

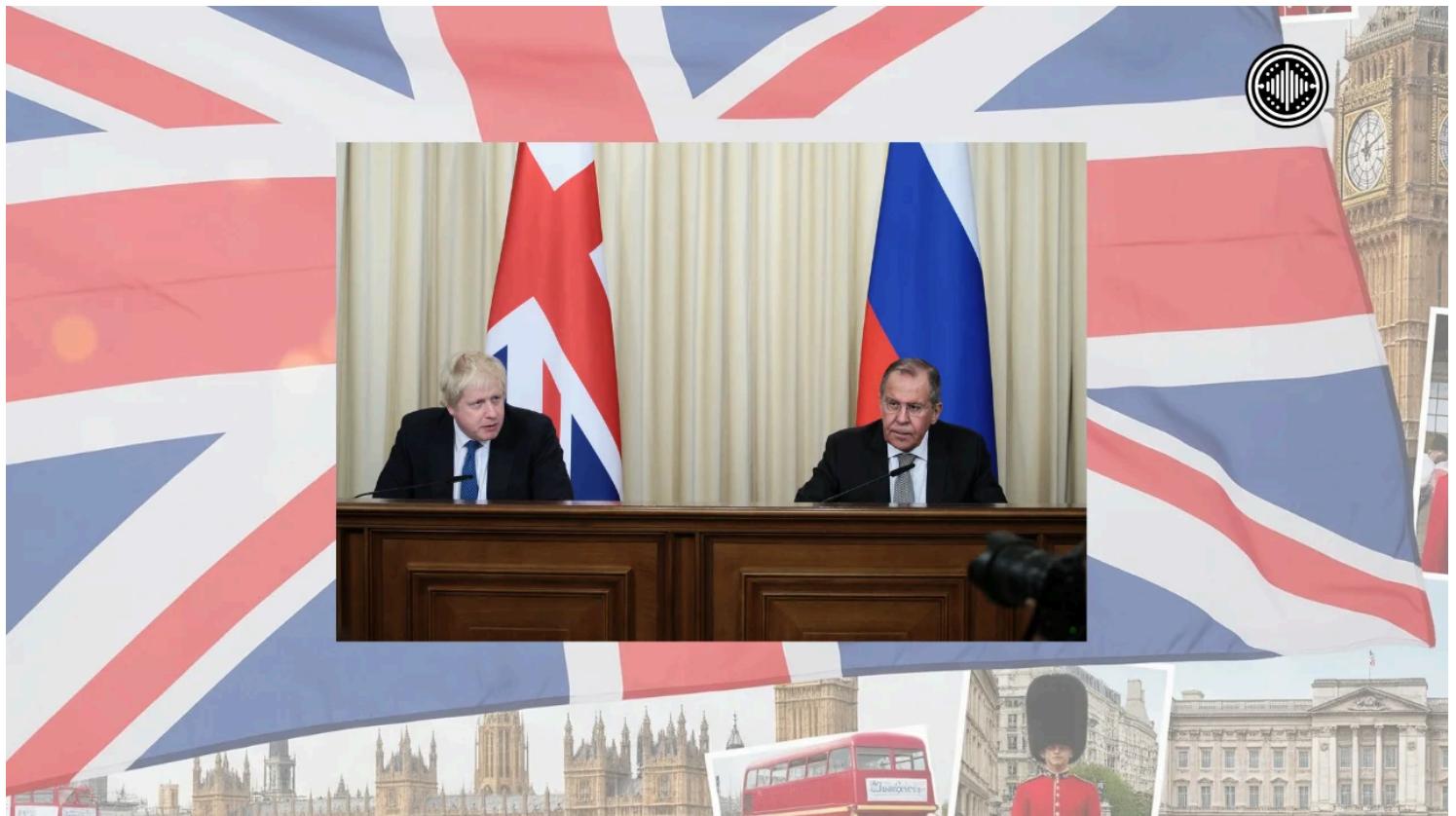
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King and Macron Hail UK-France Partnership as Migration Tops State Visit Agenda

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King Charles III and President Emmanuel Macron have emphasised the enduring strength of the UK-France relationship during a state banquet at Windsor Castle, while also acknowledging the shared responsibility to tackle illegal migration across the Channel. The visit blends tradition with pressing political issues, particularly border control and security.

On the opening day of a three-day state visit by French President Emmanuel Macron, both the UK monarchy and political leaders extended a warm welcome, underscoring the historic ties and ongoing cooperation between the United Kingdom and France. At a state banquet in Windsor Castle, King Charles III addressed dignitaries and guests in both English and French, declaring that the two nations “stand ever closer,” particularly in a time of global uncertainty.

The King also highlighted the need to address “irregular migration across the English Channel,” signalling that behind the pageantry lies a serious diplomatic agenda. President Macron echoed these remarks earlier in the day when addressing both Houses of Parliament. He stressed that the UK and France must respond to illegal migration “with humanity, solidarity and firmness.”

The state banquet, hosted at Windsor, was a star-studded affair attended by figures such as Sir Mick Jagger, Dame Kristin Scott Thomas, and Sir Elton John, and served both English sparkling wine and French champagne in honour of the bilateral ties. Beyond the ceremonial flair, however, discussions are expected to intensify on Wednesday when Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and President Macron reconvene to negotiate new efforts to curb cross-Channel small boat crossings.

As part of the day's events, Starmer and Macron jointly laid wreaths at the statue of former French President Charles de Gaulle in London, symbolising the nations' longstanding alliance. Despite public warmth and ceremonial grandeur, serious issues remain on the table, notably France's cooperation in intercepting migrants in shallow waters and the UK's hopes for a "one in, one out" migrant return agreement.

The visit also marked a public return for Catherine, Princess of Wales, who took part in the day's events alongside Prince William, receiving strong public support following her cancer treatment.

In a fragmented and increasingly unstable geopolitical climate, both the King and Macron used the moment to champion Anglo-French unity. While political tensions, particularly around migration and border enforcement, remain unresolved, the clear message was that long-standing alliances must adapt but endure.