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The UK-France nuclear agreement in context



Summary

Treaty in political and strategic context.

Three broad developments, allowing cooperation:

1. Obstacles to cooperation removed
2. New areas for cooperation
3. New (or renewed) drivers of cooperation

Interaction with debates about UK deterrent and global multilateral disarmament

What potential for further cooperation?

UK-France nuclear relations during the Cold War



Dominant theme: post-Nassau split; differing models of 'independent' deterrents.

Nevertheless:

- US assistance to France
- UK approaches to France

Obstacles to cooperation:

- UK/US nuclear relationship
- France/NATO; French attitude to UK/US

UK-France nuclear relations after the Cold War



New structures:

- Joint Commission on Nuclear Policy and Doctrine
- Staff talks

Convergence of principles

French proposals for *dissuasion concertée*

The 2010 agreement: content



Cooperation on:

- Safety and security of nuclear weapons
- Stockpile certification
- Countering N&R terrorism

TEUTATES:

- EPURE
- TDC

“Other reciprocal programmes shall be considered in due course and shall become the subject of separate agreements as appropriate.”

The 2010 agreement: drivers



Sir Michael Quinlan, 2001

There seems to be little basis for expecting that new directions of Franco-British cooperation would offer any advantage to the UK, in either technical or financial terms, large enough to make it worthwhile to reduce or endanger the dividend we get from [cooperation with the United States].

The 2010 agreement: drivers



New UK government; UK/Fr budget pressures
+
UK-Fr defence rapprochement
+
Long standing French interest;
Alignment of nuclear strategy and doctrine.
+
New fields of cooperation
+
US acquiescence

UK national debate on deterrent



Coalition agreement:

We will maintain Britain's nuclear deterrent, and have agreed that the renewal of Trident should be scrutinised to ensure value for money. Liberal Democrats will continue to make the case for alternatives.

Nick Harvey at Franco-British Defence Council, 31 March 2011

UK-France in Trident replacement spectrum

Disarmament context



50 year life span

France and disarmament 2007-2011

Consistency with UK approach

Prospects for future cooperation



Limits to cooperation. But possible avenues for progress:

- Technical cooperation
- New threats
- Traditional doctrine and policy
- Platforms/delivery?
- Operational?

Trilateral cooperation?

Conclusions



Limited agreement, broader significance

Forced by circumstances, enabled by strategic shifts

Both parties potentially have range of interests in pursuing further cooperation

Potential for trilateral cooperation