



## DEBATE PACK

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# E petitions 171928 and 178844 relating to a state visit by President Donald Trump

**Backbench Business Committee Debate**  
**Westminster Hall**  
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**4:30pm**

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

# 1. Background

## E-petition 171928

### **Prevent Donald Trump from making a State Visit to the United Kingdom**

"Donald Trump should be allowed to enter the UK in his capacity as head of the US Government, but he should not be invited to make an official State Visit because it would cause embarrassment to Her Majesty the Queen.

Donald Trump's well documented misogyny and vulgarity disqualifies him from being received by Her Majesty the Queen or the Prince of Wales. Therefore during the term of his presidency Donald Trump should not be invited to the United Kingdom for an official State Visit."

## E-petition 178844

### **Donald Trump should make a State Visit to the United Kingdom**

"Donald Trump should be invited to make an official State Visit because he is the leader of a free world and U.K. is a country that supports free speech and does not believe that people that appose our point of view should be gagged."

## Government response to e-petitions

On 13 February 2017 the Government [responded](#) to both e-petitions:

"HM Government believes the President of the United States should be extended the full courtesy of a State Visit. We look forward to welcoming President Trump once dates and arrangements are finalised.

HM Government recognises the strong views expressed by the many signatories of this petition, but does not support this petition.

During her visit to the United States on 27 January 2017, the Prime Minister, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, invited President Trump for a State Visit to the UK later this year. The invitation was accepted. This invitation reflects the importance of the relationship between the United States of America and the United Kingdom. At this stage, final dates have not yet been agreed for the State Visit."

## 2. Summary

State visits are formal visits to the UK by Heads of State from overseas, with the aim of strengthening relationships. There are usually two state visits to the UK each year. The Queen has hosted 109 state visits, from King Gustaf VI Adolf and Queen Louise of Sweden in 1954 to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and his wife Maria in November 2016. The [full list of state visits](#) during the Queen's reign is available on the royal website.

Two US Presidents have made state visits during the Queen's reign, Barack Obama (2011) and George W Bush (2003). Each of them was in the third year of his first term at the time of the visit. The most frequent state visits have been from France (5), and Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Mexico (4 each). Most other countries have had either one or two state visits.

### Format

The Queen makes an invitation on the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. [According to the royal website](#) there are some common features to the programme:

- The Queen and other members of the Royal Family formally greet the visitor, usually on Horse Guards Parade. The visitor inspects a Guard of Honour before travelling in a carriage procession to Buckingham Palace. There are accompanying gun salutes in Green Park and the Tower of London.
- There is a state banquet for the visitor, usually on the evening of arrival. This is held in the Buckingham Palace ballroom, and around 150 guests attend. Before the meal, the Queen makes a speech and proposes a toast, and then the visiting Head of State reciprocates.
- The visitor spends the rest of the trip meeting political leaders, including the Prime Minister and leaders of other political parties, and there may be a second banquet hosted by the Lord Mayor of London, where the visitor meets business people.
- The Royal Collection sometimes displays items connected to the country the Head of State of which is being hosted.

State visits are distinct from ordinary political visits and private visits. Heads of State or Government may come to the UK for a variety of reasons, including attendance at an international meeting, political talks with the Prime Minister, or attendance at a ceremonial event such as a wedding or funeral. For instance, Presidents of France will have visited during UK Presidencies of the EU, and Bill Clinton visited in 1995 when he addressed both Houses of Parliament in the Royal Gallery.

A number of other US Presidents have made non-state visits a short time after inauguration. The BBC cites the US Embassy in London as giving the examples of Richard Nixon (one month after inauguration), Barack Obama (two months), George Bush Snr (four months), John F Kennedy (five months) and George W Bush (six months).<sup>1</sup>

## Addresses to Parliament

A list of [addresses to Members of both Houses](#) by visiting Heads of State and dignitaries (since 1939) is on the Parliament website together with details of the location and a link to the address, where available.<sup>2</sup>

Discussions take place on inviting visiting dignitaries to address Parliament, and on where the event should be held, between 10 Downing Street, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Speakers of both Houses and Black Rod, with the Government taking the lead.

The use of Westminster Hall is governed by three "Keyholders": the Speaker, the Lord Speaker, and the Lord Great Chamberlain (represented by Black Rod).

## Donald Trump visit

The invitation to Mr Trump to make a state visit to the UK was conveyed by Prime Minister Theresa May during her trip to Washington in late January 2017. A potential visit was [reported in November 2016](#), and was flighted in terms of building the so-called "special relationship." The invitation is for a visit this year, and July has been mooted as a likely date, although no official date has yet been announced.

The invitation to Mr Trump has become controversial, especially given his announcement almost immediately after Mrs May's visit of an [executive order](#) halting the US refugee programme for 120 days, indefinitely banning Syrian refugees and barring entry to the USA to nationals of seven Muslim-majority states for 90 days. That policy has been suspended as a result of legal action, although the administration is seeking to reverse that position.

A former permanent secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lord Ricketts, reacted to the invitation by arguing that there was no precedent for a US President to visit in his first year in office, and that the situation could prove embarrassing for the Queen. He wrote to the *Times*:

It would have been far wiser to wait to see what sort of president he would turn out to be before advising the Queen to invite him.

Now the Queen is put in a very difficult position.<sup>3</sup>

Lord Hague, on the other hand, defended the decision, arguing that the Queen had met dictators in the past, such as Nicolae Ceaucescu, and that while,

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<sup>1</sup> ["Trump state visit plan 'very difficult' for Queen," BBC News, 31 January 2017](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Parliament website: Addresses to Members of both House of Parliament](#)

<sup>3</sup> ["Trump state visit plan 'very difficult' for Queen," BBC News, 31 January 2017](#)

Most of us do not warm to Donald Trump or agree with the policies of his first 10 days.

We can still, however, believe that our government should be the one he is most likely to listen to, and that Americans of all persuasions are among our closest friends.<sup>4</sup>

The BBC quoted Andrew Bridgen, who stressed the importance of the relationship with the USA in the context of withdrawal from the EU:

We certainly need that special relationship with the US even more acutely than normal.

The offer of a free trade deal with the US quickly will be a huge benefit to our negotiations over the next two years as we negotiate our exit from the EU and access to the single market.<sup>5</sup>

## Petitions

[A petition](#) on the Parliament website calling for the visit to be cancelled has over 1.8m signatures at time of writing. [Another](#) calling for him to be invited to visit has collected over 300,000 signatures. The text of the first petition is as follows:

Donald Trump should be allowed to enter the UK in his capacity as head of the US Government, but he should not be invited to make an official State Visit because it would cause embarrassment to Her Majesty the Queen.

The second is as follows:

Donald Trump should be invited to make an official State Visit because he is the leader of a free world and U.K. is a country that supports free speech and does not believe that people that oppose our point of view should be gagged. [sic]

The two petitions will be debated on 20 February 2017 in Westminster Hall.

The Government has declined to withdraw the invitation. A Downing Street source was reported as saying "a rejection would be a 'populist gesture', adding that the invitation had been accepted and scrapping it would 'undo everything'."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ["The Queen has dealt with dictators and despots – she'll take a visit from Donald Trump in her stride,"](#) *Daily Telegraph*, 30 January 2017

<sup>5</sup> ["Trump state visit plan 'very difficult' for Queen,"](#) *BBC News*, 31 January 2017

<sup>6</sup> ["Trump state visit: Downing Street rejects cancellation calls,"](#) *BBC News*, 30 January 2017

### 3. Press Articles

The following is a selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

#### **UK legal academics urge PM to cancel Donald Trump's state visit**

The Guardian  
Rowena Mason and Jessica Elgot  
15 February 2017

#### **£7million policing bill for Donald Trump's UK visit 'should be paid by central government'**

Evening Standard  
Pippa Crerar  
15 February 2017

#### **Donald Trump's state visit to UK may be moved from London to Brexit heartland amid security concerns**

Daily Telegraph  
Christopher Hope  
13 February 2017

#### **Why Trump should be granted a state visit**

Exposé  
William Grice  
13 February 2017

#### **How Brits Are Planning to Resist Donald Trump's State Visit**

Time Magazine  
Mark Leftly  
10 February 2017

#### **Protest and petition all you like. I won't bother listening**

The Spectator  
4 February 2017  
Rod Liddle

#### **Almost half of Brits think the Trump state visit should go ahead**

YouGov UK  
Matthew Smith  
1 February 2017

#### **Public figures call for biggest ever UK protest to oppose Trump visit**

The Guardian  
Hannah Ellis-Petersen  
1 February 2017

**We stand together against Donald Trump's toxic agenda**

The Guardian – Letters to the Editor  
1 February 2017

**Trump, state visits and Parliament: precedent and process**

The Hansard Society (Blog)  
Dr Brigid Fowler  
31 January 2017

**Queen Put in 'Very Difficult Position' With Trump State Visit**

NBC News  
Petra Cahill  
31 January 2017

**The politics behind the pomp of state visits**

BBC News Online  
James Landale  
31 January 2017

**Trump visit to UK**

The Times - Letters to the Editor (subscription required)  
Lord Ricketts  
31 January 2017

**Britain has a tradition of controversial state visits – Trump will fit in well**

The Guardian  
Simon Tisdall  
30 January 2017

## 4. Press releases

### **PM call with US President Trump: 14 February 2017**

Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street  
14 February 2017

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

“The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump this afternoon, as part of their regular engagement. They discussed a range of issues, including trade and security and also discussed the President’s upcoming state visit to the UK. The Prime Minister said she looks forward to welcoming him later this year.”

## 5. PQs

### USA: State Visits

15 Feb 2017 | 63457

**Asked by: Lady Hermon**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the implications for Northern Ireland of a visit by President Trump; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering member: James Brokenshire | Northern Ireland Office**

The UK looks forward to welcoming the President to the UK later this year. The dates and arrangements for the state visit will be worked out in due course.

### State Visits: USA

14 Feb 2017 | HL5136

**Asked by: Lord Roberts of Llandudno**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost to the UK of providing security for the visit of the US President to the UK; and which department or agency will be meeting those costs.

**Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Home Office**

Policing is a devolved matter, and as such the level of policing required and costs incurred for specific events is a matter for the relevant Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner. Police and Crime Commissioners can make an application for a Special Grant if they face significant and exceptional costs.

### Business of the House [Extract]

09 Feb 2017 | 621 cc653-5

**Asked by: Valerie Vaz**

Sixty-five years ago on Monday, Her Majesty ascended the throne, and this House congratulates her on that sapphire milestone. May I ask the Leader of the House for clarification: who issues an invitation for a state visit, can the Prime Minister do it without consulting anyone and who did she consult in this case, or is this a case of frictionless negotiation—"You give me a trade deal in exchange for a state visit"? We should be told.

**Answering member: David Lidington | Leader of the House**

May I first associate myself wholeheartedly with the hon. Lady's words about Her Majesty's sapphire jubilee? At the same time, it is important for us to be conscious that the anniversary is inevitably a time for reflection, for Her Majesty in particular, as her accession was obviously made possible by the death of a much-loved father. I think everyone in the House, whatever views they have about our constitutional

arrangements, will want to share in the tributes to Her Majesty for her selfless service to the United Kingdom over all those years.

The arrangements for state visits have not changed under this Government. They are exactly the same now as they were under Prime Ministers Blair and Brown.

## 6. Early Day Motions

### EDM relating to proposed State Visit by President Trump

#### **VISIT TO PARLIAMENT BY PRESIDENT TRUMP**

**EDM 890 (session 2016-17)**

**30 January 2017**

**Stephen Doughty**

That this House deplores recent actions taken by US President Donald J Trump, including his Executive Order on Immigration and Refugees, and notably his comments on torture and women; notes the historical significance and honour that comes with an invitation to address both Houses of Parliament in Westminster Hall or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster; and calls on the Speaker, Lord Speaker, Black Rod and Serjeant at Arms to withhold permission from the Government for an address to be made in Westminster Hall, or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster, by President Trump.

### EDMs relating to State Visits by former US presidents

#### **PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STATE VISIT 2011**

**EDM 1843 (session 2010-12)**

**23 May 2011**

**Tom Blenkinsop**

That this House happily extends a hand of friendship to President Obama and the American people on his first state visit to the UK; wishes to take this opportunity to warmly acknowledge his exceptional, steadfast and morally-fuelled determination in achieving healthcare reform in the US, which supports the needs of the American people by limiting competition, providing greater access to services and promoting greater quality of care; believes that President Obama's valiant move to give the state a greater role in the provision of healthcare is the single biggest domestic change his country has seen and that it will significantly change Americans' lives for the better; acknowledges his wisdom in asserting that an unconstrained free market in healthcare benefits few but profit-seeking companies; and hopes that he will enjoy his stay in the UK, a country which values the continued strong, cultural, historical and economic links with the US.

**STATE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.A.** (including amendments to this EDM)  
**EDM 1937 (session 2002-03)**  
**17 November 2003**  
**Andrew Rosindell**

That this House warmly welcomes President George W. Bush and the First Lady, Laura Bush, on their first state visit to the United Kingdom; and gives its support to the President of the United States of America in the continuing war on global terrorism.

**VISIT OF PRESIDENT BUSH** (including amendments to this EDM)  
**EDM 1853 (session 2002-03)**  
**3 November 2003**  
**Jeremy Corbyn**

That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Government to cancel the planned State visit of President George Bush.

## EDMs relating to other State Visits

**PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI AND KASHMIR**  
**EDM 643 (session 2015-16)**  
**3 November 2015**  
**Jo Cox**

That this House calls on the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Government to take advantage of the unique opportunity presented by the state visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to raise the issue of Kashmir and press him to work with Pakistan, and most importantly the people of Kashmir itself, to end the decades of human rights abuses, animosity, aggression and violence that have sadly become synonymous with one of the world's most beautiful regions.

**STATE VISIT OF IRISH PRESIDENT**  
**EDM 765 (session 2013-14)**  
**19 November 2013**  
**Chris Ruane**

That this House welcomes the announcement by Buckingham Palace of the historic first State visit by an Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, on 8 to 10 April 2014; believes that this gesture, so soon after the visit to Ireland by Her Majesty the Queen in May 2011, reflects the warmth of the relationship and strengthened ties between Britain and Ireland and furthers our thriving social and economic links; notes the positive response by political parties on both sides of the Irish Sea and organisations representing the Irish in Britain diaspora; and further

believes that the State visit has the capacity to bring British-Irish relations to a new level and be seen as a further milestone in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation, for healing the wounds of the past and reaching for a better future.

#### **STATE VISIT OF KING ABDULLAH OF SAUDI ARABIA**

**EDM 2102 (session 2006-07)**

**11 October 2007**

**John McDonnell**

That this House notes with concern the state visit of King Abdullah bin Abdul Azaz al Saud of Saudi Arabia to the United Kingdom on 30th October 2007; believes that Saudi Arabia is one of the most repressive societies on earth, with no political parties, free elections, independent media or trade unions; views with alarm the systematic human rights abuses that exist within the Kingdom, such as the lack of basic rights for women, the practice of public beheadings and the repression of homosexuals; condemns the recent sale of 72 Eurofighters to such a barbaric regime; and calls upon the British Government to base its foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia on democracy and human rights rather than on narrow economic interests.

#### **PEACEFUL PROTESTS DURING THE STATE VISIT OF PRESIDENT OF CHINA**

**EDM 834 (session 2005-06)**

**24 October 2005**

**Andrew Mackinlay**

That this House calls for an early and detailed statement as to the police operational decisions being made to facilitate peaceful protest against human rights abuses within China during the planned state visit of the President of China and an assurance that the President will not be screened, literally or metaphorically, from such protests simply because it would be uncomfortable for him and embarrassing for the Foreign Office.

#### **STATE VISIT BY POLISH PRESIDENT**

**EDM 1122 (session 2003-04)**

**4 May 2004**

**Wayne David**

That this House welcomes the State visit to Britain by the President of the Republic of Poland, Mr Kwasniewski; believes that the accession of Poland to the European Union reaffirms Poland's historic affinity with the rest of Europe; and is certain that the common ties between Poland and Britain will be reinforced in the years ahead to the mutual benefit of both our nations.

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