

Britain and Germany sign “friendship” treaty centred on militarism and war

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German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer met in London Thursday to sign a “friendship and bilateral cooperation treaty”. Behind the anodyne words—with Starmer declaring his surprise that this was the first major bilateral treaty agreed between the two countries since the Second World War—the 23-page “Kensington Treaty” is centred on the militarist agendas of British and German imperialism.

There wasn’t a single policy laid out that didn’t concern the mad rush to rearmament and war, other than the intensification of anti-immigration measures.

Europe’s major powers are meeting in the “face of fundamental changes of the geopolitical environment,” the Treaty states. There are “momentous new challenges to Euro-Atlantic security in an era characterised by increased strategic competition, challenges to the rules-based international order”.

Russia is declared the main enemy, with the countries “Identifying the Russian Federation’s brutal war of aggression on the European continent as the most significant and direct threat to their security”.

Britain and Germany, who have armed Ukraine to the teeth for more than three years against Moscow “shall assist one another, including by military means, in case of an armed attack on the other”.

Chapter 1, Article 1 states under the heading Diplomacy, Security and Development, “Foreign Ministers [from London and Berlin] shall hold an annual Strategic Dialogue. A Senior Level Officials Group shall meet annually to coordinate foreign, security and defence policy.”

Clearly framed as an answer to concerns over US President Donald Trump’s commitment to defending Europe, the treaty reaffirms NATO’s policy principle of collective defence, “as stipulated in the North Atlantic Treaty of 4 April 1949, in particular Article 5.”

In Chapter 2, on Defence Cooperation, clauses are included as a response to the Trump administration’s demand that Europe’s NATO powers step up defence spending and pull their weight militarily: The UK and

Germany are “prepared for high-intensity and multi-domain collective defence. They shall provide such forces, capabilities, resources and infrastructure as are needed to enable the execution of the Defence Plans of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.”

And, “The Parties shall seek to enhance industrial and capability cooperation through a long-term joint approach endeavouring to deliver effective military capabilities efficiently, minimising national constraints, and strengthening industrial competitiveness.”

Closer relations between Germany and Britain are a component of establishing a tripartite alliance with France, the subject of President Emmanuel Macron’s state visit to Britain last week. Former UK ambassador to France Peter Ricketts—who served as chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee under Labour’s Tony Blair, and as the UK’s first national security adviser from 2010 to 2012 under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition led by David Cameron—summed up what was at stake in a *Financial Times* op-ed.

“The most productive UK-French summit since 2010 will be followed by the first visit of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to London this week. There will be none of the pageantry and glitz of Macron’s state visit, but it will also be an important moment.”

He described the UK-German treaty as “strengthening what has been the weakest leg of the London-Paris-Berlin triangle as the three countries take on more responsibility for European security. These agreements turn the page on a decade in which Brexit overshadowed relations between the UK and its neighbours.”

The summit was held just days after Trump declared that the US would supply Patriot air defence systems and long-range missiles to Ukraine, with the proviso that these *had to be bought from the US by the European powers*.

Central to the Starmer/Merz talks was how to intensify the development of a viable European arms industry capable of waging war against Russia and other rivals independently of Washington.

Ricketts commented, “The task of weaning Europe off its decades-long over-dependence on US military power is so vast that close trilateral co-operation on defence, security and foreign policy between London, Paris and Berlin is essential... Britain is a natural partner for Germany in this transformation. The two countries have traditionally bought far more US military equipment than France and have a shared imperative to develop European alternatives.”

Neither Starmer, nor Merz—both keen to avoid rupturing relations with Trump who is doubling down on threats to impose 30 percent tariffs on the European Union—are prepared to openly criticise the US over its beggar-thy-neighbour Ukraine arms programme.

But these tensions still surface, with Kaja Kallas, the EU foreign policy chief, declaring on the eve of the summit, “If we pay for these weapons, it’s our support... If you promise to give the weapons but say that somebody else is going to pay for it, it’s not really given by you, is it?”

France and Italy have both declined to join Trump’s proposed \$10 billion Ukraine weapons fund, thus far leaving Germany purchasing two Patriot systems from Washington and Finland another.

Referring to the joint development of a new missile system capable of hitting targets at a range of over 2,000 km, i.e. Russia, a Downing Street readout noted “the leaders reflected on the important commitments made today to deliver the new Deep Precision Strike capability within the next decade and agreed that closer cooperation on defence exports and between their defence industries will pose valuable opportunities for economic growth in both the UK and Germany.”

This builds on the UK-Germany Trinity House Agreement on Defence signed last December, stipulating increased defence industrial capacity on armoured vehicles and artillery. The RUSI (Royal United Services Institute) thinktank wrote, “Signed just 111 days after the Labour government was elected, the [Trinity House] agreement covers strengthening defence industries, reinforcing Euro-Atlantic security, enhancing interoperability, addressing emerging threats, supporting Ukraine, and working together on future ‘Deep Precision Strike’ capabilities.”

Ramping up preparation for war is premised on the military corporations of both countries reaping gigantic profits in the years ahead. The *Financial Times* noted this week that the latest agreement will see Britain and Germany “work more closely to sell jointly made weapons, including Typhoon jets, in a deal that Downing Street claims can unlock ‘billions of pounds of additional defence exports’”.

The FT noted that any previous trepidation about selling to dictatorial regimes will be ditched by Germany. The article cited “British officials” who “said Germany would be more

open in future to selling equipment such as Eurofighter Typhoons, Airbus A400M military transport aircraft and Boxer armoured vehicles to certain regimes. The previous German government, a three-way coalition that included the Greens, blocked the sale of Typhoons to Ankara after Turkey announced its interest in buying them in 2022, citing political and rights concerns.”

Holding a joint press conference with Merz at the Airbus plant in Stevenage, Starmer said the treaty was “committing not only to our mutual defence but also to maximise the benefits of our defence spending, in the shape of more jobs, more growth and more security. Under this treaty we will bring our industries together to boost defence exports by billions of pounds and we’ll speed up our collaboration on high tech weapons and equipment, strengthening NATO—and keeping our people safe.”

The generally anti-EU *Telegraph*’s Europe Editor James Crisp commented, “The blueprint for the future of European defence is buried in Britain’s new ‘friendship treaty’ with Germany. It’s hidden by the warm talks of school exchanges, shared values, trade and direct rail links but look closely enough and steel foundations are being laid...”

“It’s a future set to be dominated by the ‘triangle’ of London, Berlin and Paris—a partnership of Europe’s two nuclear powers with its richest nation, which has plans to build its strongest army.”

The other main area of cooperation to be accelerated is a clampdown on immigration into Europe by refugees and asylum seekers. At the press conference, Starmer congratulated “Friedrich for his leadership on this”, praising their “working together on illegal migration.” The Downing Street report of the meeting confirmed that Merz would “introduce legislation to be adopted by the end of the year to make it illegal to facilitate illegal migration to the UK.”



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