

MS NOW'S *Katy Tur Reports*

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3:38:25 p.m.

8 minutes and 22 seconds

KATY TUR: King Charles delivering about a 30 minute speech — just under a 30 minute speech to congress, a Joint Session of Congress. Packed room, Republicans and Democrats alike standing multiple times for multiple standing ovations for the King. Again, this is only the second time this has happened in history. He is only the second monarch to address a Joint Session of Congress. His mother did it back in 1999 [sic] as the Gulf War was wrapping up, and 53,000 or so British troops were on their way home. Different circumstances this time around. But he did what he went there to do, which was try to smooth over this relationship. And although he is duty bound, quite literally to stay diplomatic and not share opinions on policy, he did sneak in some sharp lines for the United States, stuff that needs to be heard, he believes, right now, including “our alliance cannot rest on past achievements or assume that foundational principles simply endure.” Sounds like a direct warning, especially in this moment. Also, “I pray with all my heart that our alliance will continue to defend our shared values, and that we ignore the clarion calls to become ever more inward looking.” All right, back with me, Jon Meacham, Peter Baker. Jon — there was a lot of — there were a lot of interesting lines in that — we also have Jon Sopel, I’m sorry, and Jack Royston. Royston, I’m sorry guys. Didn’t see that you were joining us as well, my bad. I want to start with you, Jon, and just get your — your thoughts on that speech.

JON MEACHAM: It’s sort of like having a headmaster speak to a school. He is — he has come over to remind us of what matters, of what’s important, of what has endured, not simply because it is old, but because it is true and has been of utility. I actually — I’m — I don’t know whether this smooths over immediate diplomatic relations, but I do know that read even not even particularly carefully here you had a king reminding a democracy and a republic of what matters. He said, our words matter. Our deeds matter. As you pointed out, don’t look inward. Remember that there are checks on executive power. Note the climate. This is a kind of masterclass in how a non — how — how someone not tied to the minute-to-minute political realities, popular politics — this is what this thoughtful man believes is important across the Atlantic. And I think that it’s a vivid and elegant in many ways, warning and inspiration as well, about not losing ourselves in a populist, isolationist, nationalistic moment. One final point here. There’s a difference between nationalism and patriotism, alright? Nationalism is an allegiance to your own kind. Patriotism is an allegiance to a creed. And he very — the King very deftly laid out the roots of the American creed, which is comes grows out of both a biblical understanding of human equality and also came through the British Isles. Magna Carta, the Declaration of Rights in 1688 and 89 informed what happened here in the late 18th century. And what we can’t do is lose that in the 21st. And I think that was his central warning, is that this is perilous. These things are fragile, and they require our attention.

TUR: So, Jack, help me understand a little bit more about the context, because as we’ve been talking about, the relationship is frayed. He was sent here by the prime minister. He goes at the — because the prime minister wants him to. Obviously, we’re celebrating our 250 year history

right now, our separation from the U.K. But it isn't just that when the prime minister sends the King here in this moment, only the second monarch to address a Joint Session of Congress, what is he asking for?

JACK ROYSTON: Well, we know, in fact, that not only did Charles come here, come to America at the request of his prime minister, but actually this very speech was written to reflect Britain's strategic priorities. And it's all over the speech. I mean, I think I counted about seven or eight points that Charles has wandered into that are potential zones of conflict with Trump. And so to give you a very, very quick rundown of those areas, you've got Europe, you know, where Trump is becoming actually really increasingly unpopular across a number of countries. You know, Italy and the Pope, Germany, and the recent comments about — about Iran, sorry, you've got NATO. Charles referenced the specific terms under which NATO came to America's rescue or not rescue, but, you know, alliance in the war in Afghanistan, which Trump very recently made very dismissive comments about. You've got Ukraine, where Charles said there need — America's help was needed. You've got backing Keir Starmer. Charles actually quoted his prime minister and talked about the extra money that Starmer is investing in defense. Then you've got the reference to our words matter, which is very difficult not to be instantly reminded of what Donald Trump said about a war of civilization extinction in Iran. And you know, that statement that our words matter is very clearly a reminder in the context of a President who says some quite extreme things. At least that's what the rest of the world believes. And so, that's just a handful of them. You've also got references to the tech prosperity deal in there that was signed between King Charles — sorry, Keir Starmer and Donald Trump back during the state visit, when Trump visited Windsor castle. This was back in September. It was later suspended by America over a number of disagreements. And Charles has got that in there, the importance of deals on tech for our mutual benefit. So, there's a whole load of prime foreign policy areas that reflect the British government's perspective. And you have King Charles standing in America's Congress, America's legislature, making these points, advancing the British argument to the lawmakers that Trump must obviously work with in running the country. It's really — it's a huge gamble by Charles to — to cover so many potential areas of conflict, even talking about peace and promoting peace at a time when America has just started a war alongside Israel with Iran is a gamble. But if you look at the reactions around the room, the repeated standing ovations, you know, the warmth was really there for the King. And so, my read on seeing it all play out is that Charles has got away with this. So, he has gone in there and he has batted for Britain. He's batted for Keir Starmer — a man who Trump does not like at this particular moment in time — and he's tried to reinforce those foreign policy goals and he's got the reception that he wanted. So, he will be walking out of that room now feeling that this was a roaring success. But of course, we've still got to see what gets said in the days to come. My feeling is that Charles's comments were just subtle enough that he probably won't have antagonized Trump with these remarks.

TUR: All right, we're going to take a short break. But there was one moment in particular talking about standing ovations that you might have missed. It was about the Magna Carta, and it was pretty significant that both sides of that room, Republicans and Democrats alike, Republicans especially right now, stood up and applauded it. We're going to bring you that moment in just a moment, John, We're going to get you on the other side. Say same to you, Peter. Also, Jon Meacham and Jack Royston. Don't go anywhere. We'll be right back.

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3:51:30 p.m.

6 minutes and 42 seconds

TUR: I teased the Magna Carta moment. I want to play it because I think it is significant, especially to us, especially right now.

KING CHARLES III: The U.S. Supreme Court Historical Society has calculated that magna carta is cited in at least 160 Supreme Court cases since 1789, not least as the foundation of the principle that executive power is subject to checks and balances.

TUR: Peter, is it weird that I was surprised to see both sides of the room stand up and applaud that Republicans and Democrats, Democrats and Republicans?

PETER BAKER: Yeah. I mean, it shouldn't be a surprise, right? This is a foundational element of our democracy. It is — Jon Meacham just said, you know, it's rather striking to have a King remind us of what democracy is all about. But that's what he was doing. And I think, of course, it's only read in the context of today, a moment when the question of executive power and whether there are in fact, checks and balances on it, is so animating our — our national conversation right now. We have a President who, in a year and a half in his second term, has governed largely through executive power. He's done very little with Congress. Congress has done very little to try to check him with that executive power. And so, the line while it should be, you know, a standard, rote talking point, any kind of piece like this lands in that in that rather fraught context.

TUR: I think we have polling out of the U.K. And if we do, let's put it on the screen. This is about the British public support for the King coming over here, and also British public opinions on the special relationship and whether it's still a special. I'm hoping we have it. Jon, the — the reality is the British public does not believe, by and large that — Soper — Jon Soper, that the relationship is as special as it once was. So Jon Soper — I'm trying to talk to you here, control room. What do you expect this is going to mean? There you are, my friend. What will the speech do for the — the British public? It matters because if they don't support this relationship, then the government's not going to support the relationship.

JON SOPEL: I think this was a hugely important speech. And the most important speech that the King has delivered since he ascended to the throne. And if you think about it, you know, if you're a plumber, you do a two-year apprenticeship. If you're a mechanic, the same, an electrician, you know, Prince Charles did a 50-year apprenticeship before becoming King. And I think he deployed gentle humor, self-mocking, a bit, talking about 250 years or as we say in Britain just the other day. And I think that appealed to the audience and that allowed him to deliver those messages that, in another era, would have seemed utterly unremarkable about checks and balances, about co-equal branches of government, about the independence of the judiciary and the — you know, all those things that perhaps have been taken for granted and now are seen as somehow controversial. And also, I think the one bit as well that was very pointed was when he

said, you know — and support for Ukraine. And sitting behind him is JD Vance, the Vice President, who has made a point of saying, you know, it's something to be celebrated, that we're not involved in Ukraine anymore and that we've got nothing to do with it. And there was the King of England and the United Kingdom saying, actually, no, this stuff does matter to Europe. And reminding America again, in this gentle but very firm way of the role that America plays in the world. And I think, you know, if there is — if there is kind of, I don't know, annoyance in among the British public that the King is there. I think it's out of sadness because I think that we do look to America as our big brother that is very powerful in the world, that has been a stalwart friend that has rescued us twice in, you know, the 20th century and that — that the relationship has somehow changed and soured and deteriorated. And it's what's interesting is and striking is that, in Britain, where Keir Starmer is having a torrid and terrible time, the one thing that has sort of united the political class is a feeling of resentment about the way that the President has characterized Keir Starmer as he's not Churchill or he's a Chamberlain, or he's a coward, or whatever it happens to be, which just seems insulting when British men and women have stood beside American troops in all sorts of battles over so many years, and British blood and treasure has been spilled in Afghanistan and Iraq fighting alongside America.

TUR: There were some leaked audio that we saw today, the U.K. ambassador to the U.S. saying that the special relationship the U.S. has is with Israel, that the polling that I was seeing is from Ipsos. 48 percent of Britons disagree that there is currently a special relationship. You kind of answered it, but I want to go back to it. Is that hard or can that change? Does it change if Donald Trump is no longer in office?

SOPEL: Honestly, I think that people need to be more grown up about the special relationship. And I remember when I was based in Washington having breakfast with a previous presidential press secretary who said, but when the Canadians and Mexicans are in town, we talk about the closest relationship. And when the French are in town, we talk about the oldest relationship. And, you know, everyone wants to be best friends with the United States of America. The special relationship exists in certain ways in terms of national security. And I think that carries on regardless of Donald Trump. And, you know, British servicemen and women are integrated into U.S. armed forces and vice versa, that will continue. So, I think there is undoubtedly political turbulence in the relationship between prime minister and President, but it's transactional, and it always has been. And I think that we should obsess less in Britain about taking the temperature every 30 minutes of the special relationship and just get on with the fact that America is a much, much more powerful nation. And we are a second-tier nation. And I kind of think we still need to come to terms with that a bit. So, I don't blame Donald Trump for that. But I do think there has been a recasting of the international order where Britain needs to realize that we've got to look elsewhere.

TUR: Have a stiff upper lip about it. Jon Sopel. Jon Meacham, Jack Royston, Peter baker, gentlemen, thank you very much.