

Expanding C-SIPA to Britain Signals Continued Commitment to Integration

by [Elizabeth Dent \(/experts/elizabeth-dent\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Elizabeth Dent \(/experts/elizabeth-dent\)](#)

Elizabeth Dent is a Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where she focuses on U.S. foreign and defense policy toward the Gulf states, Iraq, and Syria.



Brief Analysis

By adding Britain ahead of Trump's inauguration, the parties hope to sustain the agreement's vision of building an integrated defense structure and forming a network of trusted partners for economic and technological development.

On December 7, on the margins of [the Manama Dialogue \(https://www.gov.uk/government/news/stability-in-the-middle-east-vital-to-delivery-at-home-prime-minister-says\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/stability-in-the-middle-east-vital-to-delivery-at-home-prime-minister-says), Britain accepted a [formal invitation \(https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-expansion-of-the-comprehensive-security-integration-and-prosperity-agreement/\)](https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-expansion-of-the-comprehensive-security-integration-and-prosperity-agreement/) from the United States and Bahrain to join the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA). The announcement came just weeks before President-elect Trump's inauguration, signaling London and Manama's hopes that the next administration will ensure continuity with the agreement. The fact that a new partner is being added to a framework created just last year is also a vote of confidence in this new model for security cooperation, indicating that the signatories intend to keep expanding it.

Originally inked on September 13, 2023, the initial [bilateral agreement \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/one-year-us-bahrain-c-sipa-signs-progress-regional-potential\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/one-year-us-bahrain-c-sipa-signs-progress-regional-potential) consisted of three core pillars to strengthen the U.S.-Bahrain relationship: (1) defense and security; (2) economic, commercial, and trade; and (3) science, technology, and network security. In addition, C-SIPA was intended to offer policy continuity across administrations and help alleviate partner concerns over U.S. commitment in the Middle East, which has largely been measured by the number and posture of American military assets deployed there.

Instead of case-by-case initiatives based solely on defense and security considerations, C-SIPA was designed as an intentional mechanism for intertwining economic and technological initiatives, thereby deepening overall cooperation between the United States and Bahrain while forging ties in sectors that are expected to become the primary pillar of future bilateral and multilateral partnerships in the region.

The decision to invite London is hardly surprising—Britain shares numerous regional interests with Washington and has a strong bilateral relationship with Bahrain. Its entry to C-SIPA also shows that a growing number of regional and international actors want to build an integrated security and defense structure while forming a network of trusted partners for economic development and technological integration. In addition, the agreement is a good model for integrating European allies into the emerging Middle East defense architecture, providing a multilateral security construct to counter the China-Russia-Iran-North Korea axis.

Although murmurs of international anxiety persist about how the incoming administration might affect U.S. commitments in the Middle East, Trump’s previous term made clear that he prefers a more transactional strategy toward conducting diplomacy and deepening cooperation. C-SIPA appears to fit that definition of more transactional diplomacy well, since it encourages the type of economic and technological initiatives that his administration is most likely to pursue. For example, establishing common tech standards with Bahrain and Britain will allow American companies to expand their investments abroad, which could in turn boost American jobs, exports, and innovation.

In any case, adding Britain is a clear indication of the Biden team’s efforts to leave the table set for a successful handoff to the next administration. Expanding C-SIPA also signals that Washington, London, and Manama are primed to move forward with building out a trusted network into more sustainable sectors, creating opportunities to strengthen and even redefine regional partnerships.

Elizabeth Dent is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute and former director for the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula at the Pentagon. ❖

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