



Britain and Germany Sign Trinity House Agreement on Defence Cooperation

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On 23 October, British Defence Minister John Healey and German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius signed the countries' first bilateral framework defence cooperation agreement at Trinity House in London. It is intended not only to strengthen NATO's European pillar but also to indirectly consolidate cooperation between the three countries with the largest defence and economic potential in Europe (E3—UK, France, Germany) after Brexit and with possible changes in U.S. policy after the upcoming election.

What were the objectives of the British government?

On [taking power in July](#), the Labour Party declared [it would seek closer cooperation with EU partners](#), including in the field of defence. The agreement builds on the ministerial Joint Declaration on Enhanced Defence Cooperation signed by both countries on 24 July (which identified objectives for the development of the defence industry, including the development of long-range cruise missiles and the strengthening of Euro-Atlantic security, the interoperability of armed forces, and support for Ukraine). The agreement of 23 October is intended to structure military and armaments cooperation with Germany as well as to facilitate informal negotiations already underway on [an EU-UK agreement in this field](#) due to the development of a common position between Britain and the two largest EU states. Following the British-French model based on the 2010 Lancaster House Treaty, the agreement with Germany institutionalises a British-German strategic dialogue on defence matters. This helps the consolidation of the E3 format (since all E3 countries are linked now by a network of bilateral strategic agreements) as a tool to coordinate and intensify the development of military capabilities in Europe in view of a new opening in relations with the U.S. after the presidential election.

What were the objectives of the German government?

The agreement is part of Germany's strategy of engaging European partners in joint defence projects (such as the latest ESSI missile defence initiative, or the earlier concept of Germany as a framework state for central and eastern European NATO states). It confirms Germany's ambition to play a greater role in European security and is part of making the changes in German foreign and defence policy [announced in 2022](#) more credible. The rapprochement with the UK is also part of [preparations](#) for Donald Trump's possible return to power, signalling that European NATO allies are ready to take more responsibility in the sphere of security. The German government's economic objective is to secure long-term access to the UK armaments market for German companies. The scale of actual German involvement remains an open question and will depend on political will and financial capacity, which will shape the implementation provisions.

What does the agreement cover?

Compared to the British-French Lancaster House Treaty, the agreement with Germany is narrower in scope, not legally binding and was signed at the ministerial level (instead of the heads of the executive). The document provides for the strengthening of political, military-industrial and armed forces cooperation. It is a framework in nature and legally

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nonbinding. It establishes a bilateral dialogue mechanism in the form of the Defence Ministerial Council, which will oversee the Military Steering Committee, Ministerial Group on Equipment and Capability Co-operation and Defence Policy Dialogue. In parallel, several armament and operational force cooperation projects have been announced. The former include development and production of long-range cruise missiles (successors to the Storm Shadow and Taurus types), drone systems, anti-submarine torpedoes and armaments for land forces (including the co-production of Boxer wheeled platforms). The arms package also includes cooperation in the modernisation of equipment for Ukraine, such as the arming of Sea King helicopters with anti-submarine missiles, as well as an agreement between Germany's Rheinmetall and the UK's Sheffield Forgemasters to rebuild a production base and subsequently manufacture artillery barrels in the UK. In terms of operational cooperation between the armed forces, among other things, coordination was announced for the protection of infrastructure and shipping in the North Sea and North Atlantic, including the temporary basing of German P-8 Poseidon aircraft in Scotland.

What is the significance of the agreement for European security?

The agreement could help the UK and Germany reduce the costs of research and development of new defence technologies and further arms production. This is of fundamental importance in the context of plans for the technical modernisation of the UK armed forces, especially the land forces, and the development of arms production in Britain, which is a priority for the trade-union wing of the Labour Party. The cooperation is also beneficial for Germany, given the economic stagnation in Germany and the

reluctance of part of the public to spend more on armaments. However, among the joint arms programmes announced so far, there are none that involve the latest generation of technology and strategic importance, such as the 6th generation fighter, which Germany is developing with France and Spain (SCAF/FCAS) and the UK with Italy and Japan (Tempest/GCAP). In terms of operational cooperation, however, the agreement does not provide for the creation of joint military capabilities or the possibility of jointly organising military missions outside the NATO area, unlike the UK-France Lancaster House Agreement.

What does the agreement mean for the EU and NATO's Eastern Flank states?

In view of the consolidation of E3 format cooperation, the challenge for the EU will be to develop a decision-making model within the framework of the expected EU-UK defence cooperation agreement that includes the voices of other EU Member States than just France and Germany (such as Poland, which signed a defence cooperation treaty with the UK in 2017). As a result of the reduction in UK industrial capabilities over the past 20 years, it appears that UK investment in land forces will increasingly rely on German solutions (e.g., modernisation of Challenger 3 tanks, production of Boxer vehicles), creating opportunities to develop interoperability with the Baltic States investing in German equipment. The agreement will not, however, accelerate the process of the Bundeswehr completing a brigade deployed in Lithuania (targeting 2027) nor will it increase the size of the British contingent in Estonia. However, British-German exercises have been announced to increase the interoperability of the two contingents. The agreement may also facilitate logistical support for the armies of both countries.