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Kristina Zetterlund

The Future Role and Undertakings of the US Military

Key Issues under Debate

Cover: U.S. Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, Commander of Multi-National Force Iraq, gives an aerial tour of Baghdad, Iraq, to Sen. Barack Obama, July 21, 2008. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Lorie Jewell. DefenceImagery.mil.

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Sammanfattning

USA:s nye president Barack Obama kommer att stå inför ett antal svåra utmaningar då han intar Vita Huset i januari 2009. Förutom att han måste hantera en av de värsta finansiella kriserna sedan den stora depressionen under 1930-talet, kommer han som landets överbefälhavare att leda militära styrkor ansträngda efter år av strider i Irak och Afghanistan och i behov av att bestämma en framtida inriktning. Denna rapport redogör för ett antal centrala frågor och utvecklingstendenser som bedöms vara av vikt för den amerikanska militärens framtida roll och åtaganden och som för närvarande debatteras i Pentagon och kongressen.

Nyckelord: USA, Barack Obama, försvarspolitik, utrikespolitik, militär, armé, försvarsbudget, Irak, Afghanistan, privata säkerhetsföretag, AFRICOM.

Summary

When Barack Obama in January 2009 enters the White House as President of the United States, he will face a number of daunting challenges. Not only will he have to deal with one of the worst financial crises since the Great Depression of the 1930s, but, as the country's new Commander in Chief, he will be in charge of a military strained after years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and in need of determining its future direction. This report analyses some key issues and developments deemed to have a bearing on the future role and undertakings of US armed forces and which are currently under debate in Washington.

Keywords: The United States, Barack Obama, defence policy, foreign policy, military, army, defence budget, Iraq, Afghanistan, private security companies, contractors, AFRICOM.

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Executive Summary

When Barack Obama in January 2009 enters the White House as President of the United States, he will face a number of daunting challenges. Not only will he have to deal with one of the worst financial crises since the Great Depression of the 1930s, but as the country's new Commander in Chief he will be in charge of a military strained after years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and in search of agreement on which future direction to take. This report aims to provide a smorgasbord of some key issues and developments deemed to have a bearing on the future role and undertakings of the US military and which are currently under debate in the Pentagon and on the Hill.

Expectations are high, both abroad and at home, that President-elect Obama will deliver change in a variety of policy areas after having taken office. In the security policy domain, however, there are reasons to expect a measure of continuity. Not only will some key persons, most notably Secretary of Defence Robert Gates, stay on in the new administration, but indications are that Obama is pursuing a bipartisan approach. Furthermore, influential interest groups will not change, nor will some of the challenges that the US confronts.

US forces are stretched and exhausted from the wear and tear of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Strains are revealed in indicators such as the recruitment and retention of soldiers, prevalence rates of post-traumatic stress disorder among forces, shortened dwell time for units between deployments, and growing costs for repairing damaged and lost equipment. In order to ease the strain, the administration has decided to expand the Army by some 13 percent to 547,000 soldiers and the Marine Corps by some 15 percent to an end-strength of 202,000 Marines. The expansion may, however, be hampered by costs and recruitment difficulties.

The expansion of the forces will allow the US to rely less on private contractors to perform military functions. While the US has employed contractors in times of war as far back as the Revolutionary War, their use has since grown substantially, both in terms of numbers and tasks. Expectations are that private contractors will continue to support the military during times of war, despite what seems to be a backlash among policy-makers after bad press and incidents in Iraq. However, there is a need for standardising regulations and carefully examining which tasks are too critical and vulnerable to be assigned to private companies.

The US defence budget has grown to record levels in dollars and together with the economic downturn, spending cuts are believed to be in the cards. While military operations are not expected to be immediately affected, major weapons and modernisation programmes could take a hit. As the Pentagon sets out to

prioritise its efforts and spending, it needs to determine what the future US military should look like and what threats it is likely to face. Experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have formed a military more equipped to handle non-conventional wars. However, the debate on finding the right balance between the skills and resources required for fighting conventional wars and non-conventional operations is expected to continue under the incoming administration. The dispute also reflects a long-term contest for resources between the different military services.

Ultimately, the US military will need to be able to do a bit of everything. There is little doubt that the US will be engaged in Iraq and/or Afghanistan for years to come, calling on skills and resources appropriate for counterinsurgency as well as stability operations. Moreover, other non-conventional foes, such as terrorist groupings, will not disappear. It has also been suggested that given the US dominance in conventional warfare, enemies are more likely to opt for irregular warfare. At the same time, conventional threats, e.g. emerging peer competitors such as China and Russia, cannot be discounted. In addition, also non-state actors are developing conventional capabilities. There are those who believe trying to do everything will result in the US military not being really good at anything but instead lead to mediocrity. But perhaps sub-optimality is a cost worth paying for securing full-spectrum capabilities in order to be equipped to handle the unforeseen.

Recognising that today's and tomorrow's conflicts are increasingly complex, there is an urgent need for the US government to improve coordination and cooperation between civil and military agencies. There are, however, a number of obstacles standing in the way, one being the uneven distribution of resources between military and civilian agencies, with the Pentagon outpacing the State Department in terms of growth in both size and spending.

One effort to try to employ an interagency approach, has been the creation of an African Command (AFRICOM). AFRICOM, which became operational in October 2008, was set up in order to consolidate the Pentagon's responsibility for Africa which till then had been divided among three commands – the European (EUCOM), Pacific (PACOM) and Central (CENTCOM) Commands. In addition, it could relieve the workload on CENTCOM and EUCOM, which had both become increasingly strained given the large ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ultimately, the creation of AFRICOM also reflected a recognition on the part of the US government of the strategic importance of Africa.

All in all, AFRICOM got off to a bad start though after having been announced as an ambitious project with an innovative interagency structure and a whole-government approach. The setting up of AFRICOM met with suspicion and caution from various stakeholders who worried, for example, that it was US neo-

colonialism in disguise or that it would militarise US foreign policy towards Africa. As a consequence, AFRICOM has failed to find any African country willing to host its new headquarters and will instead be based in Stuttgart, Germany, for the foreseeable future. It has also had to scale back on its inter-agency approach, and have found it difficult to recruit staff from civilian agencies. AFRICOM is viewed as a step in the right direction but, in the short term, there seem to be few expectations that AFRICOM represents a revolutionary change with regard to military command structures.

1 Introduction

What will a change in political administration mean to the world's most powerful and advanced military? What effects will experiences from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan have on those same forces? This report sets out to highlight a number of key issues and developments which are currently under debate in the Pentagon and on the Hill¹ connected to the role and design of the US armed forces. Naturally, the study is by no means a comprehensive and exhaustive examination of issues which will be of consequence to the future role and undertakings of the US military, but the objective is, rather, to provide policy-makers and others interested with a review of some of the most topical issues as well as different views held by leading experts and commentators in those debates.

With interviews and a review of literature and media as a point of departure, the report aims to identify and deliberate on a selection of issues which are currently on the table. The text reflects the views of some leading commentators and draws on facts and information from various nonpartisan institutes and organisations. It starts by looking at possible policies and beliefs of President-elect Obama and discusses some on the defence budget he will control. The next part of the study discusses the US armed forces and some central developments with regard to the future organisation and tasks of the military.

The report was commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence and is part of an ongoing project at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) on Transatlantic Security and European Crisis Management (ASEK).

¹ The Hill is short for Capitol Hill, which is informal terminology referring to the US Congress.

2 A New Commander in Chief

2.1 Barack Obama's Foreign Policy

In January 2009, the United States will have a new President, and with that, a new Commander in Chief. It is naturally difficult to predict with any certainty what the foreign policy of an incoming president will be. Some mean that it is especially difficult to forecast the policy choices of Barack Obama given his limited track record. Richard Perle has, for example, said that the US has not elected a president since Jimmy Carter about whose thinking there is so little known.² Furthermore, not only is it questionable to what extent presidential campaigns can predict actual decision-making when in office but, in the end, much is in general driven by unforeseen events. In addition, both Obama and his opponent during the presidential race, John McCain, made a number of detours and adjustments in their policy statements during the presidential race, further complicating any attempts at forecasting.³ That said, some clues as to future decisions can, arguably, be discerned from looking at Obama's rhetoric as well as from who he has chosen to be part of his team of key advisers.

Expectations are high that Obama will deliver change in several policy areas when he takes office. In the security policy domain, however, there are reasons to expect a measure of continuity. Not only will some key persons, most notably Secretary of Defence Robert Gates, stay on in the new administration, but Obama has also made clear that he is open to the idea of a bipartisan cabinet. Furthermore, influential interest groups will not change, nor will some of the challenges that the US faces. For example, when considering Obama's calls for a US military withdrawal from Iraq, it should be noted that in the end, it is the situation on the ground which will dictate. Nonetheless, Obama's view of the world seems to differ markedly from that of his predecessor George W. Bush.

2.1.1 Realist vs. Idealist

While it is nearly impossible to label policymakers as strict adherents to one school of thought or the other, one way of trying to describe Obama's beliefs and predicting his courses of action could be to try to categorise him somewhere along the spectrum between idealism and realism.

² Henri Astier, 'Obama: 'Soft power and hard reality'', *BBC News*, 24 November 2008.

³ David E. Sanger, 'Rivals Split on U.S. Power, but Ideas Defy Easy Labels', *The New York Times*, October 23 2008.

In many ways, Obama appears to be less of an idealist than both his predecessor George W. Bush and his Republican opponent during the presidential campaign, McCain. Both Bush and McCain have shown a tendency to divide the world into good and evil, and a belief that the US should form the future global order with its military supremacy. As noted by Fareed Zakaria, Obama, on the contrary, seems to view countries and other parties on the international arena as complex actors, motivated not only by ideology but as much by power, greed and fear.⁴ A difference when compared to McCain, Zakaria adds, is that Obama has a more optimistic outlook on the world: "Call him an Optimistic Realist, or a Realistic Optimist. But don't call him naïve."⁵

Obama's chosen foreign policy team is said to encompass a mix of "liberal internationalists" and realists.⁶ Robert Gates has agreed to stay on as Defence Secretary. Gates, who enjoys bipartisan support, will contribute to a smooth transition at times of war. His appointment will also be in line with Obama's rhetoric on the importance of bipartisanship and that he is open to the idea of a cabinet whose members are drawn not only from the Democratic party. As noted above, this, in turn, could suggest a certain level of continuity in future policy decisions.

Both Obama and vice president-elect Joseph Biden have been described as pragmatists who believe in using US power to advance national interests and hinder injustices in the world, but with the support of allies.⁷ The application of soft power and non-military instruments, such as economic aid and diplomacy, is believed to be seen as taking precedence over the use of force, which should be employed with constraint and care. This approach to international affairs has been compared to that of George H.W. Bush⁸ and his close foreign policy adviser, Brent Scowcroft, with whom Obama has reportedly also had discussions.⁹ In this context, it is also interesting to note that Robert Gates was Deputy National Security Adviser under Scowcroft.

On the other hand, there are those who view Obama as an idealist, prone to emphasise norms and values and the instruments of diplomacy and multi-lateralism. Some have also expressed concern that Obama's statements and choice of advisers indicate an instinct for interventionism in the name of ideals

⁴ Fareed Zakaria, 'Obama, Foreign Policy Realist', *PostGlobal*, 21 July 2008.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Henri Astier, 'Obama: 'Soft power and hard reality'', *BBC News*, 24 November 2008.

⁷ See for example Bay Fang, 'How Joe Biden's expertise may guide Barack Obama', *Chicago Tribune*, 23 October 2008.

⁸ Also called 'Bush senior' or 'Bush 41' in order to distinguish him from his son.

⁹ E. J. Dionne Jr., 'Obama's Bush Doctrine', *Washington Post*, 28 November 2008.

and values.¹⁰ Obama has said that he may support interventions in other countries not only when national security issues are at stake but also when there are moral issues at stake.¹¹ Indeed, according to Obama, humanitarian interventions may be in US national interest as passivity, for example in the face of genocide, will act to diminish US image.¹² Arguably, this does not need to represent the views of an idealist but could, rather, be the views of a realist who recognises the complexity of today's interdependent world.

2.1.2 Internationalist vs. Isolationist

The incoming President has made clear that he intends to strengthen US ties with its friends and allies and that global threats also require global responses. Thus, Obama appears to join the internationalist school of thought as opposed favouring an isolationist US foreign policy. In his *Foreign Policy* essay on his foreign policy agenda, Obama writes:

“After thousands of lives lost and billions of dollars spent, many Americans may be tempted to turn inward and cede our leadership in world affairs. But this is a mistake we must not make. America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, and the world cannot meet them without America. We can neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission. We must lead the world, by deed and by example.”¹³

Accordingly, Obama seems to warn against the onset of what some call an “Iraq Syndrome” similar to the reaction witnessed after the Vietnam War or the First World War when the US became more isolationist, avoiding diplomatic and military interventions in the affairs of other states.¹⁴ Arguably, however, today it is also more difficult, if not impossible, for the US to completely withdraw from international affairs in the growingly interdependent world. That said, the new administration will enter office at a time when the US public will most likely be more reluctant for an active US role in the world. In addition to the price paid in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the economic downturn may increase calls for decision-makers to turn their focus to developments at home. One of Obama's key messages during the presidential race – that US forces

¹⁰ See for example the Editors, ‘A Word of Support for the U.S. President-Elect’, *World Politics Review*, 5 November 2008.

¹¹ Commission on Presidential Debates, ‘The Second McCain-Obama Presidential Debate’, Debate Transcript, 7 October 2008.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Barack Obama, ‘Renewing American Leadership’, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007.

¹⁴ Richard Haas is one who has warned against an Iraq Syndrome, for example in the interview by Georg Mascolo, ‘Iraq Is Not Winnable’, *Spiegel Online International*, 13 November 2006.

should gradually get out of Iraq, may have appealed to such tendencies. In July 2008, he wrote in *The New York Times* that the US could safely redeploy troops so that they would be withdrawn from Iraq by the summer of 2010, also to allow for increased efforts in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Obama has, however, not said how many “residual forces” he will leave behind to potentially provide protection, training and advice. One of his national security advisers, Richard Danzig, has said the US may leave behind some 30,000 to 55,000 troops.¹⁶

Given these potential domestic constraints on active international engagement, Obama’s pronounced intentions to collaborate and cooperate with allies and friends seem suitable. Strengthening ties with allies and friends also suggests a realisation that the threats of today and tomorrow require multilateral and multi-functional, at times unique, responses. This becomes even more pertinent if one agrees with those who assert that the intervention in Iraq marked the beginning of the fall of the US global hegemony.¹⁷ Also the US National Intelligence Council (NIC) has projected an increasingly multipolar global landscape. In a recent report, the NIC projected that by 2025 the US will be one of a number of influential actors on the world arena, albeit still the most powerful one. Its relative strength was seen to by then have declined and its freedom of action constricted by other actors’ capabilities.¹⁸

In line with his belief in multilateralism and desire to restore America’s image in the world, Obama has expressed his support for the United Nations, and has even been cited as saying “I want to go before the United Nations and say, ‘America’s back!’”¹⁹ Even if President Bush developed a more positive approach to multi-lateral cooperation during his second term, Obama brings expectations of improved international relations. Some experts interviewed for this report suggested that a new administration, for example, may contribute to narrowing the North-South divide which has been hampering the work of the United Nations since the onset of the War on Terror.

As well as his belief in multilateralism, Obama has expressed a readiness to hold direct talks with US adversaries to find solutions to disagreements, most notably he has said is open for dialogue with Tehran over its nuclear programme.

¹⁵ Barack Obama, ‘My Plan for Iraq’, *The New York Times*, 14 July 2008.

¹⁶ Thom Shanker, ‘Obama’s thoughts evolve on U.S. troops in Iraq’, *International Herald Tribune*, 4 December 2008.

¹⁷ See for example, *The Economist*, ‘The hobbled hegemon’, 28 June 2007, and Richard N. Haass, ‘The New Middle East’, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2006.

¹⁸ US National Intelligence Council, ‘Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World’, November 2008.

¹⁹ James Traub, ‘Is (His) Biography (Our) Destiny?’, *The New York Times*, 4 November 2007.

But with the anticipated preference for international cooperation, there are also expectations that Obama will call on allies to do more, most notably in Afghanistan. He has already stated that he will ask NATO allies to contribute more troops to the organisation's operations and has pointed to the need for troop contributors to remove national operative restrictions, so called "national caveats", on their forces in Afghanistan.²⁰ How hard pressure Obama is willing to exert on allies and whether allies are prepared to increase their support remains unclear. In one sense, it was easier for allies to decline additional support during Bush's presidency as they could blame the unpopularity of Bush. It will, arguably, be harder for the same allies not to deliver when Obama calls on them to increase their support. Another question mark, however, is to what extent US allies are capable of contributing more, given their limited resources.

2.1.3 Expectations

Hopes are high that Obama will restore US image in the world. Should Obama fail to deliver notable changes in US policies, this could result in disappointment in the new administration. Arguably, given the high expectations both at home and abroad, it will arguably be difficult for the new incoming administration not to disappoint to some extent. As noted, there are many factors which indicate that US foreign policy in many ways will continue on a similar path as that of President Bush, e.g. that some key persons will stay on also in the new administration, Obama's bipartisan approach, influential interest groups and realities on the ground.²¹

In contrast though, President Obama will be supported by a Democratic majority in Congress – something which could help him push through his policies and deliver pledged changes. However, while Obama will indeed have the support of a larger number of Democrats in Congress, it should be noted that it is by no means certain that the Democratic camp will be unified. Furthermore, Republican cooperation will be required on the bigger issues. There are also fears that if moving too fast on heavily politicised issues, Obama and his Democratic Party could alienate voters. Consequently, the incoming administration may need to restrain Congress. Reportedly, Obama is already trying to encourage a bipartisan tone on the Hill, asking Republicans for advice and recommendations.²² Simultaneously, he will need to handle this balancing act with care so that he

²⁰ Barack Obama, 'Renewing American Leadership', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, 2007.

²¹ Henri Astier, 'Obama: 'Soft power and hard reality'', *BBC News*, 24 November 2008.

²² Gail Russell Chaddock, 'Capital Hill feels Obama's hand', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 November 2008 and Jeff Zeleny, 'Initial Steps by Obama Suggests a Bipartisan Flair', *The New York Times*, 23 November 2008.

does not disappoint or irritate Democrats on the left. It should also be underlined here that Obama's scope of action will be severely constrained by the economic downturn and a massive budget deficit.

2.2 The US Defence Budget

US military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been putting considerable pressure on the defence budget and is expected to continue to do so for some time. Increased expenditures include among other things costs for repairing and replacing worn and destroyed equipment and paying salaries and benefits to US military personnel. Increased costs together with the country's current economic woes are making priorities all the more urgent. Complicating the matter, there is not agreement within the Pentagon and the Hill as to what the military of the future should look like. This also reflects the continual contest for resources between the different military services.

Defence spending has ballooned under the administration of President George W. Bush, resulting in the biggest defence spending increase in real terms for 30 years.²³ The impact of the wars is considerable. As an example, retention bonuses have increased significantly while personnel costs have risen from \$75,000 per soldier in 2001 to \$120,000 in 2006.²⁴ In 2004, the defence budget in real terms exceeded that at the height of the Cold War and by 2008, expenditure was at levels equal to those seen during the Second World War.²⁵ Much of the increase can be found in supplemental defence appropriations through which operational costs for the War on Terror have mainly been funded.

On October 14 February 2008, President George Bush signed the defence budget for fiscal year 2009 (FY2009) into law.²⁶ The budget included a base budget of \$512 billion while \$66 billion were earmarked for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some \$20 billion would go towards expanding the armed forces and provide equipment, training and facilities for new recruits.

According to Steven Kosiak of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, this represents the highest ever US base defence budget (i.e. excluding

²³ Matthew Smith, 'Onwards and upwards: Life after Bush, part one – the defence budget', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 April 2008.

²⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, President of Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 'The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements', Testimony before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007.

²⁵ Matthew Smith, 'Onwards and upwards: Life after Bush, part one – the defence budget', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 April 2008.

²⁶ Gerrard Cowan, 'Bush signs off \$578 bn defence budget for US', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 October 2008.

war costs), and means an increase of approximately four percent in real terms (adjusted to inflation) when comparing to FY2008.²⁷ That said, total defence spending in FY 2009 will still account for a considerable smaller portion of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) than during World War II, or the Korean and Vietnam Wars.²⁸

Some analysts and senior military officers, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, have argued for a floor on defence spending a four percent of GDP to ensure solid and reliable defence spending levels.²⁹ Others argue that defence spending should be kept flexible so that levels can be adapted to requirements. Moreover, some mean that rather than fixating on the level of military spending, the debate should be on which capabilities may need strengthening, including alternative ones such as within the intelligence community, foreign service, foreign assistance and non-proliferation initiatives.³⁰

2.2.1 The Financial Crisis

While ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are already putting pressure on the defence budget, the financial crisis, including a \$700 billion government bailout package for Wall Street, is expected to affect defence spending in the medium- and longer-term. Indeed, some forecasted cuts in future arms programmes already before the recent economic woes.³¹ While spending on fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are not predicted to see any immediate cuts as a consequence of the financial turmoil, cost savings on bigger weapons programmes could potentially be on the cards. Furthermore, it has been suggested that budget hardship could provide an added incentive for the US to try to pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan quicker than would otherwise be the case.³²

²⁷ Steven M. Kosiak, 'The FY 2009 Defense Appropriations Act' Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 22 October 2008.

²⁸ For a more detailed review of trends in US defence spending, see for example Bengt-Göran Bergstrand, 'Military Expenditures: Snapshots of developments in ten selected countries', FOI Memo 2491, August 2008.

²⁹ Thom Shanker, 'Joint Chiefs Chairman Looks Beyond Current Wars', *The New York Times*, 21 October 2007, and Jim Talent and Mackenzie Eaglen, 'Providing for the Common Defense: Four Percent for Freedom', The Heritage Foundation, 13 December 2007.

³⁰ Bernard I. Finel, 'The 4 Percent Folly – Linking Defense Spending to GDP Could Backfire', American Security Project, 4 February 2008.

³¹ Dana Hedgpeth, 'Balancing Defense and the Budget', *Washington Post*, 13 October 2008.

³² David Brunnstrom and Ross Colvin, 'ANALYSIS – US, Europe defence spending faces long-term hit', *Reuters*, 7 October 2008.

Spending is not expected to dramatically drop next year but the financial crunch could start to have effects on the FY2010 defence budget.³³ Jane's Information Group expects the US defence budget to slim by \$75.9 billion to \$620 billion by 2010.³⁴ A report by Morgan Stanley, published after the Presidential elections, predicted that defence cuts could turn up in the defence budgets for FY2011 or FY2012.³⁵ The report claimed that Obama has agreed with his defence advisers not to decrease the defence budget within his first 18 months in office. Lawrence Korb notes that while the budget for 2009 already is in place, planning for 2010 has gone too far to allow for immediate cutbacks, meaning it will not be until FY2011 that Obama will be able to have a full impact on spending.³⁶

Defence Secretary Robert Gates forecasted in September, 2008, that US military spending would level off in the coming years but not suffer any deep cuts, despite the economic crisis, due to the increasingly complicated threat picture facing the country.³⁷ Richard Danzig, a key adviser of Barack Obama, has said he believes military spending would remain stable during a Democratic administration but that priorities could change with an increased focus on "cyber warfare" and unmanned aerial vehicles.³⁸

2.2.2 Potential Budget Issues

When discussing potential cuts in the defence budget, most analysts believe the Pentagon will have to review its bigger weapons programmes. Military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are not expected to face any immediate cuts but modernisation and upgrading programmes, on the contrary, may end up taking a beating.

According to media, among the programmes which could potentially be hit are the Future Combat Systems (FCS) programme, a future destroyer programme, as well as the production of the F-22 fighter aircraft.³⁹ Arms manufacturers are reportedly already preparing for reduced spending levels by for example looking

³³ See for example Shaun Waterman, 'Analysis: U.S. defense spending problem', *UPI*, 16 October 2008.

³⁴ *The Associated Press*, 'Jane's identifies key emerging defense markets', 21 October 2008.

³⁵ John T. Bennett, 'Shortlist Sketched for DoD Team', *DefenseNews*, 10 November 2008.

³⁶ Greg Bruno, 'Defense Spending During Economic Crisis - Background', Council on Foreign Relations, 18 November 2008.

³⁷ *Reuters*, 'Gates predicts no sharp cuts in US defense budgets', 29 September 2008.

³⁸ Dana Hedgpeth, 'Balancing Defense and the Budget', *Washington Post*, 13 October 2008.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

to alternative areas of business such as information technology services and training support.⁴⁰

When setting priorities and pinpointing potential savings, it is crucial that the future tasks of the military are agreed upon. The FCS is the Army's main modernisation programme consisting of 14 manned and unmanned systems linked together with a communications and information network.⁴¹ The programme is intended to replace the Army's current fleet of combat vehicles, including the M-1 Abrams tank and the M-2 Bradley infantry vehicle, starting in 2015.⁴²

FCS formations are meant to be more mobile and lethal than the current brigades and able to deal with the full spectrum of operations, from major combat to stability operations and disaster relief. That said, some critics mean FCS will be optimised for conventional warfighting as opposed to non-conventional operations.⁴³ Some question whether the medium-weight FCS brigade is sufficiently survivable in the face of asymmetric threats and point to recent experiences in for example Iraq where the Army has had to invest large amounts on upgrading protection on its combat vehicles and purchasing mine-resistant vehicles.⁴⁴ Defenders of the FCS respond that the high-technology system will make it possible to early detect threats, which, in turn, will compensate for heavy armour.

A related debate with regard to the transformation programme is its price tag. The Army has estimated that the whole programme could end up costing \$230 billion over numerous years, while the Pentagon's Cost Analysis Improvement Group (CAIG) expects it will require \$300 billion.⁴⁵ The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that cancellation of FCS would result in net savings of as much as \$62 over 10 years.⁴⁶ On the contrary, should the Army choose to upgrade its existing systems, this would cost approximately \$7 billion over five

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ For more information on the FCS, see for example Andrew Feickert, 'The Army's Future Combat System (FCS): Background and Issues for Congress', CRS Report for Congress, updated 12 May 2008.

⁴² The M-1 Abrams tank and the Bradley Fighting Vehicles are, however, expected to remain in the force to 2050 and beyond.

⁴³ See for example Andrew F. Krepinevich, President of Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 'The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements', Testimony before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007.

⁴⁴ Nathan Hodge, 'Avenues of approach: The US Future Combat Systems', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 February 2008.

⁴⁵ Pat Towell, Stephen Daggett, and Amy Belasco, 'Defense: FY2009 Authorization and Appropriations', CRS Report for Congress, updated 29 September 2008.

⁴⁶ Nathan Hodge, 'Avenues of approach: The US Future Combat Systems', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 February 2008.

years, as opposed to some \$23 billion over a similar period to pay for research and development and acquiring FCS equipment. A decision to slow down or not carry through the FCS programme would, however, arguably only mean a postponement of the modernisation of weapons systems, systems which were developed during the Cold War. Michael O'Hanlon has suggested that one way of cutting costs would be to equip only part of the armed forces with expensive and highly sophisticated arms to hedge against potential new threats, while the remainder would be provided less expensive upgrades of existing weaponry.⁴⁷

Arguably, some modernisation of the forces is already taking place as worn out and destroyed equipment used in Iraq and Afghanistan is being replaced. Most of the acquisition of new equipment has, however, been for force protection communications and transportation.⁴⁸

Another programme which is often brought up as a potential target for budget cuts is the Air Force's F-22 fighter programme. The F-22 Raptor is the most advanced fighter aircraft of the Air Force and, equipped with the latest in stealth technology and able to deliver precision attacks as well as conduct air-to-air combat.⁴⁹ However, some experts and key Pentagon officials question if the F-22 is the most optimal fighter plane for non-conventional warfare and, hence, worth the costs. The price-tag for manufacturing the F-22 reportedly now stands at some \$122-\$181 million per aircraft, excluding R&D costs.⁵⁰

The incoming administration will have to decide whether to add more funds to continue the production of the F-22 or whether to shut down production. The Pentagon has already reduced the number of planes it plans to order – 183 F-22s – when compared to the number of planes advocated by the Air Force – 381 F-22s. But disagreements seem to continue. Of the 183 plans which the Department of Defence plans to buy, the last 20 are included in the FY2009 budget at a price tag of \$140 million. However, Defence Under Secretary John Young has said the \$140 million is just a ceiling and that only \$50 million would be allocated for long-lead parts for four planes, handing over the decision on the future of the Raptors to the incoming administration.⁵¹ It should be added that if the

⁴⁷ Frederick W. Kagan and Michael E. O'Hanlon, 'Increasing the Size and Power of the U.S. Military', The Brookings Institution, 2007.

⁴⁸ Pat Towell, Stephen Daggett, and Amy Belasco, 'Defense: FY2009 Authorization and Appropriations', CRS Report for Congress, updated 29 September 2008.

⁴⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman and Hans Ulrich Kaeser, 'America's Self-Destroying Airpower', Working Draft, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 1 October 2008.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ John M. Doyle and David A. Fulghum, 'Pentagon Duels Congress To F-22 Standstill', *Aviation Week*, 19 November 2008.

administration chooses to shut down production completely, this could involve costs of as much as \$500 million.⁵²

Another programme which is being debated, is that of the DDG-1000 Zumwalt-class destroyer – said to be the most expensive surface combatant ever built. The FY2009 budget request includes \$2.6 billion for financing a third ship but the high costs are making some think again about building the currently planned total of seven ships. According to the Navy, each ship costs \$3.3 billion, but other estimates point to a price tag of possibly \$5 billion or more.⁵³

Perhaps savings could be realised by holding off the missile defence system. Obama has stated he supports a missile defence system in Europe but that he wants to ensure that the technology of the system works before it is actually deployed. He has also criticised President Bush for having “exaggerated missile defence capabilities and rushed deployments for political purposes” and for not consulting NATO allies sufficiently.⁵⁴

It is also plausible that cuts could be made in the nuclear arsenal. The President-elect has said that the US should strive towards a world with no nuclear weapons but also that he does not advocate for unilateral nuclear disarmament. As a senator, Obama worked with Republican Senator Richard Lugar on Cooperative Threat Reduction – efforts to control, secure and dismantle stockpiled weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union, and in 2005 they introduced the Cooperative Proliferation Detection and Interdiction Assistance and Conventional Threat Reduction Act.⁵⁵ According to one estimates, cutting the number of nuclear weapons to 1,000 and keeping national missile defence in the research and development mode could result in annual savings of \$10 billion to \$15 billion.⁵⁶ It should, however, be underlined that increased non-proliferation efforts could also involve increased spending.

⁵² Pat Towell, Stephen Daggett and Amy Belasco, ‘Defense: FY2009 Authorization and Appropriations’, CRS Report for Congress, updated 3 November 2008.

⁵³ Christopher P. Cavas, ‘DDG 1000 destroyer facing major cuts’, *Navy Times*, 16 July 2008.

⁵⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, ‘The Candidates on U.S. Policy toward Russia, 7 November 2008, <www.cfr.org>.

⁵⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, ‘The Candidates and Nuclear Nonproliferation’, 29 May 2008, and ‘Challenges Ahead For Cooperative Threat Reduction [Rush Transcript; Federal News Service, Inc.], 1 November 2005, <www.cfr.org>.

⁵⁶ Lawrence J. Korb and Max A. Bergmann, ‘Restructuring the Military’, *Issues in Science and Technology*, Fall 2008.

Furthermore, some of the analysts and experts interviewed for this report expressed scepticism that the Pentagon will have the necessary money to be able to realise the planned expansion of the US Army and Marine Corps.⁵⁷ There are also commentators who believe savings can be made from improving the management of the planning and budgeting process. According to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the 95 major weapons systems in progress as of 2007 were on average two years behind schedule and together, they were \$300 billion over budget.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Interviews conducted in Washington, DC. In an interview with *Reuters*, Stephen Biddle, Council on Foreign Relations, said the expansion plans could be difficult to maintain – David Brunnstrom and Ross Colvin, 'ANALYSIS – US, Europe defence spending faces long-term hit', *Reuters*, 7 October 2008. .

⁵⁸ Greg Bruno, 'Defense Spending During Economic Crisis - Backgrounder', Council on Foreign Relations, 18 November 2008.

3 US Military Forces

3.1 Stretched and Exhausted

3.1.1 Recruitment and Retention

With ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US military is becoming increasingly stretched and exhausted. While views are divided as to how well the military is holding up,⁵⁹ there is no doubt the armed forces are showing signs of stress. One indication that troops are increasingly strained is concerns of a looming crisis in the recruitment and retention of soldiers. This, in turn, has led some to question whether it will be possible to enlarge the military as planned, something which will be discussed further below.

Despite reported difficulties in attracting new personnel, however, all individual military services met or slightly exceeded their recruiting goals for FY2008.⁶⁰ In total, nearly 185,000 persons signed up for active duty while some 140,000 signed up for the reserves.⁶¹ Official data on retention rates was more difficult to gain access to, but the Pentagon stated that retention was strong and exceeded its goal for the active-duty Army and Navy. The Marine Corps, on the contrary, did not achieve its target for retaining first-time recruits and its retention rate fell to 95 percent. Specific retention figures for the Air Force were not released but rates reportedly dropped, partly because the service reduced in size at the beginning of the fiscal year.⁶² Retention rates among the reserve forces were said to have been “within acceptable limits”.⁶³

Recruitment rates may have received, and may continue to receive, a boost from the economic downturn. Not only does the military service offer an alternative when unemployment rates are high, but bonuses offered by the military to new recruits may help to attract soldiers. The Army and Marine Corps reportedly try

⁵⁹ For a comparison of views on the state of the military, see for example Michael O’Hanlon, ‘Military check-up time’, *The Washington Times*, 4 May 2008, and the response by Lawrence Korb in ‘Reagan and the draft’, *The Washington Times*, 16 May 2008.

⁶⁰ Fred W. Baker III, ‘All Services Meet Fiscal Year Recruiting Goals’, *American Forces Press Service*, 10 October 2008.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of Defense, ‘DoD Announces Recruiting and Retention Numbers for Fiscal 2008’, 10 October 2008.

⁶² Fred W. Baker III, ‘All Services Meet Fiscal Year Recruiting Goals’, *American Forces Press Service*, 10 October 2008.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

to convince troops to re-enlist with bonuses worth up to \$40,000.⁶⁴ Decreasing violence in Iraq could also play a part, as could the reduced Army tours of duty of 12 months from August 2008 after having been extended to 15 months in April the previous year.⁶⁵

While the services by and large have been successful at fulfilling their quantity goals, they have done so at the expense of their quality goals. This is especially the case with the Army, who together with the Marine Corps is bearing the brunt of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Army has, for example, lowered both its weight standards and increased the recruiting age. In 2006, the Army increased the maximum allowable age for enlistment twice, first from 35 to 40 and then from 40 to 42.⁶⁶ Increasing the average age of troops not only affects the way the forces look today but could also have an effect on the troops further down the line as it reduces the time of service before retirement.

In addition, the Army and Marine Corps have relaxed their recruiting standards by handing out moral waivers – special waivers for people with criminal records. In FY2008, the Army granted 372 waivers to recruits with felony convictions, which, though, was a reduction compared to the 511 in FY2007 but up from 249 in FY2006.⁶⁷ Some 20 percent of the recruits who joined the Army during FY2008 required a waiver for medical or conduct reasons. The Marines granted 350 waivers for felonies in 2007, up from 208 in 2006.⁶⁸ The crimes for which the Army and Marine Corps granted waivers included drug offences, theft, assault and terrorist threats, sex crimes and manslaughter. While the figures are still, arguably, relatively low, they indicate that the military is stretched thin.

Another recruitment indicator is the education level of recruits. In FY2008, the number of active-duty recruits enlisting for the Army who held high school diplomas rose to 83 percent from 79 percent, but was still short of the goal of 90 percent. All other active-duty and reserve services met or exceeded the 90 percent target, with the exception of the Army Reserves (89 percent).⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Daphne Benoit, 'Bad economy spells upturn for military recruiting: Pentagon officials', *AFP*, 14 October 2008.

⁶⁵ Gerry J. Gilmore, 'Bush Cites 'Sustained Progress' in Iraq, Cuts New Deployments to 12 Months', *American Forces Press Service*, 31 July 2008.

⁶⁶ Lawrence J. Korb, 'The State of America's Ground Forces', Testimony Before the House Committee on Armed Services, 16 April 2008.

⁶⁷ Elana Schor, 'US army increases use of moral waivers to meet demand for troops', *The Guardian*, 21 April 2008, and Fred W. Baker III, 'All Services Meet Fiscal Year Recruiting Goals', *American Forces Press Service*, 10 October 2008.

⁶⁸ *CNN*, 'Army, Marines give waivers to more felons', 21 April 2008.

⁶⁹ Fred W. Baker III, 'All Services Meet Fiscal Year Recruiting Goals', *American Forces Press Service*, 10 October 2008.

It is interesting to note that despite quality standards being lowered, the Army's basic trainee graduation rate reportedly rose to 94 percent in 2006 compared with 82 percent the previous year.⁷⁰

The Army is also finding it difficult to convince young Army officers not to leave after their initial commitment is fulfilled, creating a growing shortage of captains.⁷¹ One result is that the Army is promoting young officers to captain and major at notably higher rates than normal.⁷²

3.1.2 Conditions for Soldiers

For some recruits, the enlistment period has been shortened as a means to attract new soldiers.⁷³ On the other hand, the military has increasingly resorted to so called "stop-loss" orders, which prevent soldiers from leaving the military past the end of their enlistment periods. In June, 2008, some 11,000 Army troops were subjected to the stop-loss policy.⁷⁴ While the policy has been used to prevent soldiers from leaving directly before a combat tour or before the end of their deployment, critics argue that it is a "backdoor draft".

In addition, soldiers' "dwell time" has suffered – the time a soldier spends at home between deployments to rest, train and prepare for the next deployment. While the Army hopes that its planned expansion will allow for a 2:1 rotation ratio, whereby soldiers for example would get 24 months at home after a 12 months tour, arriving at such a goal is expected to take some time.⁷⁵ Now, the official ratio is instead 1:1. That is still an improvement in comparison to the 'surge' from January 2007 to mid-2008, when more than 22,000 additional US troops were sent to Iraq. Deployment tours were then lengthened to 15 months while dwell times were kept at some 12 months.⁷⁶ Moreover, there were reports

⁷⁰ Andrew F. Krepinevich, President of Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 'The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements', Testimony before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007.

⁷¹ Jim Dorschner, 'Under strain: US Army', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 25 September 2008 and Thom Shanker, 'Young Officers Leaving Army at a High Rate', *The New York Times*, 10 April 2006.

⁷² Michèle A. Flournoy and Alice E. Hunt, 'The State of the U.S. Ground Forces', Fact Sheet, Center for a New American Security, August 2008.

⁷³ Lawrence J. Korb, 'The State of America's Ground Forces', Testimony Before the House Committee on Armed Services, 16 April 2008.

⁷⁴ Russ Bynum, 'Mullen: 'Stop-loss' to continue', *The Associated Press*, 13 June 2008.

⁷⁵ William H. McMichael, 'Mullen: Better dwell time will not come soon', *Army Times*, 31 July 2007.

⁷⁶ Jim Dorschner, 'Under strain: US Army', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 25 September 2008.

of units being sent back to Iraq even earlier, one after having had spent some nine months at their home base following a 13-month deployment.⁷⁷

The high demands on the forces are also taking a toll on the soldiers. In 2007, some 115 US soldiers committed suicide – an all-time high since the Army started keeping records in 1980.⁷⁸ The number was up from 102 soldiers the previous year. And the suicide rate is expected to be even higher for 2008.⁷⁹ The Army found a significant relationship between suicide attempts and the soldiers' length of tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸⁰

A study by the RAND Corporation released in April 2008 showed that approximately one in five service members (18.5 percent) returning from Iraq or Afghanistan have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depression.⁸¹ In addition, a comparable number of soldiers (19.5 percent) said they probably had experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by blast exposure or other head injury. Still, only about half (53 percent) of the returning soldiers with symptoms of PTSD or major depression had sought mental health treatment. Only 43 percent of those reporting a probable TBI had been evaluated by a physician.

Even if figures are still relatively low, alcohol abuse is also seen to be increasingly prevalent among soldiers returning from combat in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸² The Pentagon found in a survey conducted in 2005 that for the first time in more than 20 years, approximately a quarter of soldiers surveyed viewed themselves as regular heavy drinkers, meaning having five or more drinks at least once a week. Another survey conducted in 2005 and 2006 showed that after three to six months after returning from war, 12 percent of active-duty soldiers and 15 percent of reservist said they had alcohol problems.⁸³

⁷⁷ Lisa Burgess and John Vandiver, 'Army sending soldiers back to Iraq, cutting 'dwell time'', *Stars and Stripes*, 10 May 2007.

⁷⁸ Gerry J. Gilmore, 'Army Deploys Prevention Programs to Combat Soldier Suicides', *American Forces Press Service*, 29 May 2008.

⁷⁹ Donna Miles, 'With Rising Suicide Rates, Army Urges Soldiers to Help One Another', *American Forces Press Services*, 4 September 2008.

⁸⁰ Demetri Sevastopulo, 'US army suicide cases at record 115', *Financial Times*, 30 May 2008.

⁸¹ Terri Tanielian and Lisa H. Jaycox (eds.), 'Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery', RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, US (2008).

⁸² Lizette Alvarez, 'After the Battle, Fighting the Bottle at Home', *The New York Times*, 8 July 2008.

⁸³ Ibid.

3.1.3 Reset

The strains on the military are also reflected in considerable costs for repairing and replacing equipment. The rough environment in Iraq and Afghanistan together with the high operational tempo means hardware is being worn out at four to nine times the normal rates.⁸⁴ The addition of heavy armour exacerbates the wear. Since 2006, the Army has reportedly received more than \$38 billion for “reset” – the effort to restore the military’s equipment availability and readiness to the level prior to the start of military operations.⁸⁵ That said, reset today often also involves upgrading equipment to a level where they are believed to be based.⁸⁶ The Government Accountability Office estimates that the cost to reset equipment damaged or lost during combat may total at least \$118 billion from fiscal years 2004-2013.⁸⁷ In addition, the Army estimates that it will cost at least \$10.6 billion to replace pre-positioned equipment which was removed from storage on ships to support military operations.⁸⁸

While the US military is proving resilient despite being under considerable stress due to ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, a degree of concern is warranted, especially as units are sent out on multiple tours. Some relief is in sight given the flagged withdrawal from Iraq. That said, President-elect Obama has made clear that a reduced US military presence in Iraq will be combined with increased efforts in Afghanistan.

3.2 Expansion of the Military

Partly in order to bring relief to the combat-weary armed forces, the US has decided to enlarge the size of its military. In January 2007, the administration announced plans to expand the Army by some 65,000 soldiers, increasing the number of soldiers in the active-duty Army to 547,000, and the Marine Corps by 27,000 to reach an end-strength of 202,000 Marines.⁸⁹ Nearly 10 months later,

⁸⁴ Michèle A. Flournoy and Alice E. Hunt, ‘The State of the U.S. Ground Forces’, Fact Sheet, Center for a New American Security, August 2008.

⁸⁵ Jim Dorschner, ‘Under strain: US Army’, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 25 September 2008.

⁸⁶ Steven M. Kosiak, ‘Military Readiness: Cost-Effectiveness of US Plans for Reset, Force Expansion and Weapons Modernization’, Testimony, United States House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, 14 February 2008.

⁸⁷ Janet A. St. Laurent, ‘Force Structure – Restructuring and Rebuilding the Army Will Cost Billions of Dollars for Equipment but the Total Cost Is Uncertain’, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 10 April 2008.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Jim Garamone, ‘Gates Calls for 92,000 More Soldiers, Marines’, *American Forces Press Services*, 11 January 2007.

Secretary of Defence Robert Gates approved an acceleration of the expansion, which means it should be completed by 2010 instead of 2012 as originally planned.⁹⁰

While the expansion is a way to relieve pressure on the Army and Marine Corps and, for example, allow soldiers longer dwell time at home between deployments, it also signals that the administration believes there will be a need for a larger military for some time. In turn, this, together with factors such as doctrinal changes as discussed further below, indicates a belief that forces will continue to be engaged in non-conventional stability operations, which require a more extensive and long-term troop presence on the ground compared to traditional warfighting.

Proponents of the expansion also mean it will reduce the dependency on the Army National Guard, allowing it to focus more on its homeland defence tasks, and also the dependency on private contractors to fulfil military functions.⁹¹ That said, there those who question whether the way the forces are enlarged is sufficiently adapted to non-conventional warfighting.

The Marine Corps will grow from 2.5 to three balanced Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs). The planned Army expansion will build six new brigade combat teams (BCTs), increasing the Army's available pool to 76 BCTs (48 in the active and 28 in the reserve component).⁹² This is in line with the organisational reform which the Army initiated in 2004, moving from a structure based on large divisions, consisting of 10,000-15,000 soldiers each, to one based on smaller brigade-level modular BCTs, comprising 3,000-5,000 soldiers.⁹³ The smaller units are meant to be modular; that is, more flexible to be adapted to the different forms of combat and also more self-sufficient.

Steven Kosiak of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, however, means the Army's plans to assign the extra troops to BCTs rather than units specially formed to operate in irregular warfare and to build partner capacity is likely to translate into only a modest enhancement in the Army's capacity to

⁹⁰ *The New York Times*, 'Faster Army Expansion Plan Approved', 10 October 2007 and *The Associated Press*, 'Army Leaders Plan to Add 74,000 soldiers by 2010', 10 October 2007.

⁹¹ See for example Lawrence J. Korb and Max A. Bergmann, 'Restructuring the Military', *Issues in Science and Technology*, Fall 2008.

⁹² See for example Andrew Feickert, 'U.S. Army's Modular Redesign: Issues for Congress', CRS Report for Congress, updated 24 January 2007.

⁹³ Michael Moran, 'U.S. Army Force Restructuring, 'Modularity,' and Iraq', Council on Foreign Relations, updated 26 October 2007.

sustain stability operations.⁹⁴ In addition to focusing too much on conventional capabilities, Kosiak says the relatively small increase in the number of BCTs might only offer modest relief to the Army if these are used to expand the rotation base to, for example, allow for longer dwell time. Also Lawrence Korb recommends the Army to form specialised “peacekeeping” or “stabilisation and reconstruction” brigades.⁹⁵

Arguably, however, the uncertainty of future contingencies means it is sensible to ensure flexibility rather than specialisation of the forces. In addition, as noted above, the fact that the military is investing in human resources as opposed to large weapons programmes does seem to indicate a recognition that non-conventional warfighting is here to stay.

Another debate with regard to the expansion of the military is whether it is sufficient. Frederick Kagan and Michael O’Hanlon have, for example, suggested it may be prudent for the US to enlarge the size of the ground forces even more, proposing a possible increase of at least 100,000 active duty soldiers and Marines.⁹⁶ A more substantial expansion, they argue, is justified by what they expect to be a long-term presence in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as additional potential contingencies. Kagan has together with Thomas Donnelly argued for a total force of approximately 2.8 million, including an active Army of about 800,000 and a Marine Corps of about 200,000.⁹⁷

Simultaneously, some expert voice scepticism that the expansion can be achieved without sacrificing quality. As discussed above, given that strains on the military, they question whether the forces will be able to find that many new recruits in such a short period of time without reducing quality in terms of e.g. educational standards and criminal backgrounds.

The decision to expand the military has by and large enjoyed bipartisan support. President-elect Barack Obama in April 2007 stated in a speech at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs that he strongly supported the expansion of US ground forces.⁹⁸ However, in light of the recent economic turmoil and a soaring budget

⁹⁴ Steven M. Kosiak, ‘Military Readiness: Cost-Effectiveness of US Plans for Reset, Force Expansion and Weapons Modernization’, Testimony, United States House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, 14 February 2008.

⁹⁵ Lawrence J. Korb, ‘The State of America’s Ground Forces’, Testimony Before the House Committee on Armed Services, 16 April 2008.

⁹⁶ Frederick W. Kagan and Michael E. O’Hanlon, ‘Increasing the Size and Power of the U.S. Military’, The Brookings Institution, 2007.

⁹⁷ Gordon Lubold, ‘Is US fighting force big enough?’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 October 2008.

⁹⁸ Remarks of Senator Barack Obama to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 23 April 2007, <www.thechicagocouncil.org>.

deficit, some experts are starting to question whether the expansion is economically viable.⁹⁹ Some wonder, for example, whether the Army will be able to afford both its FCS programme and the planned expansion. There are some initial signs that bipartisan support may be slipping. Congressman John Murtha (D) of Pennsylvania has, for example, argued that the cost of enlarging the forces is too large and could prevent the military from equipment acquisitions.¹⁰⁰

The Army is said to estimate that the price tag for its expansion will be about \$70 billion in increased funding through fiscal year 2013 followed by a significant amount in annual funding to sustain the larger forces.¹⁰¹ However, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) has said the Army's funding plan is not comprehensive and may even be somewhat understated as some costs are still evolving while others have been excluded from its estimates, including \$2.5 billion for health care and educational support.¹⁰² In addition, the acceleration of the expansion of the military is seen to potentially lead to increased costs. The congressional watchdog GAO has also criticised the Army for not having presented a transparent funding plan and says it is unclear how the Army developed the various cost estimates which form the basis for the total cost estimation of \$70.2 billion.

Arguably, the cost-benefit ratio of the military's expansion hinges to some degree on whether the forces will actually be employed. Should, for example, large parts of the US Army and Marine Corps soon be pulled out of Iraq without a parallel substantial increase in military presence elsewhere, e.g. Afghanistan, the US could find itself with troops which are no longer needed, at, as noted by Steven Kosiak, a cost of some \$100 billion over the next five years and \$15 billion a year thereafter.¹⁰³ On the other hand, the US would increase its freedom of action and preparedness in case of unforeseen new crises.

The strain placed on forces, potentially growing difficulties in recruiting and, consequently, enlarging the military, as well as a desire to spread the burden of war more evenly throughout society have caused some to call for a reinstatement

⁹⁹ A concern also expressed by some interviewees in Washington.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon Lubold, 'Is US fighting force big enough?', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 October 2008.

¹⁰¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, 'Force Structure – Need for Greater Transparency for the Army's Grow the Force Initiative Funding Plan', 18 January 2008.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Steven M. Kosiak, 'Military Readiness: Cost-Effectiveness of US Plans for Reset, Force Expansion and Weapons Modernization', Testimony, United States House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, 14 February 2008.

of the military draft.¹⁰⁴ The number of advocates, however, seems to be low and conscription is not expected to be reintroduced at any point in the near future. Those who are against the draft argue that the quality of the forces may be compromised and that there are severe difficulties in creating a fair system of conscription.¹⁰⁵ Some mean that the draft actually means forced military service and that voluntary service, on the contrary, remains a choice of each individual. Compensation for those that do choose to enlist can therefore be higher than would otherwise have been possible. On the other hand, there are those who argue that the administration, to be responsible, must reinstate the draft if it is to sustain a large troop presence in Iraq.¹⁰⁶

Max Boot and Michael E. O'Hanlon suggest that an alternative way of deflating pressure on the military could be to invite foreigners to join the US armed forces in return for a promise of American citizenship after a four-year tour of duty.¹⁰⁷ Such a strategy could, according to them, also enrich the forces with currently lacking cultural knowledge and languages. While an interesting proposal, this is not expected to happen in the foreseeable future.

Thomas Donnelly has warned against the risk that an attempt to relieve the demands and pressure on the military may lead the US to try to “fit the war to the size of the force rather than sizing the force to win the war”, which, in turn, would give the strategic initiative to the enemy.¹⁰⁸ Some commentators mean this is what we are today witnessing in Afghanistan, with repeated calls from among others the US for additional troop contributions. The other side of the coin could, arguably, be that US policies in the future become driven by the fact that the country has a larger Army and a larger Marine Corps – that a more powerful instrument also becomes more attractive to policymakers. One scenario could then be that the administration becomes more prone to use the military in its foreign policy.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion on possible pros and cons of a draft, see The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), ‘The All-Volunteer Military: Issues and Performance’, July 2007.

¹⁰⁵ See for example Frederick W. Kagan and Michael E. O’Hanlon, ‘Increasing the Size and Power of the U.S. Military’, Opportunity 08, The Brookings Institution, 28 February 2007.

¹⁰⁶ See for example Lawrence J. Korb and Max A. Bergmann, ‘Bush’s draft dodge’, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 May 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Max Boot and Michael O’Hanlon, ‘A Military Path to Citizenship’, *The Washington Post*, 23 October 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Donnelly, Thomas, Resident Fellow in Defense and National Security Studies, Statement before the Subcommittees on Readiness and Air and Land Forces, House Armed Services Committee, Hearing on House Resolution 834, 16 April 2008.

3.3 The Use of Contractors

One consequence of the manpower shortages has been an increased reliance on private contractors. Indeed, the war in Iraq represents something of a watershed for the United States with regard to the use of private contractors. While the US has employed contractors as far back as the Revolutionary War, the extent has since grown substantially, both in terms of numbers and tasks.

3.3.1 Increased Use and Scope

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) – Congress’s fiscal watchdog – estimated that as of early 2008 there were at least 190,000 contractor staff, including subcontractors, working for US-financed contracts in the Iraq theatre.¹⁰⁹ Of these, roughly 20 percent were US citizens and just under 40 percent were citizens of the country where they were working (mainly Iraq). CBO drew attention to the fact that the ratio of approximately one contractor employee for every member of the US armed forces in Iraq is at least 2.5 times higher than what has been the case in all other major US military operations, with the exception of operations in the Balkans in the 1990s, which were comparable.

These contractors perform a wide range of duties such as logistics support and construction as well as supplying petroleum products or food.¹¹⁰ But in addition to the contractor pool being historically large, operations in Iraq also stand out by the fact that more contractors are performing tasks which have traditionally been performed by military forces. This includes armed security services such as the protection of personnel, facilities or properties. Examples include escorting convoys and guarding reconstruction work sites and government buildings. There are also several private military companies that provide unarmed services such as security training and intelligence analysis.

Using private security contractors offers the government a way to fill troop shortages and to supplement lacking skills. As of June 2008, it was estimated that approximately 50 private security contractors were operating in Iraq, employing

¹⁰⁹ Congress of the United States Congressional Budget Office, ‘Contractors’ Support of U.S. Operations in Iraq’, August 2008.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

more than 30,000 employees.¹¹¹ These figures did not include Iraqi private security companies working for the Iraqi government or Iraqi private industry.

3.3.2 Legal Status

The increased reliance on private security companies has, however, raised a number of issues which, in turn, questions the US military's future reliance on private security companies. Foremost, critique has been levelled at lacking accountability and transparency.

First and foremost, the seemingly unclear legal status of private security companies causes accountability problems and concern.¹¹² Contracted security personnel seem to fall into a grey area as to whether they should be considered non-combatants or combatants, and if the latter – whether lawful or unlawful combatants. Contractors employed by the US government are potentially subject to numerous US laws and regulations such as the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act of 2000 (MEJA) and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction Act of the United States and the USA Patriot Act. However, some contractors might not fall within the statutory definitions. Furthermore, few contractors have actually been trialled, establishing few precedents and causing some to suggest that there is a reluctance on the part of the Department of Justice and the Judge Advocate General's Corps to actually put contractors on trial.¹¹³

The controversy of events, such as that in September 2007 when security guards working for the US security firm Blackwater shot and killed 17 Iraqi civilians at a crowded intersection in Baghdad, has brought the issue of control and accountability to the fore. An investigation into the Blackwater incident by the Iraq government concluded that the incident was unprovoked. Blackwater, however, claimed the guards had acted in self-defence.¹¹⁴ In 2008, Blackwater had reportedly secured a renewed contract from the US State Department and was

¹¹¹ Jennifer K. Elsea, Moshe Schwartz, Kennon H. Nakamura, 'Private Security Contractors in Iraq: Background, Legal Status, and Other Issues', Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 25 August 2008.

¹¹² For a comprehensive review of the legal status of private security companies contracted by the US, see Jennifer K. Elsea, Moshe Schwartz and Kennon H. Nakamura, 'Private Security Contractors in Iraq: Background, Legal Status, and Other Issues', Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 25 August 2008.

¹¹³ See for example Max Boot, 'Accept the Blackwater mercenaries', *Los Angeles Times*, 3 October 2007.

¹¹⁴ James Bone, 'Blackwater guards face prosecution over killing of 17 Iraqi civilians', *The Times*, 19 August 2008, and Del Quentin Wilber and Karen DeYoung, 'Justice Dept. Moves Toward Charges Against Contractors in Iraq Shooting', *Washington Post*, 17 August 2008.

back in business as usual in Iraq.¹¹⁵ While there were reports in August that the Justice Department would try to indict at least some of the guards, the failure to hold anyone accountable for the incident has left a bad taste for both US and Iraqi politicians and qualms about the increasing use of contractors.¹¹⁶

During discussions between the US and Iraq on a new Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which will define the legal basis for US troops to stay in Iraq after December 31, 2008, immunity for contractors has been one sticking point. According to media, the new agreement will give Iraq jurisdiction over personnel of private contractors employed by the US Department of Defence guilty of crimes or misdemeanours.¹¹⁷ Whether the new agreement will affect the willingness of private military companies to operate in Iraq remains to be seen. However, it can be added that the demand and, hence, potential revenue for these companies, remains considerable. Furthermore, the deal, reportedly, makes no reference to other security contractors, for example those working for the US State Department.¹¹⁸

3.3.3 Other Issues of Concern

Yet another point of concern with regard to the use of private military contractors is that their use, at a fundamental level, challenges the state's monopoly on the use of force. In essence, it questions the level of democratic control over the conduct of war.

Similarly, it can be argued that the democratic control over the conduct of war is undermined when the use of private military companies provides the government with a political weapon. As an example, casualties suffered among contractors are usually not included in official statistics. Thus, if casualties become politically sensitive, it offers the government a means of keeping official figures lower than otherwise possible.

However, even if private security companies are tasked with defensive missions, in conflict, they become targets in the same way as regular forces. One estimate puts the number of contractors killed in Iraq at almost 1,300 persons as of April

¹¹⁵ James Risen, 'Iraq Contractor in Shooting Case Makes Comeback', *The New York Times*, 10 May 2008.

¹¹⁶ Del Quentin Wilber and Karen DeYoung, 'Justice Dept. Moves Toward Charges Against Contractors in Iraq Shooting', *Washington Post*, 17 August 2008.

¹¹⁷ Matthew Lee, 'US contractors lose immunity in Iraq security deal', *Washington Post*, 20 November 2008, *AFP*, 'Immunity a sticking point in US-Iraq security pact: report', 1 September 2008, and *Aljazeera.net*, 'No Immunity for Iraq contractors', 17 June 2008.

¹¹⁸ Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Security agreement puts detainees at risk of torture', 27 November 2008.

2008 while approximately 9,600 were estimated to have been wounded.¹¹⁹ In comparison, according to the Washington Post some 4,196 US soldiers had been killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom as of December 18, 2008.¹²⁰ Further illustrating the harsh environment of contractors is data on the number of attacks against private supply convoys in Iraq, which reportedly increased from 5.4 percent in 2005, to 9.1 percent in 2006, and to 14.7 percent by May 2007.¹²¹

Closely related to the argument that democratic control over the conduct of war can be jeopardised with the use of private military contractors, some question the driving force behind these companies. The fact that there are people who actually earn a living and profit from war means it is not necessarily in their interest that the conflict in question ends. And the money involved is not by any means insignificant. From 2003 through 2007, CBO estimates that US agencies spent \$85 billion in contracts for work to be done mainly in the Iraq theatre, representing almost 20 percent of all funding for operations in Iraq.¹²² Total spending by the US government and other contractors for security provided by contractors in Iraq during the same period was estimated to have been between \$6 billion and \$10 billion.

The value of the private security market has literally surged with the war in Iraq. In early 2003, UK-based security company ArmorGroup allegedly estimated the global market for high-end protective security to be an annual USD900 million. Four years later, the same company changed that estimate to USD2.5 billion.¹²³

One problem linked to this market boom is lacking oversight and the challenge of corruption, which has led to billions of dollars of unsupported or questionable costs from contractors.¹²⁴ Stuart W. Bowen, Jr., special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction, has even called corruption a “second insurgency” in Iraq.¹²⁵ The issue of transparency is closely related to that of oversight. The contracts of private security companies are not managed by the military commander but a government contracting officer. Analyst Peter Singer means there are too few people monitoring contractor performance, with one financial auditor for every

¹¹⁹ Peter W. Singer, 'Outsourcing the Fight', *Forbes*, 5 June 2008.

¹²⁰ *Washington Post*, Faces of the Fallen, projects.washingtonpost.com/fallen/iraq.

¹²¹ Steve Fainaru, 'Iraq Contractors Face Growing Parallel War', *Washington Post*, 16 June 2007.

¹²² Congress of the United States Congressional Budget Office, 'Contractors' Support of U.S. Operations in Iraq', August 2008.

¹²³ Nathan Hodge, 'High risk, high return? Private security contractors', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 July 2008.

¹²⁴ See for example Peter W. Singer, 'Outsourcing the Fight', *Forbes*, 5 June 2008.

¹²⁵ Stuart W. Bowen, Jr., statement before the United States House Committee on International Relations, Review of Iraq Reconstruction, 8 June 2006.

\$2.03 billion in Pentagon contracts, compared to 1998 when there was one financial auditor for every \$642 million in contracts.¹²⁶

Some suggest private military companies are cheaper than regular armed forces, e.g. as they do not have to be maintained during peacetime as opposed to regular military units. CBO has concluded that the costs of a private security contract are largely equal to those of a US military unit performing similar tasks.¹²⁷ On the other hand, there are those that criticise private companies for employing former members of the armed forces which are trained thanks to tax-payers' money. During the first years of operations in Iraq, private security firms were for example said to have grown in size by hiring former special operations forces.¹²⁸ This was partly possible as private security companies tend to pay higher salaries than the military does for doing the same job. This, in turn, is said to at times create tension in the field between regular soldiers and private contractors. Similarly, critics of the extensive use of private security companies mean that it causes soldiers to lose basic skills and that some, instead, merely turn into contract managers.

The relative independence of contractors has led to worries about outsourcing services and products critical to the military operation. Analyst Peter Singer draws attention to developments in Iraq in 2004, when an increasing number of attacks on convoys led a large number of companies to withdraw or suspend operations in the area in question, causing fuel and ammunitions stocks to shrink.¹²⁹ Should the US continue to make extensive use of private military companies, Washington, arguably, needs to carefully assess which services and products are critical and simply too vulnerable to be outsourced. Singer, for example, suggests that roles such as military interrogators, armed troops and movement of critical supplies (all now outsourced) should remain in the hands of the military.

Similarly, concern has also been voiced that the use of private companies is restrictive as their contracts are usually inflexible, a quality which is especially inappropriate in time of war.

Operationally, critique has been directed toward lacking control over and coordination between and with these companies. This, in turn, is said to potentially increase the risk of accidents and incidents such as friendly fire. While US forces

¹²⁶ Peter W. Singer, 'Outsourcing the Fight', *Forbes*, 5 June 2008.

¹²⁷ Congress of the United States Congressional Budget Office, 'Contractors' Support of U.S. Operations in Iraq', August 2008.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Peter W. Singer, 'Outsourcing the Fight', *Forbes*, 5 June 2008.

for example operate under strict rules of engagement (ROE) it is unclear if contracted companies even have standing ROE.¹³⁰

3.3.4 Efforts to Improve Accountability and Practices

There is a general realisation that private security companies are here to stay. At the same time, however, it is recognised that there is a need to enhance the sector and its standards. Efforts to improve accountability and practices are taking place on all levels – e.g. through political initiatives and within the industry through umbrella organisations such as the British Association of Private Security Companies (BAPSC), the International Peace Operations Association (IPOA) and the Private Security Company Association of Iraq (PSCAI).¹³¹

Initiatives are also underway on the international and civil society levels. One endeavour is the so called Swiss initiative on private military and security companies, which was launched in 2006 by Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).¹³² On 15 September 2008, it resulted in 17 states, including the United States, and the ICRC endorsing the Montreaux Document, which sets out rules and good practices relating to private military and security companies operating in armed conflict. Industry representatives as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had been involved in the work. As a resource to support the work conducted under the Swiss initiative, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) with the support of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, set up PrivateSecurityRegulation.net – a website devoted to international and domestic regulations governing private military and security companies.¹³³

Many of the experts interviewed in the US for this report did not believe the use of private military companies was promised a certain future and meant that there was a large dose of scepticism on the Hill in the aftermath of bad press and incidents such as the Blackwater shooting. Seemingly confirming this view, the Senate in September 2008 passed a version of the Fiscal Year 2009 defence

¹³⁰ Andrew F. Krepinevich, President of Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 'The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements', Testimony before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007.

¹³¹ For an overarching study on various stakeholders' positions on global security industry standards, see James Cockayne, Emily Speers Mears, Iveta Cherneva, Alison Gurin, Sheila Oviedo and Dylan Yaeger, 'Beyond Market Forces: A Feasibility Study for a Standards Implementation and Enforcement Framework for the Global Security Industry', International Peace Institute, 8 September 2008 (draft for public consultation).

¹³² See <www.eda.admin.ch/psc>.

¹³³ See <www.privatesecurityregulation.net>.

spending bill which would restrict private security contractors from performing tasks which were inherently governmental functions in a combat zone.¹³⁴

That said, private contractors supporting the military are not a temporary phenomenon. While it should be carefully examined which roles are critical to a military operation, to ensure that such vulnerable tasks are left for the regular forces to perform, some jobs are neither vital to the mission nor do they require the skills of a soldier. It is, however, crucial that regulations with regard to private contractors are standardised and agreed on in order to ensure control and good practices.

3.4 Fighting the Wars of the Future

3.4.1 Conventional vs. Non-Conventional Capabilities

As the Pentagon sets out to prioritise its efforts and spending, it needs to determine what the future US military should look like and what threats it is likely to face. Experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have formed a military more equipped to handle non-conventional wars. However, the debate on whether the military is more likely to perform conventional or nonconventional tasks as it moves forward is expected to continue under the incoming administration. The search for the ultimate balance between different capabilities also reflects a long-term contest between the different services for resources.

Doctrine

One indicator of which direction the Army is taking is its guiding doctrine. The doctrine and its underlying documents codify how the Army views its role and mission, which, in turn, determines its organisation, training and equipment.

The Army's and Marine Corps' renewed focus on full-spectrum operations (as opposed to traditional military-on-military conflicts) came to the fore with the much publicised Counterinsurgency Field Manual – FM 3-24, which was released in December 2006. The manual was developed under the direct guidance of General David H. Petraeus in a relatively short period of time to fill something of a doctrinal vacuum with US forces facing a growing insurgency in Iraq.

¹³⁴ Nathan Hodge, 'US defence spending bill may restrict private contractors', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 18 September 2008.

The more detailed FM 3-24 on Counterinsurgency was followed by an upgraded version of the overarching capstone doctrine FM 3-0 – Operations – which was published in February 2008. FM 3-0 sets out overarching doctrinal guidance and direction for military operations. Importantly, the document reiterates the full spectrum approach in which offensive, defensive and stability or civil support tasks are combined to foster long-term peace and stability.

In October, 2008, the Army released FM 3-07 on Stability Operations. The manual emphasised the importance of a comprehensive and interagency approach to areas of conflict. Military means alone were seen to be insufficient and the soft power capabilities of the military were deemed critical in today's security environment. The document also underlined the weight of supporting institutions and tasks such as security sector reform, governance and economic development.

When the Counterinsurgency field manual was published in 2006, it was the first time in 20 years that the Army had put together a field manual which exclusively dealt with counterinsurgency operations. For the Marine Corps 25 years had passed. While this sheds some light on the significance of these manuals in redirecting the doctrinal approach of the Army and Marine Corps, the comprehensive approach is not new to the US military.

Comprehensive Approach

The civil-military approach is not new to the US military. In 1967, US President Lyndon Johnson created the Civil Operational and Revolutionary – later Rural – Development Support (CORDS) programme to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnam people.¹³⁵ CORDS integrated US civilian and military efforts in Vietnam under a single civil-military command structure. Integrated civilian and military teams were formed and worked closely with their Vietnamese counterparts at all levels of society – from provinces to the national level.

After the Vietnam War, however, the Army's interest in counterinsurgency operations gradually faded and it turned its focus to conventional wars and major arms programmes which to a large extent dominated the Cold War face-off. It has also been suggested that the Army was reluctant to adopt lessons learned in Vietnam given the association with having lost that war.¹³⁶ Consequently, it was an unprepared military which found itself engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. As put by US Army Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl – “It is not

¹³⁵ Department of the Army, Headquarters, 'FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency', December 2006.

¹³⁶ As noted by for example General John Keane in an interview with Jim Lehrer on *PBS Online NewsHour*, 'Generals' Revolt', 18 April 2006.

unfair to say that in 2003 most Army officers knew more about the US Civil War than they did about counterinsurgency.”¹³⁷

Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld’s belief in the superiority of military technology and quick ‘in-and-out’ operations further undermined efforts to prepare for counterinsurgency operations and lengthy US military presence on foreign ground. His successor, Secretary Robert Gates, has made clear that his priorities lie in a military transformation towards a multifunctional approach where it is necessary to win the peace as well as the war, drawing on instruments of soft power as well as hard power.

Secretary of Defence Gates

But there are still obstacles in the way of the military transformation envisioned by Secretary of Defence Gates. One major obstacle is what it will mean to the balance of power between the various military services. It is widely recognised that increased focus on counterinsurgency operations will most likely translate into more resources for the Army and Marine Corps. The Air Force and Navy, on the contrary, know that a move away from classical conventional wars will most likely result in less influence and resources for them. Instead, while the Army emphasizes the future importance of full spectrum operations, the Air Force points to the danger of ascendant powers, while at the same time though improving its response against the threat of terrorism and insurgencies, and the Navy continues to raise a warning finger against China’s naval acquisitions.¹³⁸

Even if the underlying reasons have varied, Gates has provided a clear picture of his views on the role and undertakings of the military through some relatively dramatic personnel changes that he has managed to push through during his term as Secretary of Defence.

In March 2007, US Army Secretary Francis Harvey resigned following revelations that a main health-care facility, the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, had offered war veterans substandard care and dilapidated housing.¹³⁹ Later that same month, US Army Surgeon General Kevin Kiley was forced to retire due to the deteriorating services and facilities at Walter Reed.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ John Nagl, ‘The Evolution and Importance of Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency’, *smallwarsjournal.com*, 27 June 2007.

¹³⁸ Richard Weitz, ‘Can the U.S. Military Sustain Focus on ‘Stability Operations’?’, *World Politics Review*, 25 February 2008.

¹³⁹ David S. Cloud, ‘U.S. Army secretary resigns’, *International Herald Tribune*, 2 March 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Tony Capaccio and Ken Fireman, ‘Army Medical Chief Forced Out in Walter Reed Scandal’, *Bloomberg*, 12 March 2007.

In June 2007, Gates announced that he would not reappoint General Peter Pace to a second term as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, justifying the decision by saying it was to avoid difficult confirmation hearings in a Democratic-controlled Senate.¹⁴¹ At the same time, however, there are those who note that Gates did not fight very hard to keep Pace and that he was criticised for the way he fought the wars, e.g. not paying sufficient attention to the effects of prolonged conflict on the Army and Marine Corps.¹⁴² On the contrary, Secretary Gates praised his choice of successor, the chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Mullen, for expressing concern for the needs and requirements of all services, not only the Navy.¹⁴³

In March 2008, Navy Admiral William J. “Fox” Fallon resigned as commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM). While Gates emphasised that it was Fallon’s own decision and one which he regretted, it happened after public disagreements between Fallon and the administration. Divergent views on Iran was one point of disagreement but Fallon and Army General David H. Petraeus, at the time in command of the Multinational Force in Iraq, were also in disagreement on the US strategy in Iraq, most notably the Surge.¹⁴⁴ Gates’s decision to nominate General Petraeus as new commander of CENTCOM can be viewed as an indirect approval of Petraeus counterinsurgency focus and experience in Iraq.

But the stir-up does not end there. In June 2008, US Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynne and Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley were asked to resign following a report on the Air Force’s problems handling nuclear weapons. However, these dismissals also followed a series of disagreements between the Air Force leadership and Secretary Gates. Divergent views between the Air Force and the Office of the Secretary of Defence included the number of F-22 fighter planes the Air Force should buy, problems with getting more surveillance drones to the conflict areas and general budget issues.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, some interpret the dismissals as a critique against the Air Force for having had a too strong focus on potential future conflicts against e.g. China or Russia, and not ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Thom Shanker, ‘Chairman of Joint Chiefs Will Not Be Reappointed’, *The New York Times*, 8 June 2007.

¹⁴² Ibid. and *IJSS Strategic Comment*, ‘All change at the Pentagon’, Vol. 14 No. 6, August 2008.

¹⁴³ DoD News Briefing with Secretary Robert Gates from the Pentagon, News Transcript, 8 June 2007, <www.defenselink.mil>.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas E. Ricks, ‘Top U.S. Officer in Mideast Resigns’, *Washington Post*, 12 March 2008.

¹⁴⁵ *Air Force Times*, ‘Moseley and Wynne forced out’, 9 June 2008.

¹⁴⁶ *IJSS Strategic Comment*, ‘All change at the Pentagon’, Vol. 14 No. 6, August 2008.

These changes can be seen as an attempt to return accountability to the Pentagon's leadership but they also reflect Gates's ambition to steer the military towards greater focus on current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan rather than plan and acquire weapons for future, potential wars.¹⁴⁷ Gates has also articulated his thoughts, stating that there is too much of a tendency within the defence establishment to what he coined "Next-War-it is" – support for what might be required in a future conflict.¹⁴⁸

But there are other obstacles standing in the way for the military taking a new direction towards a more multifunctional approach. One which at times is mentioned is the differences between operational officers and the institutional Army – those working at headquarters and the bureaucratic structures – as well as the promotional system.¹⁴⁹ Organisations tend to reinforce existing ideas and norms. Consequently, the military leadership, with training and experience from the Cold War, has tended to promote officers cast in the same mould as themselves. However, there are signs that this is changing.

At the end of 2007, General David H. Petraeus was named to head the promotion board which selects the Army's new one-star generals. Among the some 40 colonels who in July 2008 were announced to have been selected for promotion many were reportedly supporters of Petraeus counterinsurgency doctrine and had multiple tours of duty leading soldiers in battle.¹⁵⁰ As put by journalist Fred Kaplan; any officers looking at the people sitting on the promotion board would get a very clear message: "The Cold War is over, and so, finally, is the Cold War Army".¹⁵¹

Finding a Balance

Some of the issues in the debate on the future direction of the military have been deliberated on above under this report's sections on the expansion of the military and the defence budget. While there seems to be agreement that the military will need to fight non-conventional wars both today and tomorrow, the debate continues on whether the military is doing enough to change its thinking away from the Cold War era. However, there are also those who mean the Pentagon is moving too far towards non-conventional thinking and resources and thus

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Donnelly, 'A Transformer in Disguise', *The Weekly Standard*, 23 June 2008, and *IISS Strategic Comment*, 'All change at the Pentagon', Vol. 14 No. 6, August 2008.

¹⁴⁸ Lolita C. Baldor, 'Gates warns DoD of 'next-war-it is'', *The Associated Press*, 15 May 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Weitz, 'Can the U.S. Military Sustain Focus on 'Stability Operations''? *World Politics Review*, 25 February 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Fred Kaplan, 'Annual General Meeting', *Slate*, August 4 2008 and Ann Scott Tyson, 'Army's Next Crop of Generals Forged in Counterinsurgency', *Washington Post*, 15 May 2008.

¹⁵¹ Fred Kaplan, 'Annual General Meeting', *Slate*, 4 August 2008.

dangerously neglecting conventional war-fighting skills.¹⁵² Army Lt. Col. Gian P. Gentile is one of those who warn against the risk of preparing only for the last war: “Proponents of counterinsurgency routinely damn the army for wanting to fight the Second World War all over again. This, even as they’re busy fighting Vietnam all over again in Iraq.”¹⁵³ An internal Pentagon report by three Army colonels has raised similar concerns, questioning whether the focus on counterinsurgency is making the Army unbalanced and stating that the Field Artillery Branch had been subject to inattention and, thus, deteriorated.¹⁵⁴

Critics of the strong focus on low-intensity warfare mean it will leave the US military unprepared to fight a war against potential adversaries such as China and Russia. Furthermore, they argue, while it is relatively easy for units to change to counterinsurgency tactics and procedures, making the reverse change – building up conventional war-fighting capabilities – is more time-consuming and possibly more expensive. One reason for this is the time lag between the ordering and actual delivery of larger weapon programmes.

Ultimately, the US military will have to find a balance between retaining the skills and resources to fight conventional wars while at the same time developing the capabilities to conduct counterinsurgency and stability operations. Whether it has found the right balance will, arguably, always be debated. This also reflects divergent views as to future risks and threats. But there is little doubt that the US will be engaged in Iraq and/or Afghanistan for years to come, calling on skills and resources appropriate for counterinsurgency as well as stability operations. Moreover, there are additional non-conventional foes such as various terrorist groupings. It has also been suggested that given that the US is overwhelmingly dominant in conventional warfare, enemies are more likely to opt for irregular warfare.¹⁵⁵

At the same time, there is agreement that the US military cannot completely turn its back on the risk of conventional conflicts, e.g. with emerging peer competitors such as China and Russia. In addition, as noted by two analysts interviewed, also non-state actors are increasingly developing conventional means. Indeed, Frank Hoffman writes that future contingencies will likely consist of hybrid

¹⁵² See for example Gian P. Gentile, ‘A (Slightly) Better War: A Narrative and Its Defects’, *World Affairs*, Summer 2008.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Guy Raz, ‘Army Focus on Counterinsurgency Debated Within’, *NPR*, 6 May 2008.

¹⁵⁵ Andrew F. Krepinevich, President of Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, ‘The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements’, Testimony before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007.

threats which are adapted to target US vulnerabilities and involving all forms of war and tactics, possibly by both states and non-state actors.¹⁵⁶

Simultaneously, there are those who believe trying to do everything will, ultimately, result in the US military not being really good at anything but instead lead to mediocrity. Spreading resources too thinly across a spectrum of operational skills and instruments will then only mean that US soldiers and weapons will not be able to conduct any mission convincingly. But perhaps sub-optimality is a cost worth paying for securing full-spectrum capabilities. Inherently, by doing a bit of everything, the military will not be as good as it could be at one specific task. However, as a whole, it will be better equipped to handle various situations. One interviewed analyst meant that this, however, was problematic in itself – institutions do not tolerate mediocrity or accept the reality of limited resources. Lowering standards, for example, would not necessarily make it easier for individual officers to accept that they were producing worse results in exercises than their predecessors, he added.

3.4.2 Interagency Coordination

Recognising that today's and tomorrow's conflicts are increasingly complex, possibly involving a number of different actors and interconnected issues, many believe there is an urgent need for the US government to improve coordination and cooperation between civil and military agencies. Modern conflicts will rarely, if ever, only call for a military response but may include tasks such as assisting refugee flows, strengthening infrastructure and governance structures, and providing economic development. This will require contributions from all parts of government. Furthermore, in order to avoid stovepipe solutions and tunnel-vision, which may lead to inaction, unnecessary duplications or simply suboptimal results, it is critical that various government agencies interact and cooperate seamlessly.¹⁵⁷

Today, however, there are a number of obstacles standing in the way to smooth interagency coordination. One such barrier, which is often mentioned in related discussions, is the lopsided distribution of resources between military and civil agencies. In its budget for Fiscal Year 2009, the White House has requested \$515 billion for the Department of Defence compared with \$38 billion to spend on the

¹⁵⁶ Frank G. Hoffman, 'Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars', Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007.

¹⁵⁷ For a review of the US security system and suggestions of reforms, e.g. with regards to increased interagency collaboration, see for example the Project on National Security Reform (PNSR), 'Project on National Security Reform – Preliminary Findings', July 2008. PNSR is a bipartisan initiative which has brought together a large number of experts in the field to study related issues.

State Department.¹⁵⁸ This asymmetry is also reflected in personnel resources. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, today employs less than a third of the staff it had during the Cold War.¹⁵⁹ In addition, it can be noted that in 1999 the civilian agencies the US Information Agency (USIA) and the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) were abolished and integrated into the Department of State. While some may suggest that the resource balance is the result of the Pentagon being power-hungry, analyst Hans Binnendijk has suggested that it is the result of an inability of civilian agencies to adjust to new missions.¹⁶⁰

One consequence of this discrepancy is that civil agencies often are unprepared and unable to dedicate sufficient resources to emerging crises. This, in turn, has led the military and contractors to shoulder an increasing number of tasks normally assigned to civilian agencies. That the military is becoming more involved in foreign assistance activities, such as humanitarian and state-building operations, is both hailed and criticised.

On the positive side, the military is often praised for being able to deploy and act quickly. In addition, its extensive resources and ability to provide security, intelligence and aerial reconnaissance as well as its command, control and communications capabilities are considered a considerable strength.¹⁶¹

On a more negative note, the military's growing involvement in humanitarian assistance activities is also criticised. One critique is that it risks endangering the safety of non-governmental organisations carrying out assistance work. Even if there are many who applaud the military's ability to provide security in conflict areas, there are also many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are critical to the military's involvement in assistance work as it blurs the line between civilian and military actors and, consequently, jeopardises the security of NGOs as they inadvertently risk becoming linked to military operations.

Another critique is that the use of military forces may send the wrong signal to other countries, communicating that US foreign policy is becoming increasingly militarised. This, in turn, may complicate US foreign policy efforts in other areas. This kind of suspicion has, for example, been heard among African leaders with regard to the setting up of the new US African Command.

¹⁵⁸ Office of Management and Budget, 'Mid-Session Review, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2009', 28 July 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Hans Binnendijk, 'At War But Not War-Ready', *Washington Post*, 3 November 2007.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Nina M. Serafino (Coordinator) et al, 'The Department of Defense Role in Foreign Assistance: Background, Major Issues, and Options for Congress', CRS Report for Congress, 25 August 2008.

In addition, many mean military forces are simply not trained nor have the skills required to perform these tasks and that their lack of expertise to support economic and political development can therefore be detrimental to efforts. Yet another argument against military involvement in areas such as economic development is that military forces tend to emphasise quick fixes as opposed to other actors in the field which may have a more long-term perspective on development assistance and structural reforms.

Given the increasingly complex nature of conflicts, it is crucial that non-military instruments are strengthened to adequately meet the threats of tomorrow. Indeed, a robust multi-functional approach which is deployed timely may even remove the need to use military means all together. Thus, it seems desirable that the administration invests more money and personnel in its civilian agencies.

There does seem to be a growing recognition in Washington that civilian agencies need to be strengthened. According to media reports, President George Bush requested 1,076 more diplomatic personnel in the budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2009, a step in the State Department's aim to double the number of diplomats in the next decade.¹⁶² The Foreign Service currently comprises some 6,500 Foreign Service officers.¹⁶³ Similarly, the military would prefer that capable civilian actors perform these jobs.¹⁶⁴ Secretary of Defence Robert Gates has called for increased resources to the State Department – \$100 billion to its budget – and other civilian agencies and in order to improve interagency collaboration.¹⁶⁵

But even if civilian agencies grow in size and resources, it is critical that civilian and military agencies can cooperate. Coordination must also improve between governmental and non-governmental actors as well as with international organisations and allies. In December 2005, President George Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44) which called on government agencies to improve the coordination of stability operations.¹⁶⁶

While the Pentagon is said to have reviewed its planning capabilities to fully take into account pre- and postconflict operations, interagency planning is said to

¹⁶² Matthew Lee, 'Bush Aims To Hire More Diplomats', *The Associated Press*, 4 February 2008.

¹⁶³ *The Christian Science Monitor*, 'More 'troops' for U.S. diplomacy', 8 February 2008.

¹⁶⁴ Hans Binnendijk, 'At War But Not War-Ready', *Washington Post*, 3 November 2007.

¹⁶⁵ Lawrence J. Korb and Max A. Bergmann, 'Restructuring the Military', *Issues in Science and Technology*, Fall 2008, and Jim Garamone, 'Gates Lauds Moves to Bolster Civilian Agencies', *American Forces Press Services*, 15 May 2008.

¹⁶⁶ United States Government Accountability Office, 'Military Operations – Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning', Report to the Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, May 2007.

remain limited.¹⁶⁷ Reportedly, military commanders have only had limited inter-agency participation when developing military plans due to lacking guidance from the Pentagon on how to involve other agencies, difficulties in sharing planning information with other organisations, as well as a lack of understanding between the Department of Defence and other organisations as they do not share planning processes, capabilities and cultures.¹⁶⁸

There are various proposals of how one could improve interagency coordination. Operationally, new thinking has been introduced into the new structures of the so called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq, which include both civil and military competences and participating staff from various government agencies. Despite their problems, this could be a step in the right direction.

One proposal to increase the 'jointness' is the creation of a unified national security budget.¹⁶⁹ One single national security budget, incorporating related spending within various agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Pentagon, could, it is argued, promote a more balanced national security structure.

Another initiative which is being discussed is the possible setting up of an interagency cadre of national security specialists.¹⁷⁰ These would go through a career development programme possibly including education, training and exchange tours in various agencies, to encourage deeper understanding of the different mandates, capabilities and cultures. It should, be added though that the administration in 2007 initiated the National Security Professional Development (NSPD) programme, with the objective of building a cadre of national security experts. This interagency career development programme, however, is still inchoate and its visibility on the Hill has, allegedly, been very limited.¹⁷¹

Yet others have proposed that a new coordinator post should be established in order to improve coordination, e.g. at the White House level or by setting up a new agency.¹⁷² In 2004, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization was set up in the State Department with the mission to coordinate

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Lawrence J. Korb and Max A. Bergmann, 'Restructuring the Military', *Issues in Science and Technology*, Fall 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Catherine Dale, 'Building an Interagency Cadre of National Security Professionals: Proposals, Recent Experience, and Issues for Congress', CRS Report for Congress, 8 July 2008.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Catherine Dale, Nina Serafino and Pat Towell, 'Organizing the U.S. Government for National Security: Overview of the Interagency Reform Debates', CRS Report for Congress, 18 April 2008.

government civilian capacity to prevent and prepare for post-conflict situations. While viewed a step in the right direction, some mean it has not been given sufficient funding.¹⁷³

It has also been suggested that Congress should pass legislation similar to the Goldwater Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which centralised and unified the different military services' lines of command, but one which streamlines interagency coordination.¹⁷⁴

3.5 Supporting Indigenous Forces

An increasingly prevalent and popular security concept in Washington is that of supporting and working with indigenous forces in conflict-ridden countries. Pentagon itself highlighted the US military's increasing focus on building partner capabilities in its 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report.¹⁷⁵ Defence Secretary Robert M. Gates has called on Congress to give the Pentagon permanent authority to train and equip foreign forces, something which previously was controlled by the State Department, and to increase the annual budget for the programme by 250 percent to \$750 million.¹⁷⁶

Training and equipping indigenous military and police forces means local stakeholder are involved in the building and strengthening of national structures which are required for the promotion of long-term peace and stability. It also provides US forces with an exit strategy. As noted by Andrew Krepinevich, given that a foreign troop presence may not be welcome by the local population, by permitting the US to quickly reduce its force footprint it is also in keeping with the key objective in counterinsurgencies – to win the support of the population.¹⁷⁷

The concept has gained traction with what is broadly viewed as having been a successful strategy of supporting local security organisations in Iraq. In 2006, the so called 'Sons of Iraq' programme started in the western Anbar province when Sunni tribal leaders turned against al-Qaeda in Iraq and aligned themselves with

¹⁷³ Lawrence J. Korb and Max A. Bergmann, 'Restructuring the Military', *Issues in Science and Technology*, Fall 2008.

¹⁷⁴ Robert E. Hunter (principal author), Edward Gnehm and George Joulwan, 'Integrating Instruments of Power and Influence', RAND, 2008.

¹⁷⁵ US Department of Defense, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report', 6 February 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Thom Shanker, 'Pentagon Seeks Authority to Train and Equip Foreign Militaries', *The New York Times*, 16 April 2008.

¹⁷⁷ Andrew F. Krepinevich, President of Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 'The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements', Testimony before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007.

US and coalition forces. Today, there are reportedly over 98,000 Sons of Iraq.¹⁷⁸ Of these, approximately 80 percent are Sunni while 19 percent are Shiite.¹⁷⁹ Violence has dropped markedly in Iraq since the creation of these local forces with some 440 Iraqis killed in September 2008, down from more than 3,000 every month in 2006.¹⁸⁰ A ceasefire by radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and the US troop “surge” in Iraq in 2007 are also believed to have contributed to the increased stability.

But while the US-sponsored Sons of Iraq are praised for having improved the security situation, there are considerable concerns as one looks to the future. Above all, both observers and involved parties are worried about the integration of the Sons of Iraq into society.

The Sons of Iraq programme has from the start been viewed as temporary with the aim of integrating its members into the rest of society. As a first step, the Shia-led government of Iraq has started to take control over the mainly Sunni Muslim movement. The transfer kick-started in October 2008 as some 54,000 Sons of Iraq in the Baghdad area came under government command. But while the Iraqi government aims to find the members jobs in the army, police or elsewhere in the public sector, the process has reportedly been moving slowly with the government dragging its feet.¹⁸¹ As of April 2008, only 8,200 Sons of Iraq had been integrated into the regular Iraqi Security Forces while some 13,000 had been hired for other government jobs.¹⁸²

In addition to providing some training, the US has paid the Sons of Iraq a monthly salary of approximately \$300. Both US officers and members of the Sons of Iraq are now said to be worried that the Iraqi government will stop the payment of these salaries. Needless to say, guaranteeing a continued income for these security forces is key in order to prevent a large-scale return to violence. In addition, while the Iraqi government has promised not to arrest any Sons of Iraq without a warrant issued before the beginning of 2008, there is anxiety among the members, many of whom are former insurgents.

¹⁷⁸ US Department of Defense, ‘Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq’, Report to Congress, In accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2008, September 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Greg Bruno, ‘Backgrounder: The Role of the ‘Sons of Iraq’ in Improving Security’, Council on Foreign Relations, 25 April 2008.

¹⁸⁰ Scott Peterson, ‘An uncertain future for the Sons of Iraq’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 October 2008.

¹⁸¹ Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O’Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack, ‘How to Leave a Stable Iraq’, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2008.

¹⁸² Greg Bruno, ‘Backgrounder: The Role of the ‘Sons of Iraq’ in Improving Security’, Council on Foreign Relations, 25 April 2008.

The Iraqi government is said to regard the Sons of Iraq with a considerable portion of suspicion and uneasiness. The government worries that the Sons of Iraq will, ultimately, return to arms and challenge the government's authority. Yet another challenge for the Sons of Iraq programme is infiltration by insurgent groups, something which one tries to prevent by a registration and vetting process.

While one of the interviewed experts suggested that the fact that these groups are able to defend themselves may actually contribute to stability,¹⁸³ what seems to be the most worrying prospect is that US and coalition forces have created a 'monster'. Even if there is conflicting information on whether the US has armed these groups,¹⁸⁴ the training of and financial support to these forces may result in disaster should the integration process fail.

Given the decentralised nature of the Sons of Iraq system with over 200 groups under contract it is even more critical that these separate groups are carefully dealt with to ensure that trust is built. Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack have suggested that the US military will likely come to play an increasing role in policing the ceasefire until Sunni groups fully trust Iraq's security forces.¹⁸⁵ Analyst Steven Simon means the bottom-up strategy has actually worsened sectarianism by fostering an impression that the US has decided to support and strengthen the Sunnis to challenge Shiite supremacy.¹⁸⁶ When these groups realise that Washington does not aim to restore Sunni dominance, they will return to arms, he believes.

Bolstered by the success in Iraq and increasingly disappointed with the government of President Hamid Karzai, the US is now considering exporting a similar concept to Afghanistan.¹⁸⁷ According to media, also Pakistan's government is increasingly looking to engage tribes in the fight against the Taliban.¹⁸⁸

The US is said to encourage tribal leaders in Afghanistan and their volunteer fighters, called *arbakai*, to rise up against the Taliban. However, as in Iraq, such policy is problematic and carries risks. For one thing, the tribal structure in

¹⁸³ A notion which did not necessarily represent his personal views.

¹⁸⁴ Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack in 'How to Leave a Stable Iraq', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2008, e.g. say the groups have received no weapons from the US while Steven Simon in 'The Price of the Surge', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, says at least one unit leader has said he receives weapons and logistical support from US units.

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack, 'How to Leave a Stable Iraq', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2008.

¹⁸⁶ Steven Simon, 'The Price of the Surge', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008.

¹⁸⁷ Mark Sappenfield, 'To fight Taliban, US eyes Afghan tribes', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 October 2008.

¹⁸⁸ *The Associated Press*, 'Pakistani tribesmen rise up against militants', 13 October 2008.

Afghanistan is a complex web of tribal and ethnic groups, some rival, which need to be negotiated with care. A failure could ignite a new civil war. In addition, it has been suggested that the system would only function in the eastern Afghanistan, where tribal structures are strong, as opposed to the South.¹⁸⁹

Across the border, Pakistan, with the support of the US, is said to look to tribal fighters, called *lashkars*, in their fight against the Taliban, al-Qaeda and other extremist groups.¹⁹⁰ Pakistani support includes supplying the lashkars, totalling as many as 14,000 men according to Pakistani military estimates, with small arms.

The growing interest in Washington to work through local and existing structures can be beneficial to efforts to build peace and stability, especially in a country where the government appears to be increasingly distant from its people. However, it also involves more careful implementation so that governance structures are not undermined and so that local power balances are not altered. Arming and training local militia groups without properly incorporating them into security structures is not the answer.

3.6 AFRICOM – A Prototype for Military Commands?

In February 2007, President George Bush announced the creation of an African Command (AFRICOM) to coordinate the US military's activities and operations on the African continent. When AFRICOM became operational, on October 1, 2008, it added to the five already existing geographical commands: the European (EUCOM), Pacific (PACOM), North (NORTHCOM), Southern (SOUTHCOM), and Central (CENTCOM) Commands.

The new geographical combatant command was created in order to consolidate the Pentagon's responsibility for Africa which till then had been divided among three commands – EUCOM, PACOM and CENTCOM. That division had resulted in coordination challenges, for example with regard to organising policy and activities linked to security in Darfur. While Sudan was under the command of CENTCOM, neighbouring Chad and the Central African Republic were under

¹⁸⁹ Jon Boone, 'US general warns on Afghan defence plan', *Financial Times*, 2 January 2008, Mark Sappenfield, 'To fight Taliban, US eyes Afghan tribes', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 October 2008, and Tom Coghlan, 'Can tribes take on the Taleban?', *BBC News*, 26 December 2007.

¹⁹⁰ Karen DeYoung, 'Pakistan Will Give arms to Tribal Militias', *Washington Post*, 23 October 2008, and *The Associated Press*, 'Pakistani tribesmen rise up against militants', 13 October 2008.

EUCOM.¹⁹¹ In addition, AFRICOM could relieve the workload on CENTCOM and EUCOM, which had both become increasingly strained given the large ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ultimately, the creation of AFRICOM also reflected a recognition on the part of the US government of the strategic importance of Africa. In 2004, a group of African experts authorised by the Congress to propose policy, pointed to five factors which have changed Africa's significance to US foreign policy: oil, global trade, armed conflicts, terror and HIV/AIDS.¹⁹² Trade between Africa and the US has tripled since 1990, mainly on the back of increasing US oil imports – Africa now supplies the US with approximately as much oil as the Middle East.¹⁹³ Africa has also assumed a place on Washington's map for its War on Terror. In addition to the risk of possible terror attacks in Africa, similar to those in 1998 against the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, there is concern that countries with weak governance structures can provide a safe haven and fertile breeding ground for terrorists.

But the setting up of AFRICOM has been far from frictionless. From the start, the new command has been met with suspicion and caution from various stakeholders. While praised for being a move toward a more coherent US security policy with regard to Africa, the question marks have been many.

Suspicion has been pronounced among African countries who wonder whether AFRICOM is just a form of US neo-colonialism to control African oil resources. There is also concern that it is merely a disguised counter-response to China's increasing influence on the continent. In addition, the Pentagon's initiative has led to worries among other government agencies, African countries, and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) that AFRICOM will act to militarise US policies and activities in Africa. Many are afraid that AFRICOM will come with the price of an increased US military footprint in Africa and that US engagement will revolve around Washington's War on Terror. In the same line of thinking, African critics fear AFRICOM will only make it easier for the US to intervene militarily in African countries, in violation of their sovereignty.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Lauren Ploch, 'Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa', CRS Report for Congress, updated 22 August 2008.

¹⁹² Walter H. Kansteiner III (Chairman) and J. Stephen Morrison (Executive Secretary), 'Rising U.S. Stakes in Africa – Seven Proposals to Strengthen U.S.-Africa Policy', A Report of the Africa Policy Advisory Panel, CSIS, May 2004.

¹⁹³ Lauren Ploch, 'Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa', CRS Report for Congress, updated 22 August 2008.

¹⁹⁴ Isaac Kfir, 'The Challenge That Is USAFRICOM', *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 49, 2nd Quarter 2008.

One consequence of the widespread scepticism has been that AFRICOM has failed to find any African country willing to host its new headquarters.¹⁹⁵ Instead, it will be based in Stuttgart, Germany, for the foreseeable future. One senior defence official was quoted by media as saying there was a possibility it could be moved to the East Coast of the US.¹⁹⁶ The Department of Defence has previously stated that it was important for AFRICOM to be based in Africa in order to improve its local understanding and communication.¹⁹⁷

Yet other areas in which AFRICOM has had to scale back its ambitions are with regard to its structure as well as its roles and responsibilities. AFRICOM has been called a combatant command “plus”, referring to the goal of having an all-encompassing approach to African security, incorporating soft power as well as military instruments in its mandate.¹⁹⁸ This approach has, however, met a lukewarm reception from the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) who worry that the Pentagon may overestimate its capabilities and diplomatic role in Africa or conduct activities which are outside of its core mandate.¹⁹⁹ AFRICOM’s focus on conflict prevention has also lead to concern within civilian agencies that the command will overstep its mandate and take on development and diplomatic work which they are normally in charge of. Also non-governmental organisations fear that the lines between civilian and military instruments and policies will be blurred and that this, in turn, will put aid workers at risk as the population and combatants will not be able to differentiate between them and military personnel.

As discussed above under the section on Interagency Coordination, an additional factor which contributes to the perception that AFRICOM could lead to a militarisation of US policies in Africa is the large amount of resources which the Pentagon controls compared to civilian agencies. A report by NGO Refugees International has drawn attention to the civil-military imbalance in US global engagement.²⁰⁰ While foreign assistance accounts for less than one percent of the federal budget, defence spending bites a chunk of 20 percent. Similarly, the military’s 1.5 million uniformed active duty personnel and over 10,100 civilian personnel dwarf the human resources of the Department of State which include

¹⁹⁵ According to media, only Liberia has offered to host AFRICOM.

¹⁹⁶ Gordon Lubold, ‘Pentagon scales back AFRICOM ambitions’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 May 2008.

¹⁹⁷ EUCOM, also based in Stuttgart, is the only other US regional combatant command with a headquarters outside the US.

¹⁹⁸ Lauren Ploch, ‘Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa’, CRS Report for Congress, updated 22 August 2008.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Mark Malan, ‘U.S. Civil-Military Imbalance For Global Engagement’, Refugees International, July 2008.

some 6,500 employees. In addition, Refugees International said development activities are increasingly controlled by military institutions whose policies are driven by the War on Terror, noting that the percentage of Official Development Assistance managed by the Pentagon inflated from 3.5 percent to nearly 22 percent between 1998 and 2005. Simultaneously, the part controlled by USAID declined from 65 percent to 40 percent.²⁰¹

With regard to US foreign assistance, James K. Bishop, speaking on behalf of an umbrella organisation for American NGOs, states:

“In countries with fragile political structures where USAID mission may have been closed what message are we transmitting about our priorities if the largest aid program, aside perhaps from relief of refugees and IDPs, is to be equipment and training for the local military?”²⁰²

This kind of critique has led the Pentagon to trim its ambitions also with regard to AFRICOM's staff. The goal for AFRICOM was to have an innovative inter-agency structure in which other government agencies than the Department of Defence would be integrated to create a whole-government approach. While the Pentagon initially proposed that as many as 25 percent of the headquarters' staff would be filled by non-DoD agencies, this goal has been trimmed to some four percent (52 interagency of the total 1,356 positions).²⁰³ However, even these positions have reportedly been hard to fill.²⁰⁴ The recruiting problems have also been explained by what is said to be a lacking number of professionals in the field, with some pointing to reductions of the Department of State and USAID.²⁰⁵

In terms of possible operational issues, there have also been question marks raised as to the future size of the budget of AFRICOM and with regard to some legal considerations of its operations.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² James K. Bishop, InterAction, Testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (HOCR), 23 July 2008.

²⁰³ John Pendleton, 'Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command', Testimony Before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, 15 July 2008.

²⁰⁴ Karen DeYoung, 'U.S. Africa Command Trims Its Aspirations', *Washington Post*, 1 June 2008.

²⁰⁵ Mark Malan, Refugees International, 'AFRICOM: Joined-Up Geographic Command or Federal Business Opportunity?', Testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, 23 July 2008.

²⁰⁶ See for example Jeffrey S. Palmer, 'Legal Impediments to USAFRICOM Operationalization', *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 51, 4th quarter 2008.

All in all, AFRICOM got off to a bad start after having been announced as an ambitious project. Some commentators mean a number of the hurdles could have been avoided by consulting civilian agencies and African governments early on and that the failure to do so has meant that the Department of Defence has largely been reactive throughout the process of establishing AFRICOM.²⁰⁷ Simultaneously, the challenge of integrating different parts of three geographical commands as well as introducing large-scale changes should not be underestimated. It will, however, take time. Thus, in the short term, there seem to be few expectations that AFRICOM will be at the front of any revolutionary change. Regardless, one could arguably say that the innovation started with SOUTHCOM, which includes a range of operations which are not combat-related.²⁰⁸ Over the next few years it will, however, become clearer to what extent, more than possibly increasing the focus on Africa, US policies will change as a result of the new command. The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) has said that the difficulties in staffing AFRICOM, establish the military's role in policy, and establish a presence in Africa illustrate deeper cultural and structural issues within the US government.²⁰⁹ It concluded that while the new command will likely help the Pentagon to focus its military efforts on Africa, it is still uncertain whether an integrated approach is feasible.

²⁰⁷ See for example Kathleen H. Hicks, 'AFRICOM: Vision and Prospects', Statement before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 23 July 2008.

²⁰⁸ Lauren Ploch, 'Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa', CRS Report for Congress, updated 22 August 2008, and Thom Shanker, 'Command for Africa Is Established by Pentagon', *The New York Times*, October 5 2008.

²⁰⁹ John Pendleton, 'Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command', Testimony Before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives, 15 July 2008.

4 Concluding Remarks

While there are, naturally, an endless number of factors which could potentially influence the future direction of the US military, this study tried to highlight some of the major issues which are currently being debated in Washington.

Though the US military has come under considerable strain from years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is still the world's most powerful military and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. That said, in today's increasingly complex and interdependent world, with new threats and new actors, military might is not all. Instead, as emphasised by President-elect Barack Obama, multilateral cooperation and multifaceted solutions and responses will be required, including the use of soft power instruments such as diplomacy and economic assistance.

Multifaceted responses will require all parts of government and society to be prepared to contribute. This will make it even more important for different actors, including the military, to define their roles and tasks. At the same time, flexibility must be maintained, allowing for ad hoc solutions. Ensuring seamless coordination and communication between involved parties is a key ingredient when trying to achieve this. Easier said than done, such interaction will require time, patience and overcoming fundamental hurdles such as cultural divides. However, gradual steps are being taken in the right direction.

Flexibility is also central when considering the military's core missions. Ultimately, the future depends on a series of unpredictable decisions and events. The armed forces of tomorrow should, thus, not be designed to fight today's or yesterday's wars but must be prepared for the unexpected. Consequently, the military should be able to meet both conventional and non-conventional threats, securing capabilities for major combat as well as counterinsurgency, stability and humanitarian operations.

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Center for American Progress

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Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)

National Defense University (NDU)

Center for Technology and National Security Policy

Institute for National Strategic Studies

RAND Corporation

Swedish Embassy

New York, June 2008

Council on Foreign Relations

International Peace Institute (IPI)

The Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations

The United Nations, The Department of Political Affairs