the White House beehive in a nod to the king's focus on conservation.

The formal arrival ceremony will take place on Tuesday, with a 21-gun salute, brass bands playing the national anthems of both countries and a contingent of U.S. service members passing in review.

The ceremonies will be followed by a meeting between Trump and Charles.

Behind the scenes

But beneath the pomp and pageantry will be a

carefully choreographed diplomatic event staged, like all royal visits, at the request of the British government.

Starmer resisted **pressure** to cancel it after Trump **belittled** the British military's sacrifices in Afghanistan and criticized him personally for failing to back the U.S. in Iran.

Despite those tensions, Trump has continued to speak warmly about Charles.

President Trump really tries to be impressive whenever he's dealing with British royalty - Douglas Brinkley

"History has shown that President Trump really tries to be impressive whenever he's dealing with British royalty," Brinkley said. "And I'm sure it'll be the same this time around."

Ever since 1939, when King George VI became the first British monarch to set foot on the soil of the country's former colony, there's been a special sort of excitement whenever the royals come to the United States.

Take that first visit, which took place as World War II loomed over Europe. The royals toured the east coast and attended a "picnic" at Roosevelt's private home in Hyde Park, New York. "King tries hot dog and asks for more," declared the New York Times.

But the big moment was when the royals traveled to Mount Vernon to lay a wreath at the tomb of George Washington, America's first president. It showed respect at a time of isolationism.

"People could see the handwriting on the wall and know that it was going to be important for the United States and Britain to stay strong for fighting against Hitler," said Barbara Perry, a presidential scholar at the University of Virginia's Miller Center.

But bonding over sausages had broader benefits, helping the royals build links to the

general public as well as its leadership.

After war broke out in September 1939, Queen Elizabeth, the wife of George VI and mother of the future Elizabeth II, wrote to first lady Eleanor Roosevelt to say how moved she'd been by letters from Americans who enclosed small sums for British forces.

"Sometimes, during the last terrible months, we have felt rather lonely in our fight against evil things, but I can honestly say that our hearts have been lightened by the knowledge that friends in America understand what we are fighting for," she wrote.

The queen's connection

Queen Elizabeth II built on those relationships, making four state visits to the U.S. during her 70-year reign.

She helped President Gerald R. Ford celebrate America's bicentennial in 1976 and met with President George W. Bush in 2007 as British and American forces fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Charles' visit will be no different. It includes a commemoration of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, a ceremony honoring fallen service members

and an event to be attended by Queen Camilla to mark the 100th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh stories by British author A.A. Milne.

Awkward events will be avoided.

The royals won't meet with Jeffrey Epstein's victims, despite calls for the king to address **his brother's links** to the convicted sex offender.

Nor are there plans for Charles to meet with his son Prince Harry, who has been a critic of the monarchy since giving up royal duties and moving to California.

Those issues aren't the priority, said Robert Hardman, author of "Elizabeth II: In Private. In Public. The Inside Story."

"He's going because 250 years ago the Founding Fathers of the USA kicked out his great-times-five grandfather, and he's going to say, 'No hard feelings, it's been a great divorce, we've had a lovely 250 years and let's reflect on the high points,'" Hardman said. "I mean, there are going to be some very, very large elephants in the room during that visit ... but, you know, there are plenty of other things for the king to focus on."

History, not politics

Charles' speech to a joint session of Congress offers the chance to deliver the message that long-term friendship is more important than transient disputes.

He is also likely to offer a bit of humor, as his mother did when she faced lawmakers in 1991.

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Wearing soft peach amid a sea of gray suits,

the diminutive monarch began her remarks with a joke about an earlier blunder at the White House when her lectern was so tall it obscured the audience's view of her.

"I do hope you can see me today from where you are," she deadpanned.

The chamber erupted in laughter. A standing ovation followed. Then she launched into a speech about democratic values, the rule of law and the Atlantic Alliance.

But Charles will have to offer his own take on those ideas, Brinkley said.

"The theme of the speech is going to be American exceptionalism, American history, the importance of U.S.-British alliance, and some memories from the past," he said. "But also about the love affair the two countries share with each other, even though it goes over rocky rapids from time to time."