

Research Briefing

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UK-French defence cooperation: A decade on from the Lancaster House treaties



Summary

- 1 The Lancaster House treaties
- 2 Challenges to cooperation
- 3 What was agreed at the UK-France summit?

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Summary

A UK-France summit was held on 10 March 2023.

It marked the first time that the leaders of France and the UK have come together in a bilateral format in nearly 5 years. Among the issues addressed was greater UK-French defence cooperation within the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, France's new national security review and the UK's refresh of the Integrated Review.

The Lancaster House Treaties – 2010

For the past decade, defence cooperation between the UK and France has taken place within the context of the Lancaster House treaties which were agreed in 2010.

The Lancaster House treaties are primarily about improving interoperability, the capacity to act together quickly (expeditionary capability) and the joint development of capabilities.

The [Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty \(PDF\)](#) provided an overarching framework for future cooperation, while [a separate Letter of Intent and package of joint measures](#) attached to the treaties provided more detail on specific programmes and initiatives that would be taken forward. The treaties envisaged the creation of a Combined Joint Expeditionary force of 10,000 personnel, the development of an integrated maritime task force by the early 2020s and collaboration in capabilities, particularly in the complex weapons sector.

The [Nuclear Co-operation Treaty \(PDF\)](#) was intended to facilitate collaboration in the technologies associated with stewardship of both countries' nuclear stockpiles.

In November 2020 the Government said [all the milestones set out in the Lancaster House treaties had been achieved](#), including the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force which achieved full operational capability in 2020.

What was agreed at the UK- France summit?

The summit was regarded as an opportunity to reset the UK-France relationship and, from a defence perspective, provide a framework for future cooperation that builds on the achievements of Lancaster House.

The overriding ambition for the next decade is to deliver further integration of UK and French armed forces. Operational cooperation will be advanced through the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force and the coordination of aircraft carrier deployments to provide a “complementary and more persistent” European presence in regions of shared interest, including the Indo-Pacific. Armaments cooperation, particularly in the complex weapons sector, will continue with a specific emphasis on possible future synergies in air defence, long range precision strike and each country’s combat air programmes.

1 The Lancaster House treaties

In 2010 the UK and France agreed a series of bilateral measures intended to enhance defence co-operation between both country's armed forces, including the signing of two new defence treaties: [the Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty \(PDF\)](#) and a [Nuclear Cooperation Treaty \(PDF\)](#). The treaties were labelled by several analysts as 'historic', specifically for the implications of bilateral co-operation in the nuclear sphere.¹ Other commentators viewed the Lancaster Treaty proposals as either a natural progression in an already well-established area of cooperation² or as a practical necessity at a time of austerity following the 2008 global financial crisis.³

1.1 What did the Lancaster House treaties set out to achieve?

The Lancaster House treaties are primarily about improving interoperability, the capacity to act together quickly (expeditionary capability) and the joint development of capabilities.

The [Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty \(PDF\)](#) provided an overarching framework for future cooperation, while [a separate Letter of Intent and package of joint measures](#) attached to the treaties provided more detail on specific programmes and initiatives that would be taken forward.

The [Nuclear Co-operation Treaty \(PDF\)](#) was intended to facilitate collaboration in the technologies associated with stewardship of both countries' nuclear stockpiles.

A bi-annual assessment of the treaties at subsequent summits has seen initiatives evolve and new programmes take shape. However, Franco-British

¹ ["Franco-British defence and security treaties: entente while it lasts"](#) (PDF), Chatham House, March 2011

² The seeds of many proposals put forward at Lancaster House had already been sown at previous bilateral summits. See for example [Joint UK-France Summit Declaration, 2008 \(PDF\)](#).

³ See: Benoît Gomis, "Signs of Concord", *The World Today*, November 2010 and Robert Fox, "Two powers with less than global budgets to back their ambitions", *The Evening Standard*, 2 November 2010

defence cooperation has not been addressed in detail since the last of those summits in Sandhurst in 2018 (see section 2: challenges of cooperation).

Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF)

One of the flagship proposals of Lancaster House was the creation of a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF). It would be a non-standing (ie. not permanent) force of British and French military personnel able to carry out a range of operations either bilaterally or through NATO, the EU or other coalition arrangements. It would involve 10,000 personnel across all three Services: a land component comprised of formations at national brigade level, maritime and air components with associated HQ and logistics and support functions.

In 2012, the Level of Ambition for the CJEF was formally agreed. It would be an early entry force capable of time limited but complex and demanding combat operations, and would be made available for bilateral, NATO, European Union, United Nations or other operations. The aim was to achieve full operational capability (FOC) in 2016, including the establishment of a deployable Combined Joint Force Headquarters and a Combined Logistics Support Group to sustain any deployed force. A five -year framework of joint exercises and personnel exchanges had been put in place the previous year to achieve that FOC objective.⁴

Full operational capability was not achieved by 2016. At the Amiens Summit in March of that year it was confirmed that the next joint exercise, scheduled for April, would “allow the full validation of the concept of the CJEF”, thereby allowing for the planning and potential conduct of low intensity operations, instead of the full spectrum of operations originally envisaged within the 2016 timeframe.⁵ In order to facilitate the CJEF’s use, it was agreed that work would be taken forward on potential deployment scenarios. It was also agreed that the UK and France would “build a common architecture and communications systems” and increase intelligence exchanges.

At the Sandhurst summit in 2018, the UK and France confirmed that the CJEF would now be fully operational by 2020 and “able to carry out a full range of complex and demanding expeditionary military combat operations on land, in the air and at sea; or to provide peace-keeping, disaster relief or humanitarian assistance”.⁶

Integrated Maritime Task Force

As part of the CJEF concept, another significant proposal was the development of an integrated maritime task force that would provide the

⁴ [UK-France Declaration on Security and Defence](#), February 2012

⁵ [UK-France Summit: Annex on security and defence \(PDF\)](#), March 2016

⁶ Ministry of Defence press release, 18 January 2018

ability, by the early 2020s, to deploy a UK-French integrated carrier strike group incorporating assets owned by both countries.

Faced with a gap in UK carrier strike capability until 2020,⁷ the proposal initially focused on cooperation with the maritime task force centred around the French aircraft carrier, Charles de Gaulle.

Development of military capabilities

Through the Lancaster House treaties, and subsequent summit declarations, the UK and France agreed to:

- Implement a common support plan for the A400M transport aircraft and associated training.
- Investigate the potential for the UK to support France in any requirement for air-to-air refuelling and military air transport.
- Establish a [Maritime Mine Countermeasures programme \(MMCM\)](#) to develop a prototype autonomous system for the detection and neutralisation of sea mines and underwater IEDs. It will be a “system of systems” incorporating several integrated assets, including unmanned surface and underwater vessels, C2 and neutralisation systems. The intention is to deliver a fully autonomous end-to-end mine countermeasures capability by 2030.
- Cooperate on the next generation of medium-altitude, long endurance (MALE) unmanned air surveillance systems.
- Assess the potential for co-operation on future military satellite communications.
- In the longer term both countries will also assess requirements and options for the next generation of unmanned combat air systems from 2030 onwards.
- In 2012, a 10-year strategic plan for the British and French complex weapons sector was agreed, including the launch of the [Future Cruise/Anti-Ship Weapon \(FC/ASW\)](#) programme which will replace the UK’s Harpoon and French Exocet missile systems in 2030. In 2014 Ministers also signed a joint contract for the development and manufacture of a Future Anti-Surface Guided Weapon (FASGW).
- Enhance co-operation in the field of cyber security and counterterrorism.

⁷ The decision to procure two new aircraft carriers (the Queen Elizabeth class) was taken in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review. The 2010 SDSR the government committed to delivering this future carrier strike capability from around 2020. However, the review also withdrew the existing Harrier aircraft from service and to convert the only remaining UK aircraft carrier to a helicopter carrier. In 2010 the UK subsequently faced a gap in carrier strike capability of almost a decade. HMS Queen Elizabeth undertook her first deployment in 2021.

- Develop a joint research and technology programme that will identify 10 priority areas for collaborative research. To underpin that work a detailed comparison of capability plans was undertaken in four key areas: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), command and control information systems, tactical airlift and land combat.
- Plan to jointly develop some of the equipment and technologies for the next generation of nuclear submarines. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2011.
- Expansion of the UK-French officers exchange programme.

The MMCM and FC/ASW programmes were identified as the key joint capability programmes in the near term.

Nuclear cooperation

The Lancaster House treaties envisaged cooperation in the nuclear sphere, specifically: the safety and security of nuclear weapons, stockpile certification, and countering nuclear or radiological terrorism.

Both countries committed to build and jointly operate a dedicated radiographic and hydrodynamics facility at Valduc in France (the Teutates project) and co-operate in a joint radiography and diagnostics technology programme in a joint facility (Technology Development Centre) at AWE Aldermaston in the UK.

In 2014 technical cooperation under the treaty was expanded:

We also have agreed to subject more of the technical and scientific data that underpins warhead certification to peer review; to work together on developing energetic materials for the future; and to conduct joint research at the laser facilities located at AWE Orion and CEA/DAM - LMJ. There is no greater evidence of the value we both attach to the bilateral relationship than our willingness to work together in this most sensitive area.⁸

1 Further reading

- House of Commons Library, [Franco-British defence cooperation](#), November 2010
- [UK-France Summit: Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation](#), November 2010
- [UK-France Declaration on Security and Defence](#), February 2012

⁸ France-UK Summit, [Declaration on Security and Defence \(PDF\)](#), January 2014

- [France-UK Summit: Declaration on Security and Defence \(PDF\)](#), January 2014
- [UK-France Summit: Annex on security and defence \(PDF\)](#), March 2016
- [UK-France Summit: Declaration on Security and Defence \(PDF\)](#), January 2018

1.2

The 10th anniversary of Lancaster House – an assessment of achievement

“This historic commitment has helped establish a long-term partnership and provides a framework for a joint response when mutual interests are at stake”.

[Ministry of Defence](#), 2 November 2020

In November 2020, the British and French governments issued [a Joint Declaration marking a decade of defence and security cooperation under the Lancaster House treaties](#).

The Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace, said that all the milestones set out in the Lancaster House treaties had been achieved and it was “a testament to our close defence relationship”.⁹ He also confirmed that, going forward, both Governments said that both nations would now look to build on existing work.¹⁰

Operational experience and the CJEF

The Joint Declaration confirmed that the flagship policy of Lancaster House, the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), had achieved full operational capability. As a result, the UK and France, should they wish to do so, can now rapidly deploy over 10,000 personnel in response to a crisis, including high intensity operations, peacekeeping, disaster relief or humanitarian assistance.

Over the last decade, UK and French forces have also gained operational experience working alongside each other and deploying together, independently of the CJEF concept.

In March 2011 British and French forces led military operations in Libya in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1973.¹¹

⁹ Ministry of Defence, [Press release](#), 2 November 2020

¹⁰ Ministry of Defence, [Press release](#), 2 November 2020

¹¹ This is examined in greater detail in House of Commons Library, [Military operations in Libya](#), October 2011

Since 2014 British and French forces have deployed together in the Middle East in operations against Islamic State/ Daesh and operated together as part of NATO's enhanced forward presence in Eastern Europe.

The UK has also supported French operations in the Sahel (see box 2).

The UK is also part of the French-led [European Intervention Initiative](#).

The CJEF, and operational cooperation more broadly, has been noted as “one of the real success stories of the Lancaster House process”.¹²

2 Case study: UK and French joint operations in the Sahel

The UK has provided military support to France's operations in Mali over the last decade. However, in the last year France has withdrawn its forces from both Mali and Burkina Faso after relations soured with their respective military leaders (who took power by force).¹³ Both countries are battling an Islamist insurgency. Anti-French sentiment has been growing in recent years, while Russia's influence in the Sahel has grown.

France launched operation Serval in early 2013 to push back Islamist and rebel movements in northern Mali at the request of Mali's Government. The UK provided [logistical and tactical air support](#) to operation Serval.¹⁴

Operation Serval was replaced by operation Barkhane in August 2014. Barkhane broadened the counter-terrorism operation beyond Mali, to the tri-border area with Burkina Faso and Niger.

France requested, and received, additional support from the UK at the 2018 UK-France Sandhurst Summit. This took the form of three Chinook helicopters to provide non-combat logistical support.¹⁵

France expanded the force in early 2020, bringing the number of personnel to over 5,000. However, the deployment has come at a cost. [59 French soldiers have died](#) in West Africa.¹⁶

¹² Lord Ricketts, “[France and the UK: A decade of the Lancaster House treaties](#)”, RUSI Commentary, 2 November 2020

¹³ See Commons Library papers [UK military in the Sahel: Developments in 2022](#) (CBP 9634); [Burkina Faso: Second coup in 2022](#) (CBP 9633); [Mali: Why have elections been delayed until 2024?](#) (CBP 9636)

¹⁴ At its peak in late January 2013 the UK had approximately 200 military personnel supporting a C17 military air transport aircraft a Sentinel airborne ground surveillance aircraft and in reconnaissance and liaison roles. [HC Deb 18 November c700W](#)

¹⁵ [HCWS413, 18 January 2018](#); [UK-France Summit 2018: documents: Security and Defence](#), Gov.uk, 18 January 2018

¹⁶ [France completes military pullout from Mali](#), Le Monde, 15 August 2022

A [deterioration in relations](#) with the Malian military-led government and the arrival of the Russian linked private military entity Wagner group led to President Macron [announcing in June 2021](#) plans to end Operation Barkhane.¹⁷ The last French soldiers [left in mid-August 2022](#).¹⁸ The French-led Takuba task force of predominantly European forces also [came to an end](#) on 30 June 2022 with the French withdrawal from Mali.

In November 2023 the UK Government announced plans to withdraw its contingent with the UN peacekeeping force in Mali earlier than planned.¹⁹

France formally ended its presence in Burkina Faso, operation Sabre, on 20 February 2023.²⁰

Neither the UK Government's [Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy](#) nor the French Government's [2022 National Strategic Review](#) (PDF) devoted much attention to the Sahel. Both Governments identify the Sahel as vulnerable to Islamist forces and the spread of the terrorist threat towards the Gulf of Guinea.²¹ The French review identifies Russian actors, including the Wagner Group, as “carrying out actions that are contrary to our interests.”²²

Maritime Cooperation

The Declaration highlighted the extent of maritime cooperation over the last 10 years, evident in the coordination and support for each country's naval deployments in the Gulf and Indo-Pacific and the support given by the Royal Navy to the Charles de Gaulle carrier group on operations.²³

In the absence of a UK carrier capability for most of the period, the Declaration also acknowledged the work of the French Navy in helping sustain the UK's carrier operating skills and experience, and its importance to integrated carrier operations going forward. Indeed, in June 2021 the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier and the Charles de Gaulle both participated for the first time together in Exercise Gallic Strike in the Mediterranean.²⁴

¹⁷ [Macron announces French troop withdrawal from Mali](#), France 24, 17 February 2022

¹⁸ [French army leaves Gao base, ending nine-year mission in Mali](#), France 24, 15 August 2022. See also Commons Library paper [UK military in the Sahel: Developments in 2022](#) (CBP 9634).

¹⁹ [HC Deb 14 November 2022 c401](#)

²⁰ [French army officially ends operations in Burkana Faso](#), France 24, 20 February 2023

²¹ [PQ35888 \[Mali: Peacekeeping operations\]](#), 21 July 2022

²² [National Security Review 2022](#), French Government, November 2022

²³ For example, Type 45 destroyer HMS Duncan provided air defence and escort duties to the Charles de Gaulle carrier group in the eastern Mediterranean in April 2019 (Royal Navy, [Press release](#), 25 April 2019)

²⁴ Royal Navy, [Press release](#), 4 June 2021

Capabilities development

Developing the complex weapons sector was set out as one of the main ambitions, and achievements, of Lancaster House. The Declaration confirms that “cooperation on missiles remain at the core of our armament cooperation” and commits to “developing a Joint Vision to shape deeper cooperation in the next decade”.²⁵ The Future Cruise/ Anti-ship (FC/ASW) missile programme remains a priority, although a potential capability gap between the UK’s Harpoon missile leaving service and the entry into service of the FC/ASW has led some analysts to question whether the UK’s decision to fill that gap with an interim capability, the Naval Strike Missile,²⁶ may lead to eventual divergence on the FC/ASW programme.²⁷

Progress in the [Maritime Mine Counter Measures Programme](#), with the beginning of sea trials and the signing of production contracts in 2020, was also noted as a success.

However, progress in other areas, particularly future combat air systems, satellite communications and submarines technologies has been limited. Indeed, in the last few years France and the UK have diverged in their approach to a future combat air system (FCAS) with France partnering with Germany and Spain and the UK establishing its Global Combat Air Programme alongside Italy and Japan.²⁸ The ability of the UK and France to realise their original ambitions for industrial cooperation on specific capability projects, has also been questioned following Brexit. While some industrial cooperation has been realised in the complex weapons sector, largely as a result of pre-existing relationships through [the pan-European company MBDA](#), as Lord Ricketts notes in his commentary for RUSI in November 2020:

But the ambitious plans for industrial cooperation between the UK and France have been a casualty of Brexit and the wider geopolitical environment. French energies under President Emmanuel Macron have turned towards European strategic autonomy. The UK’s refusal to seek any structured cooperation with the EU on security and defence matters makes it inevitable that European defence industrial cooperation will develop without the UK.²⁹

²⁵ Ministry of Defence, [Press release](#), 2 November 2020

²⁶ The decision to reinstate the Interim Surface-to-Surface Guided Weapon System (ISSGW) programme was confirmed by the Defence Secretary in evidence to the Defence Select Committee in July 2022 ([Oral evidence: National shipbuilding strategy refresh \(PDF\)](#), HC 181, 5 July 2022, Q119). The decision to procure the Naval Strike Missile was subsequently made in November 2022 (Royal Navy, [Press release](#), 22 November 2022)

²⁷ “France-UK security relationship to be tested by Brexit negotiations”, Jane’s Intelligence Review, 3 March 2020

²⁸ This is examined in greater detail in Library briefings [UK-Japan defence agreement 2023](#) and [The Combat Air Strategy: From Typhoon to Tempest?](#), August 2018

²⁹ Lord Ricketts, [“France and the UK: A decade of the Lancaster House treaties”](#), RUSI Commentary, 2 November 2020

3 Further reading

- British Embassy Paris, [Ten years of the Lancaster House treaties: Points of view on Franco-British defence relations \(PDF\)](#), November 2020
- [“France and the UK: A decade of the Lancaster House treaties”](#), RUSI Commentary, 2 November 2020
- Defence Select Committee, [Oral evidence: UK-French naval cooperation \(PDF\)](#), HC166, 25 May 2021
- Defence Select Committee, [Future anti-ship missile systems: Joint inquiry with the Assemblée Nationale’s Standing Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces \(PDF\)](#), HC 1071, Session 2017-19

2

Challenges to cooperation

The last summit to discuss Franco-British defence cooperation was held in 2018. The 10-year anniversary of Lancaster House in November 2020 acknowledged its achievements but also failed to provide a framework for future cooperation, beyond a generic commitment to build upon existing work.

Several analysts suggested that cooperation under Lancaster House may have lost momentum amidst the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the political fallout from the UK's departure from the European Union.³⁰ In the last few years, the broader UK-French relationship has been beset with political arguments over [migration](#), [trade](#) and [fishing rights](#), among other things.

In September 2021, the UK/ French defence relationship also came under increasing pressure after the UK, Australia and the United States announced, with no prior consultation with allies, a new security partnership called AUKUS. Under that agreement the three countries committed to collaborate on new nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy. A multibillion-pound submarine contract with France was subsequently cancelled leading the French government to accuse its allies of “unacceptable behaviour” and of stabbing them in the back.³¹ A planned summit between UK and French defence ministers was cancelled as a result.

In August 2022 diplomatic tensions rose again when the former Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, only weeks before assuming the role of Prime Minister and amidst the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, said the “jury’s out” on whether President Macron was “friend or foe”.³² President Macron responded that the UK was a friend of France, regardless of its leaders.³³

2.1

Strategic differences

Notwithstanding the dynamics of the broader political relationship, defence cooperation between the two countries has historically had its peaks and troughs. The challenge at the heart of the relationship has always been the

³⁰ Lord Ricketts, [“France and the UK: A decade of the Lancaster House treaties”](#), RUSI Commentary, 2 November 2020

³¹ This is examined in greater detail in House of Commons Library, [The AUKUS Agreement](#), 11 October 2021

³² [“Liz Truss says jury’s out on whether Macron is friend or foe”](#), Independent TV (You Tube), August 2022

³³ [“Serious problem if France and UK can’t tell if they are friends or enemies says Macron”](#), The Guardian, 26 August 2022

difference in strategic outlook by both countries and how to reconcile those differing perspectives to keep cooperation on track. As a result, cooperation between the UK and France in the defence and security sphere has either arisen out of political necessity (such as a direct military threat or financial austerity), or as a result of converging national interests, which have tended to be relatively short-lived.³⁴

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its implications for European security is one such driving factor behind greater cooperation.

The UK's approach

The UK has, for example, historically had a transatlantic approach to security, focusing on its relationship with the United States and the NATO alliance as the cornerstone of that security architecture, supported by a network of strong multilateral and bilateral alliances and partnerships of which the UK is a participant. From the UK's perspective the EU has been a notable soft power actor, focusing on crisis prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilisation. Greater defence cooperation within the EU has always been viewed as complementary to NATO and a means of strengthening the European pillar of that Alliance.

The 2021 Integrated Review reiterated that NATO "remain[s] the foundation of collective security in our home region of the Euro-Atlantic". Alongside the United States, the review called France a "key ally" and committed to enhancing this partnership, particularly through the Lancaster House framework.³⁵

A refresh of the Integrated Review, in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is currently underway.

Strategic autonomy as a French priority

In contrast to the UK, France has long argued for strategic autonomy and a stronger European defence identity, with France at its centre. In 2019 President Macron controversially called NATO "brain dead" and said that Europe needed to start thinking of itself as a geopolitical power as it could no longer rely on the United States to defend NATO allies.³⁶

In November 2022 President Macron presented a new [National Strategic Review](#) (PDF). Building upon the conclusions of the [2017 Strategic Review](#) (PDF), and its [2021 Update](#) (PDF), this latest review reiterates strategic

³⁴ The 2008 global financial crisis, for example, provided the context for many of the conclusions of the 2010 Strategic Defence Review and the Lancaster House treaties. In the past, [European Defence has also progressed largely as a result of Franco-British initiatives](#) (PDF)

³⁵ HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, CP 403, March 2021, p.19 and p.72

³⁶ "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain dead", *The Economist*, 7 November 2019

autonomy “as a prerequisite for protecting our [France’s] fundamental interests” and identifies France as a “driving force for European autonomy”.³⁷

However, the document also emphasises the need to pursue these goals “complementary to our active participation within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation”.³⁸ Indeed, the euro-Atlantic relationship was identified in the review as one of 10 strategic priorities for France to 2030.

Of the UK, the 2022 Strategic Review says that “post-Brexit, constructive dialogue on the basis of bilateral treaties must be quickly re-established with the UK”.³⁹ In a speech in Toulon in November 2022, in which President Macron set out the conclusions of the Strategic Review, he said “our partnership with the United Kingdom must be raised to another level”.⁴⁰

³⁷ French Republic, [National Strategic Review 2022](#) (PDF), p.8

³⁸ French Republic, [National Strategic Review 2022](#) (PDF), p.7

³⁹ French Republic, [National Strategic Review 2022](#) (PDF), p.45

⁴⁰ [“France and UK to hold a joint defence summit in 2023”](#), The Local, 9 November 2022

3

What was agreed at the UK-France summit?

In October 2022 President Macron and then Prime Minister, Liz Truss, announced that a UK-France summit would be held in early 2023 to “take forward a renewed bilateral agenda”.

That summit took place on 10 March 2023 and was welcomed as an opportunity to reset bilateral relations between the UK and France.⁴¹ As expected, the threat to European security posed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and future foreign policy cooperation were among the main issues discussed.

3.1

Key points of the Summit Declaration

“This was less of a landmark summit than an exercise in continued alignment with the ambitions of the Lancaster House agreements”.

[Professor Richard Whitman](#), 14 March 2023

[The Joint Leader’s Declaration](#) set out several agreements and commitments on illegal migration, energy, organised crime and terrorism, social and economic ties and broader foreign policy cooperation, including future participation in the European Political Community and a unified response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

On defence and security cooperation specifically, both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Lancaster House treaties and to furthering the UK-France defence and security partnership.

The overriding ambition for the next decade is to deliver further integration of UK and French armed forces.

Nuclear

- The Joint Nuclear Commission will be developed as the principal forum for bilateral discussion and the elaboration of common positions where possible, on nuclear deterrence, non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament issues.

Armaments cooperation

- Collaboration on future complex weapons will be advanced through a number of key projects. Work will develop on the Future Cruise/Anti-Ship Weapon programme to avoid gaps and deliver a capability in 2030. Work will also start on identifying commonalities in future missile

⁴¹ [“A new momentum grows for UK-France defence cooperation”](#), Chatham House, 14 February 2023

requirements, with specific reference to the needs of future air platforms. Ensuring the interoperability of each country's future Combat Air systems (see above) including on communications as well as armaments, will form part of that work. Both countries are also committed to looking at European solutions for current and future air defence capabilities.

- Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to the A400M transport aircraft programme and to ensuring its sustainability.
- Future areas of potential cooperation include directed energy weapons and a deep precision strike capability.
- Industrial cooperation will be enhanced through a new relationship on industrial strategy that will address shared issues such as industrial resilience, supply chain risks, access to critical components and materials, skills, and reciprocal market access and exports, subject to other international commitments.
- Fresh impetus will be given to dialogue on cyber, including cyber warfare.

Operations

- Operational cooperation will be advanced, specifically through the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), ensuring it adapts to the evolving security environment and new contested areas such as the High North.
- Logistical cooperation in support of operations will be improved, including enhancing intelligence sharing and facilitating access to respective military bases.
- Joint opportunities to uphold freedom of navigation and counter illegal fishing activities will be sought.
- Carrier deployments will be coordinated to provide a “complementary and more persistent” European presence in regions of shared interest, including the Indo-Pacific. Mutual support will be routinely provided for each other's carrier task groups.
- In the Balkans, the UK and France will increase cooperation, particularly in support of [EUFOR Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina](#).

To mark the 120th anniversary of the Entente-Cordiale and the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2024, a joint programme of commemorative military activities will also be formulated.

4 Further reading

- Professor Richard Whitman, [“The Anglo-French summit: A modest advance in foreign, security and defence policy?”](#), UK in a Changing Europe, 14 March 2023
- [“CJEF: A solution in search of a problem?”](#), RUSI Commentary, 10 March 2023
- [“A new momentum grows for UK-France defence cooperation”](#), Chatham House, 14 February 2023

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