

U.S.–UK contradictions in light of Middle Eastern realities

ARVAK Center comment, March 28, 2026¹



Annotation

ARVAK analyzes the deepening crisis in relations between the United States and the United Kingdom, provoked by a radical shift in Washington's geopolitical priorities. It examines the fundamental divergence in identifying the West's "primary enemy", London's commitment to the anti-Russian course versus the United States' reorientation toward the containment of China. Particular attention is paid to the Iranian conflict as a factor neutralizing UK strategies in the Ukrainian and Turkic directions. The author concludes that the monolith of the "Anglo-Saxon world" is eroding, leading to an intensified struggle for control over regional assets, specifically Turkey's foreign policy course.

Keywords: geopolitics, USA, United Kingdom, Iran, Turkey, China, Russia, "Great Turan", OTS, Hakan Fidan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Donald Trump, Middle Corridor.

1. The systemic crisis of Anglo-Saxon unity

Recent developments concerning Iran have exposed a conflict of interest between the United States and the United Kingdom, an inherent disagreement that, in reality, spans well beyond the scope of the Middle Eastern region.

Geopolitical divergences between Washington and London have seldom been a subject of public discourse in recent years. This can be attributed to both nations' efforts to preclude widespread exposure of problematic facets of their relationship, thereby safeguarding the overarching framework of the U.S.–UK allied conventions. Since the latter half of the 20th century, these conventions have been instrumental in establishing the contemporary global order, which is informally perceived as being under "Anglo-Saxon" stewardship.

Evidence suggests that the disagreements between the allies concerning numerous aspects of the geopolitical agenda are intensifying and becoming more profound, irrespective

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 27.03.2026.

of shifts in leadership and political factions governing the United States and Great Britain over the past two decades. This situation involves a convergence of deep and critically important systemic interests for both nations, the reconciliation of which appears insurmountable for Republicans and Democrats in the U.S., as well as for Conservatives and Labourites in the UK, even with a strong inclination to achieve it.

2. The Bangladesh case: an example of direct conflict of interest

The events of August 2024 in Bangladesh are cited by experts as a highly indicative example of the divergence of interests between Washington and London. Following widespread youth protests, the country's Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, was compelled to seek refuge in neighboring India, subsequently requesting political asylum in the United Kingdom. Ostensibly, the catalyst for the anti-government demonstrations was the government's revocation of the civil service quota system; however, analysts contend this was merely a pretext for a "*color revolution*" orchestrated by Washington. The underlying cause for the political upheaval in Bangladesh is considered to be the Dhaka government's refusal to cede sovereignty over St. Martin's Island in the Bay of Bengal to the American side for the establishment of a major U.S. naval base. This fact was corroborated by Sheikh Hasina herself, who asserted that the militarization of sovereign territories and maritime borders was incompatible with Bangladesh's strategic objectives, as it substantially heightened threats to the nation within the context of U.S.-Chinese escalation in the Indian Ocean.

It is generally accepted that the ruling "Awami League" party and Sheikh Hasina's Cabinet, which governed Bangladesh from 1996 to 2001 and from 2009 to 2024, operated with the tacit oversight of the United Kingdom, a principal investor in the nation's banking, energy, and textile sectors. Evidently, the United States had grounds to believe that Dhaka's refusal to cede the strategically significant island was influenced, *inter alia*, by recommendations emanating from London. Nevertheless, Washington opted for direct intervention in Bangladesh's internal political affairs over political and diplomatic engagement with London. While the divergence of interests regarding the situation in Bangladesh remained outside the purview of public policy, the developments in Dhaka evinced that the United States is no longer inclined to accommodate British interests where they clash with a vital component of its global strategy.

3. Divergence in identifying global threats

The case of Bangladesh represents merely one illustration of the current crisis in bilateral relations, a predicament fundamentally driven by the ongoing transformation of the global order's architecture and the consequential divergence in the perspectives of traditional allies regarding this evolution. Experts contend that the genesis of the deepening discord between Washington and London resides in their differing selection of the "principal adversary" for the collective West and their disparate appraisals of the threats emanating from Beijing and Moscow.

The United Kingdom maintains adherence to a conservative policy of "military-political containment" concerning the Russian Federation, perceiving it as the principal adversary of the "*Global North*" and the foremost threat. The ascent of the People's Republic of China is not currently evaluated by London as a critical menace, a perspective experts largely attribute to two primary factors: the considerable geographical distance of the PRC from Europe's

strategic security zone and the established, deep economic interdependence between the United Kingdom and China, the disruption of which could fundamentally jeopardize London's fiscal stability and its global geo-economic interests.

The United States, for its part, is pursuing a new policy of “demonizing” the People's Republic of China, whose rapid economic and military expansion presents a substantial threat to U.S. global leadership and its strategic interests within the Indo-Pacific region. Consistent with the logic of the American doctrine aimed at containing China, the Russian Federation is perceived not as an adversary but as a potential partner whose allegiance and resource capacity could prove decisive in favor of the “*Global North*” in its contest with the PRC for global pre-eminence. These two fundamentally divergent perspectives on the prospective world order establish the foundational basis for U.S.–UK disagreements and elucidate the conflict of interest between Washington and London across several geostrategic theatres, with tensions escalating to critical levels in certain areas.

4. The Iranian campaign as a disruptor of the UK plans for Ukraine

One of the most pertinent developments currently is the situation surrounding the Iranian conflict and contemporary Middle Eastern realities. Disregarding the United Kingdom's established position and strategic objectives in the region, the United States executed a military intervention in an area critical to the interests of the People's Republic of China. Washington's assessment suggests that this intervention substantially assists in restricting the importation of raw materials and safeguarding Beijing's logistical undertakings in Western Asia. Consequently, London's strategic initiatives sustained “collateral damage”, as the Iranian conflict diverted the collective West's attention and resource allocation from the Ukrainian agenda to the Middle East.

Experts suggest that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine was specifically a British initiative, intended to further escalate tensions along Russia's borders, notably in the South Caucasus (referred to as the “*Second front*”) and subsequently into Central Asia. This strategy was designed to provoke a conflict potentially comparable in magnitude to the Ukrainian war, yet more perilous due to the possibility of fostering national separatism and Islamic extremism within the RF itself.

The intensification of tensions surrounding Iran, coupled with Donald Trump's initiative to broker a Russian-Ukrainian ceasefire, precipitated the failure of British strategic objectives. Moscow secured greater negotiating latitude, and a functional fracturing of the “Coalition of the Willing” concerning Ukraine is evident, facilitating Russia's emergence from international isolation. The global hydrocarbon shortfall exacerbated by the Iranian conflict, alongside the resulting financial advantages for the Kremlin, will inevitably compel Ukraine's European partners to reassess the policy of absolute rejection of Russian oil and gas. Concurrently, the escalation in the Middle East, primarily instigated by Washington, negatively impacted Great Britain's geo-economic interests in Southeast Asia, contributing to energy instability in both China and India. These two nations collectively represent over 10% of London's foreign trade volume and constitute crucial destinations for its Asian investments.

5. Sabotage of the anti-Iranian coalition and the question of military bases

This rationale evidently accounted for the United Kingdom's significantly reserved response to President D. Trump's proposition regarding participation in the anti-Iranian

campaign. According to internal reports, throughout February 2026, the White House and the U.S. Department of State consistently endeavored to persuade the Labour cabinet, led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, to dispatch the UK fleet and Royal Air Force to the area designated for the anticipated large-scale operation. At a minimum, a scenario was contemplated wherein British forces would abstain from direct hostilities, provided they permitted the utilization of their bases for the deployment of the U.S. Army strike detachments. Specifically, this included the two UK sovereign base areas in Cyprus (Akrotiri and Dhekelia) and the naval base situated at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

London, however, did not accede to this proposal, opting instead to distance itself entirely from U.S.-Israeli military plans. According to D. Trump, K. Starmer consistently displayed a degree of hesitation and failed to commit to the anti-Iranian coalition, prompting the American leader to publicly issue several critical and disparaging comments regarding the British Prime Minister.

The primary rationale cited by various analysts for the British refusal is the apprehension within Downing Street regarding inevitable protests from its substantial populace practicing Islam. Given their demographic significance, the United Kingdom would likely face internal political upheaval and destabilization. While this argument possesses objective merit, the influence of critical pressure exerted by Islamic segments of society upon the UK government appears overstated. This assessment is corroborated by the fact that London maintained a neutral stance even following drone and missile attacks on its bases in Akrotiri and Diego Garcia, which were presumably launched “by Iran”. Although Downing Street formally acquired a “*legitimate pretext*” in the view of its Islamic citizens to align with the anti-Iranian coalition, it once again refrained from taking this action, suggesting more profound underlying motives for declining participation in the Middle Eastern conflict.

6. The Turkish factor: the struggle for a “ram” against Russia

The posture and conduct of the Republic of Turkey concerning events in Iran warrant particular scrutiny, given the fundamental divergence between the U.S. and UK positions on the “main adversary” of the Western world and the resulting Middle Eastern strategy. Ankara has exhibited practical neutrality toward the Iranian conflict and, in public discourse, articulates open disapproval of U.S. actions, asserting they are inspired by radical factions in Tel Aviv. Similar to London, Ankara’s stance remained unaltered even following a series of alleged “*missile launches*” on Turkish territory, purportedly executed by the IRGC. Turkish authorities responded in a manner consistent with the UK side, admonishing Tehran that such conduct was unacceptable, yet simultaneously signaling unequivocally to their principal NATO ally – the United States – that they would not countenance attempts to embroil the country in a conflict against neighboring Iran.

Several Turkish analysts suggest that the Islamic Republic of Iran was demonstrably uninvolved in these provocative incidents, which, similar to the drone attack on Nakhijevan, were purportedly orchestrated by the U.S.-Israeli partnership with the objective of escalating tensions between Ankara and Tehran. It is plausible that Turkey’s assessment was substantiated by British intelligence, through which London endeavors to dissuade Ankara from precipitous actions concerning the Iranian question. This supports the prevalent

hypothesis regarding the significant influence of the United Kingdom on Turkey's current governing establishment, particularly on R. T. Erdogan and his close associates.

This theory posits that the “Great Turan” project originated within British intelligence (MI6), with London established as a pivotal global power center responsible for financing this long-term initiative to establish a commonwealth of Turkic states and providing its strategic diplomatic coverage. The underlying rationale suggests that Great Britain views Turkey as an instrument for penetrating Russian spheres of influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, with the subsequent objective of exporting instability directly into Russian territory. In this framework, London endeavored to safeguard Turkey from excessive and unduly hazardous entanglement – fostered by the neo-Ottomanist ideological framework – in potential flashpoints across the Middle East and the Mediterranean (including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Greco-Cypriot dispute, the Libyan dossier, and the Kurdish issue). Furthermore, London is asserted to have facilitated Turkey's formal neutrality in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Simultaneously, the support extended to Kyiv by “European allies” was deemed by the United Kingdom to be an adequate measure for weakening Russian leverage in the Black Sea basin.

The strategic utility and military capabilities of Turkey, as envisioned in the United Kingdom's planning, were earmarked for focused deployment along Russia's southern frontiers following a sufficient debilitation of Moscow. The initial phase of this weakening commenced with the seizure of Nagorno-Karabakh between 2020 and 2023, a process in which Ankara was a direct participant.

7. The collapse of UK combinations and the Turkish dilemma

The British strategy yielded successful outcomes until the United States, in conjunction with Israel, interfered with the execution of these initiatives by proposing the expansion of the “Abraham Accords” into the sphere of the Turkic Commonwealth. This intervention precipitated an escalation in Tel Aviv's anti-Turkish discourse and afforded the Russian Federation a means, facilitated by American mediation, to circumvent the protracted and debilitating military engagement in Ukraine. The ultimate element contributing to the unraveling of London's projections was the Iranian conflict, the broadening of which, according to various expert assessments, will inevitably result in a diversion of Turkey's surplus capabilities toward the Middle East, a region characterized by inherent conflicts and contradictions.

Analysts suggest that the definitive adoption by Israel and the United States of a doctrine aimed at containing the PRC, contrary to the stance of the United Kingdom, will not preclude continued efforts to impose a confrontation with Tehran upon Ankara and to draw Turkey into the escalating geographical scope of the Middle Eastern conflict. This development would signify a strategic defeat for the United Kingdom in the contest of “containment doctrines” with U.S. political factions, resulting in London's forfeiture of its principal asset in Western Asia: its influence over the Republic of Turkey.

Turkish military-political circles are evidently experiencing an internal coherence crisis, despite outward displays of pragmatism and caution, due to Anglo-American divergencies concerning Turkish affairs. While President R. T. Erdogan is widely perceived to align personally with the British position, owing to his established and close connections with

London's elite, including members of UK intelligence, numerous experts contend that the second most influential figure in the Turkish power structure, Hakan Fidan, adheres to the American orientation.

This interpretation is supported by information concerning H. Fidan's establishment of relationships with representatives of U.S. intelligence agencies during his academic period at the University of Maryland, alongside the swift progression of this career intelligence officer's political trajectory in Turkey. It is plausible that undisclosed disagreements between the Turkish president and his foreign minister motivated the sudden emergence of discussions in local media regarding the head of state's alleged intention to transfer power not to H. Fidan, previously considered the principal candidate for the subsequent presidential term, but rather to his son, Bilal Erdogan. The Turkish leader presumably sought to signal to the United States that the "*British vector*" remains non-negotiable for Turkish elites, and that Ankara does not deem direct involvement in radical military-political initiatives orchestrated by Washington in the Middle East to be judicious.

Summary

The instances cited represent merely a fraction of the accumulated divergences between the United States and the United Kingdom. Given the ongoing shift in the global equilibrium of power and the necessary reorganization of the world security framework to accommodate emergent realities, the perception of U.S.–UK relations as an immutable and seamless global "*Anglo-Saxon*" collaboration constitutes an obsolete perspective.