



# Getting it Right in Uncertain Times

The Defence Priorities of the United States, the United Kingdom and France

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## Sammanfattning

I denna studie analyseras hur beslutsfattare och säkerhetspolitiska experter ser på den framtida försvarspolitiska inriktningen i USA, Storbritannien och Frankrike. Vilka prioriteringar kommer dessa länder att göra i ljuset av minskande försvarsbudgetar, en alltmer osäker omvärld och tillbakadragandet av militära styrkor från Afghanistan? Kombinationen av krympande resurser och en vidgad hotbild gör att prioriteringar blir allt viktigare. Dessutom kan begränsade resurser leda till ett ökat samarbete mellan allierade för att uppnå synergier eller en slags arbetsfördelning när det gäller olika nischförmågor eller geografiska prioriteringar. En central fråga är huruvida dessa tre länder är eniga eller skiljer sig åt i synen på framtida försvarspolitiska prioriteringar, vilket har betydelse för framtida försvarssamarbeten. I studien behandlas ländernas inrikespolitiska förutsättningar, deras upplevda hotbilder och geografiska intressen samt de doktriner och förmågor som länderna prioriterar för att kunna möta morgondagens utmaningar.

Nyckelord: USA, Storbritannien, Frankrike, försvarspolitik, beslutsfattare, försvarsbudget, geografiska prioriteringar, cybersäkerhet, upprorsbekämpning, specialförband, kapacitetsbyggnad, drönare, försvarssamarbeten.

## Summary

This study analyses the thinking among policymakers and security policy experts in the United States, the United Kingdom and France with regard to the future focus of defence policies and programmes. What are the new priorities likely to be in these countries, given tight defence budgets, uncertain threats and the removal of Afghanistan as the main focus of military efforts? The combination of limited resources and the breadth of potential threats means that prioritising becomes all the more central. Similarly, the restricted purse strings could call for cooperation between allies to achieve synergies, as well as a certain division of labour in terms of niche capabilities or geographical focus. The study considers whether the three countries agree or diverge on future defence needs, revealing possible causes of friction in collaborative efforts. The analysis examines the countries' domestic policy setting, their perceived interests and threats in terms of geographical focus, and their chosen doctrinal and operational approaches to meet tomorrow's uncertainties.

Keywords: US, UK, France, defence policy, policymakers, defence budget, geographical priorities, cyber security, light footprint, counterinsurgency, special operations forces, capacity building, UAVs, defence collaborations.

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

This report is a product of the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) research programme: Atlantic Security – European Crisis Management. The programme supports the Swedish Ministry of Defence by providing applied research related to current issues. Areas studied include the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the development of NATO and US foreign and security policy.

The report examines the defence priorities of the US and Europe at a time when international troops are withdrawing from Afghanistan and many countries face severe budgetary constraints. It looks specifically at the US, the UK and France and highlights the domestic factors influencing these countries' perceptions of their role in the world as well as the geographical and operational focus of these countries' defence efforts.

The analysis has benefitted substantially from the input of leading security and defence experts and analysts in Washington, London and Paris. The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the interviewees listed in full on pp. 79-81. Their knowledge and expertise were invaluable to the study. The authors would also like to extend a special thank you to Dr Gustav Lindström of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy who reviewed report and whose constructive comments much improved the text. It should be emphasised, however, that the views expressed in the report are solely those of the authors. Thank you also to Bengt-Göran Bergstrand of FOI who kindly provided us with the graphs presented in Annex 1, illustrating the military spending of the three countries.

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# 1 Introduction

After more than 11 years in Afghanistan, international troops are now gradually pulling out. The plan is to leave behind only a limited military presence after 2014. For the United States (US), Afghanistan, with the sole exception of Vietnam, has been the longest war in the country's history. While concerns abound over the future development and stability of Afghanistan, there is also a lingering question over what the next focus will be for international forces. What will become the defence priorities of the US and Europe?

Both Europe and the US are slimming down their defence budgets amid a general economic downturn. At the same time, the world is not necessarily becoming safer. Military capabilities will have to be tailored to uncertain threats. A combination of limited resources and the breadth of potential threats means that prioritising becomes all the more central. Similarly, the restricted purse strings could call for cooperation between allies to achieve synergies, as well as a certain division of labour in terms of niche capabilities or geographical focus. If so, it is key that such allies share a similar view of such collaboration. A common understanding of threats and defence needs is a prerequisite for defence cooperation between European countries, and between European countries and the US.

This study analyses the thinking in the US and Europe with regard to the future focus of defence policies and programmes. The report highlights some of the key issues which are now under debate, and which seem to occupy the minds of security policy analysts as well as policymakers. The analysis considers whether the US and Europe are in agreement on future defence needs or whether they diverge, exposing possible frictions in collaborative efforts.

In order to limit the focus of the report, we have chosen to look at the US, the United Kingdom (UK) and France. The course set by these countries will inevitably be of consequence to the rest of Europe – and indeed the world. The UK and France spend the most on defence in Europe, while the US still far outpaces the rest of the world in terms of defence spending. Moreover, the expeditionary nature of these countries' military policies and structures means that their decisions will have international implications, possibly also with regard to future military interventions and operations. In addition, these three countries hold permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council – automatically giving them a level of influence in international matters.

## 1.1 Purpose

The study considers the crossroads at which the international community stands as it pulls its troops out of Afghanistan. What next? Where and on what will the

US and Europe now focus their defence efforts? Which priorities are likely to be identified in the capitals, given tight defence budgets, uncertain threats and the removal of Afghanistan as the main focus of military efforts? The report sets out to highlight and analyse key issues in the current international security policy debate.

The study was commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. The aim is to analyse and provide input into the ongoing defence policy debate taking place in Washington and European capitals. The decisions made there will have consequences for Sweden. Sweden is an active member of the European Union (EU) and of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, and has contributed to numerous international operations. It is also one of the countries which are now scaling down its military presence in Afghanistan, having been there militarily since the beginning of 2002.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 Method and Sources

The subject matter of this report is inherently limitless. We have therefore restricted the analysis to those issues which we judge to be especially pressing in the current defence policy debate in the US and Europe. Similarly, for the reasons noted above, in Europe the study focuses on the defence policies of the UK and France. These countries were chosen because they boast the largest defence budgets in Europe. In addition, both the UK and France share an expeditionary approach in their defence policies, which means that their decisions are likely to have implications for future military interventions and operations. That these countries hold permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council also gives them a level of influence in international politics.

The issues addressed in the report were identified through a thorough literature review, including of policy documents, analyses and media coverage, as well as interviews with policymakers and analysts. The authors met with experts in London, Paris and Washington, DC, during the spring of 2013. For a comprehensive list of the interviews conducted see pp. 79-81

The report obviously cannot cover everything. In order to limit its scope, we have not delved into all the issues in equal depth. We have also left a number of important issues on the table, such as arms proliferation, nuclear and conventional deterrence, terrorism, climate change, health security and technological developments in areas such as space, to name only a few. Moreover, additional factors such as institutional structures and interest groups

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<sup>1</sup> For information on Sweden's military presence in Afghanistan see Swedish Armed Forces, 'Afghanistan – ISAF', <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/Forces-abroad/Afghanistan/>. For its aid to Afghanistan see Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 'Afghanistan', <http://www.sida.se/English/Countries-and-regions/Asia/Afghanistan>.

could have been discussed at greater length when analysing the domestic setting in the three countries.

The analysis builds on the national defence priorities regularly set out by the three countries. However, it is notable that the countries that are the focus of this study have their own timelines for reviewing and presenting their policy priorities in the defence field. This makes comparisons problematic, as the policy documents are influenced by a rapidly changing security environment. The current US National Security Strategy and Quadrennial Defence Review were issued in 2010 and will be rewritten in 2014. However, in view of the presidential elections, President Barack Obama presented a new strategic guidance for defence in January 2012. In the UK, the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition published the first ever British National Security Strategy and an accompanying Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in 2010. The government plans to renew the SDSR after the next general election in 2015. In April 2013 President Hollande finalised France's fourth White Paper on Defence and National Security since 1972. Although France has no fixed interval for issuing White Papers, there is a trend for them to become more frequent. The previous White Paper was issued by former President Sarkozy in 2008.

### 1.3 Structure of the Report

The Prussian general, Carl von Clausewitz, lends the text some guidance in terms of structure. One of the world's best known military strategists, Clausewitz's work is still studied today – and he coined some of today's established terms in military thinking. While he has also been the subject of critiques, mainly related to the declining role of the state since his time of writing, he arguably still offers some insight into the nature of war.<sup>2</sup> We have chosen three of his concepts to set the tone for the report's chapters. First, Clausewitz's dictum that war is merely the continuation of politics by other means introduces the chapter that addresses the policy setting in the US, the UK and France which may be of consequence for their future defence policies. Second, Clausewitz's concept of the centre of gravity, signifying the main strength of an enemy, leads us into a chapter on the threats these states are preparing to meet and where the enemies of the future are perceived as being. Third, Clausewitz's use of the terms friction and fog, by which he describes the unpredictability of war, leads on to a chapter that examines how the countries seek to meet tomorrow's uncertain threats.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the debate see, e.g., C. M. Fleming, 'New or Old Wars? Debating a Clausewitzian Future', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2009, 213-241.



## 2 A Continuation of Politics: The Domestic Backdrop

*[W]ar is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.<sup>3</sup>*

Ultimately, the use of military force is a means to an end – and the end is a political objective. As Clausewitz put it: “What remains peculiar to war is simply the peculiar nature of its means”.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in order to discuss what possible forms the military forces of the US, the UK and France might take and the features they might possess moving forward, it is crucial to first determine the drivers shaping the defence policies of those same countries. Political forces, such as the beliefs and outlooks of policymakers and the general population, and budgetary restrictions, are discussed below.

### 2.1 Policymakers at the Helm

There are various levels on which it is possible to study relations between states and the determinants of how they act. One aspect is to consider the role of decision makers, individually or in groups, and the structural settings in which they operate.<sup>5</sup> While there are many additional influencing domestic factors, including the role of various institutions and interest groups, this section explores the beliefs and policies of leaders in the US, the UK and France, and speculates about the extent to which their voices are heard – or not – in the setting out of the three countries’ foreign policies.

It is noteworthy that the French President, François Hollande, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the US President, Barack Obama, have all been called pragmatists.<sup>6</sup> While recognising that it may be harder to predict the decisions of a pragmatist than an ideologist, we examine whether it is nonetheless possible to discern some underlying features which might indicate their influence on defence policies.

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<sup>3</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Everyman’s Library, 1993, Book One, Chapter One, Paragraph 24, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> This being the specific focus of foreign policy analysis (FPA).

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. F. Fressoz, ‘François Hollande: les convictions d’un pragmatique’, *Le Monde*, 8 May 2012; J. Glover, ‘David Cameron profile: Calm, confident and a pragmatist. But where would he lead Britain?’, *The Guardian*, 25 April 2010; and M. Indyk, K. Lieberthal and M. E. O’Hanlon, ‘Scoring Obama’s Foreign Policy’, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2012.

### 2.1.1 Priorities of the US President

The making of foreign policy under President Barack Obama has been described as highly centralised. Ultimately, foreign policy is largely seen as being formed by Obama himself.<sup>7</sup> One case in point is his selection of close aides. His National Security Adviser, Tom Donilon, for example is said to be highly skilled as a coordinator, with a sensitive feeling for political dynamics. While encouraging extensive deliberations with all the principal actors on the National Security Council, Obama has largely remained his own national security strategist.<sup>8</sup> Another indicator of Obama's centralised governing style is the selection and authorisation process for the killing of terrorists – labelled by *The New York Times* as a secret “kill list”. According to the newspaper, Obama has ensured that he has the final say on who should be targeted.<sup>9</sup> One interviewee for this report also highlighted Obama's resistance to engagement by the US in Syria, despite the fact that his closest advisers are pushing for it.<sup>10</sup>

This example also puts the spotlight on the president's reluctance to use force as an instrument of foreign policy. Not only is the domestic economic situation acting as a deterrent against being dragged into yet another costly military operation, but there is also a sense of failure, or at least of having had limited success, in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama's choice of national security team for his second term reinforces his policy of caution and scepticism with regard to military interventions, based on an understanding that the ability of the US to form the world is limited.

Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry are both veterans of the Vietnam War, an experience which is said to have left a big imprint on them both.<sup>11</sup> Neither Hagel nor Kerry want to see another Vietnam, and Hagel even broke with the Republican Party over US involvement in Iraq. In addition, underlining that he does not see the military as the solution to everything, Hagel has questioned the size of the Pentagon's budget. Before his appointment as Defence Secretary, Hagel told *The Financial Times* in September 2011: “The Defence Department I think in many ways has been bloated. So I think the Pentagon needs to be pared down. I don't think that our military has

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<sup>7</sup> See e.g. D. Milne, ‘Pragmatism or what? The future of US foreign policy’, *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 5, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal and M. E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> J. Becker and S. Shane, ‘Secret “Kill List” Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will’, *New York Times*, 29 May 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with analyst in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. D. Rothkopf, ‘The Disengagers’, *Foreign Policy*, 7 January 2013.

really looked at themselves strategically, critically in a long, long time”.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, Obama has made it clear that he is not averse to the use of force if needed. Asked in an interview what had surprised him the most about the president, Donilon answered without hesitation: “He’s a president who is quite comfortable with the use of force on behalf of the United States”.<sup>13</sup> Analysts and commentators, however, are struggling to define exactly when Obama would be ready to resort to the use of force. At the time of writing it also remains unclear whether the appointment in June 2013 of Susan Rice as his new national security adviser will move the White House towards a more activist approach. Known as an outspoken voice in favour of humanitarian intervention and for having pushed for the military operation in Libya, she is, on the other hand, not said to be arguing for a more aggressive stance on the civil war in Syria.<sup>14</sup> Rather than being subject to a precise doctrine, US policy under Obama seems to be made on a case-by-case basis. More broadly, his foreign policy line involves a light footprint approach and multilateralism, including international cooperation and burden-sharing. The lack of a specific doctrine, however, is thought to reflect Obama’s unwillingness to construct things as absolute truths, or to see ultimately ideological solutions to all problems. He is a pragmatist and his national security campaign team is said to have advised “pragmatism over ideology” in a memo in 2008.<sup>15</sup>

The journalist and author Bob Woodward has suggested that the best definition of Obama’s doctrine on war can probably be found in his Nobel Peace Prize speech:<sup>16</sup>

...the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace. And yet this truth must coexist with another – that no matter how justified, war promises human tragedy. The soldier’s courage and sacrifice is full of glory, expressing devotion to country, to cause, to comrades in arms. But war itself is never glorious, and we must never trumpet it as such. So part of our challenge is reconciling these two seemingly irreconcilable truths – that war is sometimes necessary, and

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Former Republican senator criticises party’, *FT Video*, 1 September 2012, <http://video.ft.com/v/1138459180001/Former-Republican-senator-criticises-party> (accessed 5 June 2013).

<sup>13</sup> J. Becker and S. Shane, ‘Secret “Kill List” Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will’, *New York Times*, 29 May 2012.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. M. Landler, ‘Obama’s Choices Reflect Change in Foreign Tone’, *New York Times*; and S. Wilson, ‘National security team shuffle may signal more activist stance at White House’, *Washington Post*, 5 June 2013.

<sup>15</sup> J. Becker and S. Shane, ‘Secret “Kill List” Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will’, *New York Times*, 29 May 2012.

<sup>16</sup> B. Woodward, ‘Why Obama picked Hagel’, *Washington Post*, 28 January 2013.

war at some level is an expression of human folly.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, President Obama's reluctance to get dragged into another lengthy and costly military engagement, his preference for international burden-sharing and his chosen national security team indicate that the US is unlikely to engage with international crises unless it is perceived as absolutely necessary. In the US, as in the UK and France, economic concerns are expected to preoccupy policymakers.

### 2.1.2 Priorities of the British Prime Minister

David Cameron has often been described as a pragmatic politician.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, he has himself said that he is not deeply ideological but rather a practical and pragmatic person. "I know where I want to get to, but I'm not ideologically attached to one particular method".<sup>19</sup> The Conservative Party formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats having failed to win a majority in the 2010 general election. It is the first coalition in the UK since World War II and has resulted in an even more pragmatic leadership style, as the need to compromise with the Liberal Democrats has meant that policies are formed on a case-by-case basis. Arguably, it has also translated into less direct power for Cameron as he has to juggle political priorities and make concessions to the different factions within the coalition.

In addition, Cameron is to some extent hampered by internal discord within his own party. The failure to win the election is said to have led to internal friction and resentment, mainly among more traditionalist Conservatives.<sup>20</sup> Some disgruntlement has also been heard about Cameron's management of the party, e.g. his failure to consult his Members of Parliament. In addition, because the Conservatives are now sharing power with the Liberal Democrats, Cameron has fewer government jobs to hand out to parliamentarians in his own party.

Prime Minister Cameron is struggling with a stagnating economy, something which is reflected in fading support for the Conservative government. Indeed, opinion polls indicated that the Labour Party would win the most votes if an election were held in May 2013. According to a YouGov opinion poll carried out

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<sup>17</sup> B. H. Obama, 'A Just and Lasting Peace', Nobel Lecture, *Nobelprize.org*, 10 December 2009, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/obama-lecture\\_en.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/obama-lecture_en.html) (accessed 5 June 2013).

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. J. Glover, 'David Cameron profile: Calm, confident and a pragmatist. But where would he lead Britain?', *The Guardian*, 25 April 2010 and D. Knowles, 'David Cameron's hollow pragmatism will win him the next election', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 December 2011.

<sup>19</sup> A. Rawnsley, 'I'm not a deeply ideological person. I'm a practical one', *The Observer*, 18 December 2005.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. E. Rigby and G. Parker, 'Mistrust and anger fester among Tories', *Financial Times*, 5 February 2013, and, 'Hero for a day', *The Economist*, 26 January 2013.

in mid-May 2013, 40% of voters would have voted Labour, while 30% would have opted for the Conservative Party. The Liberal Democrats received 10% support and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) 14%.<sup>21</sup>

This has made a significant mark on the government's policies. In January 2013, Cameron announced that if it wins the next election, the Conservative Party would hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU before the end of 2017.<sup>22</sup> The Prime Minister's call for a referendum was intended to appease Eurosceptics within his own party. It was also an attempt to dampen support for the Eurosceptic and right wing UKIP, which has surged in opinion polls mainly at the expense of the Prime Minister's party. British scepticism about the EU is widespread. An opinion poll carried out in January and February 2013 showed that only one-third of British voters would support continued EU membership while 50% would opt to leave the EU.<sup>23</sup> The EU debate continues to keep Cameron busy, and many Conservatives argue that he must take a tougher line on Europe. As an illustration of how Cameron's authority is being challenged from within his own party, Conservative MPs in May voted for a motion "regretting" that legislation preparing the way for an EU vote was not included in the Queen's Speech.<sup>24</sup>

Yet another example of how Cameron's policies and room for manoeuvre are affected by divisions in the Conservative party was his attempt to placate those of his party members who objected to the government's defence cuts while increasing development aid. The Prime Minister opened up a lively debate in February 2013 when he said that money in the aid budget should be able to be used for security, demobilisation and peacekeeping.<sup>25</sup> The money would not be earmarked for combat missions or equipment, but could possibly boost the Conflict Pool, which brings together the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to fund conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping activities.

Cameron's pragmatism, however, does not preclude the fact that he is also to some extent driven by moral convictions. Indeed, London's decision to intervene in Libya was to a large extent made top-down by the Prime Minister. While there

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<sup>21</sup> YouGov/The Sun Survey Results, fieldwork 14–15 May 2013, [http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus\\_uploads/document/j8ykzfmje4/YG-Archive-Pol-Sun-results-150513.pdf](http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/j8ykzfmje4/YG-Archive-Pol-Sun-results-150513.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2013).

<sup>22</sup> The British Prime Minister's Office, 'EU speech at Bloomberg', 23 January 2013, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/eu-speech-at-bloomberg/> (accessed 30 May 2013).

<sup>23</sup> J. Pickard, 'Only one in three wants UK to stay in EU', *Financial Times*, 17 February 2013.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. A. Sparrow, 'EU referendum: why did Tories publish a draft bill, and what happens next?', *The Guardian*, 16 May 2013.

<sup>25</sup> 'Aid money could go to defence – David Cameron', *BBC News*, 21 February 2013 and N. Watt, 'David Cameron gives green light for aid cash to go on military', *The Guardian*, 21 February 2013.



were several motives for the intervention, there was also a sense that the UK could not remain idle on the sidelines, and that there was a moral obligation to help protect the Libyan people.<sup>26</sup> More recent examples of Cameron's possible moral streak include London's and Paris's attempts to convince the rest of the EU to arm opposition forces in Syria.<sup>27</sup> His defence of the government's decision to increase the budget for international aid in times of austerity also involved ethical considerations.<sup>28</sup> Cameron argued that the UK has a "moral obligation" to help the world's poor, and that this could prevent countries from collapsing.<sup>29</sup>

Looking ahead, however, the Prime Minister is expected to be kept busy with largely domestic concerns. The feeble UK economy, political opposition and the debate on the EU are likely to keep his attention focused on developments at home rather than overseas.

### 2.1.3 Priorities of the French President

Rather than being described for his own qualities, President François Hollande is often compared with his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy. The stark contrasts offer a colourful and easy way of characterising them both, and, arguably, it was also the fact that Hollande is in so many ways the opposite of Sarkozy that brought him to power in 2012. Hollande for example portrayed himself as a normal candidate running for a normal presidency,<sup>30</sup> which led to a comparison between Mr Normal and President Bling-Bling, the latter being a reference to Sarkozy and his extravagant lifestyle. Hollande's choice of transport in Paris while campaigning at the beginning of 2012 – a scooter – accentuated his more discreet image. A member of his own party was said to have commented that Hollande looked "more like a pizza delivery man" than the next president.<sup>31</sup>

Hollande, who before becoming president had never held a ministerial post, is viewed as a moderate who strives for consensus. A recent biography depicts him as a man with a strong ambition for the presidency but who also shuns conflict.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For more on this see e.g. M. Lindström and K. Zetterlund, *Setting the Stage for the Military Intervention in Libya: Decisions Made and Their Implications for the EU and NATO*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), October 2012.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. I. Traynor, 'Syria crisis: France and Britain move a step closer to arming rebels', *The Guardian*, 14 March 2013.

<sup>28</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, 'Department for International Development Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2010-11 and Business Plan 2011-15', Fourteenth Report of Session 2010-12, 9 March 2012.

<sup>29</sup> T. Ross, 'Cameron: UK has a "moral obligation" to help world's poor', *Daily Telegraph*, 28 December 2012.

<sup>30</sup> G. Parussini, 'France Elevates a "Normal" Candidate in Hollande', *Wall Street Journal*, 6 May 2012.

<sup>31</sup> A. Chrisafis, 'François Hollande: from marshmallow man to Sarkozy's nemesis?', *The Guardian*, 18 April 2012.

<sup>32</sup> 'Profile: Francois Hollande', *BBC News*, 15 May 2012.

In fact, the former Socialist party leader's dislike of conflict and his reputation for being soft have earned him the nickname "the marshmallow" within his party, and "Flanby" – a French caramel custard pudding – more broadly.<sup>33</sup>

Hollande came to power in the spring of 2012 with a pledge that he would pull French troops out of Afghanistan by the end of the year – one year earlier than planned. He also said that Sarkozy's decision to return to NATO's military command would be re-evaluated, while expressing a desire to strengthen European defence. These statements led to some concern in allied countries that France would revert to a policy of Eurocentrism, taking a step back from cooperation with NATO and adopting a cautious approach to military operations. However, France's swift decision to intervene in Mali stifled such thoughts. Hollande, who had no previous foreign policy experience and a reputation for being hesitant and conflict-averse, showed boldness and decisiveness in launching *Opération Serval* on 11 January 2013.<sup>34</sup> Hollande also ordered a commando raid, which took place on the following day, to rescue a French intelligence agent who had been held hostage in Somalia since 2009. The rescue operation failed and the outcome in Mali remains uncertain, but both decisions underscored Hollande's ability to be decisive and act as a leader, as well as his willingness to take political risks. Indeed, Hollande has repeatedly stated that Mali may turn into a long and costly war for France, illustrating that he understands the risks involved.<sup>35</sup>

What does all this say about Hollande's likely decisions in foreign and military affairs? First, it is important to stress the considerable power the French president wields in shaping French foreign policy. He or she has the final say on all diplomatic issues and is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This centralised policymaking structure means that Hollande can put his own stamp on French foreign policy.

While Hollande enjoyed a brief boost in the opinion polls after the decision to intervene in Mali,<sup>36</sup> he quickly learned that foreign policy rarely wins votes in the long run. Arguably, this was something Sarkozy experienced in the wake of the Libya operation – an operation which was a political success but failed to secure him the presidency. Instead, a feeble economy and numerous political scandals have hit Hollande's approval ratings. Surveys indicate falling support for

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<sup>33</sup> A. Chrisafis, 'François Hollande: from marshmallow man to Sarkozy's nemesis?', *The Guardian*, 18 April 2012.

<sup>34</sup> 'François Hollande's new war trappings', *The Economist*, 19 January 2013; and J. Rothwell, 'From Mr Normal to chef-de-guerre: How President Hollande found his appetite for leadership', *The Independent*, 6 February 2013.

<sup>35</sup> J. Rothwell, 'From Mr Normal to chef-de-guerre: How President Hollande found his appetite for leadership', *The Independent*, 6 February 2013.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. B. Inzaurre, 'Mali war pulls France's Hollande out of polling slump', *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 January 2013.

Hollande, who is struggling with high levels of unemployment and a generally weak economy. An opinion poll in February 2013 made him the most unpopular French leader since 1981, and one carried out the following month revealed that a majority of the respondents would prefer Sarkozy as president.<sup>37</sup> Another poll in March showed that only 31 per cent of respondents were satisfied with Hollande's performance, eight points lower than the previous month and 18 points lower than at the start of his presidency.<sup>38</sup>

Looking forward, Hollande will probably need to prioritise the overriding issues at home, primarily the sluggish economy. Moreover, Hollande came to power on the back of promises to ensure economic equality and the regulation of the financial industry in France, as opposed to pursuing an adventurous foreign policy. On the other hand, the launch of the Mali operation showed that Hollande is not averse to the idea of using military means to achieve foreign policy objectives. Moreover, it taught Hollande – who had no previous foreign policy experience – that the military can be useful in advancing France's standing in the world.<sup>39</sup> One analyst interviewed for this report suggested that domestically the operation also gave more weight to the Defence Ministry.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.2 Economic Strains

The economic crisis and related reductions in defence spending will significantly affect future defence priorities in the US and Europe. A tighter budgetary situation will make prioritising all the more necessary. All the analysts interviewed for this report saw strained defence budgets as one of the main factors influencing future defence strategies in the US, the UK and France. It is interesting to note that while the US has for many years complained about insufficient defence spending by its allies in Europe, it now faces a situation in which it will have to make noticeable reductions to its own defence budget. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that the US spends more than 10 times the amount of the UK or France on defence (see Annex 1).

### 2.2.1 The US Defence Budget and its Military Consequences

The Budget Control Act of 2011 calls for cuts in US defence spending amounting to USD 487 billion over the next 10 years, which represents an 8–10 per cent cut in annual defence spending. In order to enforce further reductions in the total government deficit, it envisages additional across-the-

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<sup>37</sup> H. Fouquet, 'Hollande Snub Fuels Charm Offensive to Show He's No Sarkozy', *Bloomberg*, 12 March 2013.

<sup>38</sup> 'France's Hollande approval rating below Le Pen's: Poll', *Reuters*, 17 March 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with analyst in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

board cuts that will enter into force unless Congress agrees alternative solutions. In the field of defence, this translates into additional cuts of USD 500 billion over the next decade, representing an additional 8–10 per cent cut to yearly defence spending. Taking these two rounds of cuts into account, in February 2013 the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) assessed that US defence spending would decline from USD 660 billion in 2012 to USD 520 billion in 2021.<sup>41</sup> The subsequent failure to reach a compromise in Congress meant that the so-called sequester entered into force on 1 March 2013, requiring the Department of Defense (DOD) to reduce spending by 8 per cent (USD 46 billion) in the fiscal year (FY) 2013. These cuts were to be implemented in the remaining seven months of the year (March–September 2013).<sup>42</sup>

Most analysts argue that a declining defence budget will have implications for US defence priorities and its willingness to intervene militarily. Some note that the Obama administration has rephrased the long-established strategy of maintaining force levels that would be capable of responding simultaneously to two major regional contingencies. Instead, the defence strategic guidance of 2012 states that “Even when US forces are committed to a large-scale operation in one region, *they will be capable of denying the objectives of – or imposing unacceptable costs on – an opportunistic aggressor in a second region*”.<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly, the Pentagon has proposed reducing the size of the army from 562,000 to 490,000 on active duty and the Marine Corps from 202,000 to 182,000 on active duty by 2017.<sup>44</sup> However, the defence strategic guidance notes that any reduction in the level of ambition should be implemented in such a way that ensures that the process can be reversed if future demands so require. Thus, the DOD intends to maintain intellectual capital, rank structures and the industrial base for the capabilities that are being reduced.<sup>45</sup> Although notable reductions have been made to the defence budget, analysts point out that US defence spending, even after the withdrawal of forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, will still be higher in real terms than the base budgets before the attacks on the US of 11 September 2001, and than at the height of spending in the Reagan years.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> C. A. Murdock and C. R. Crotty, ‘A Methodology for Making the Right Trade-offs in Defense for the Decade Ahead, Defense Budgeting to Beat the “Double Whammy”’, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2013, p. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> C. Ruelo, ‘With Some New Flexibility, Officials Reassess Spending Cuts’, *American Forces Press Service*, 26 March 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Department of Defense, ‘Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense’, January 2012, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> T. Sharp, ‘Over-promising and under-delivering? Ambitions and risks in US defence strategy’, *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 5, p. 980.

<sup>45</sup> Department of Defense, ‘Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense’, January 2012, p. 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> Interviews with analysts in Washington, DC, march 2013.

The new budgetary situation presents several short-term and long-term challenges for the Pentagon. First, the administration has emphasised the risks of the short-term cuts mandated by the sequestration. Secretary of Defense Hagel has stated that these cuts will fall heavily on operations and modernisation programmes while also affecting the readiness of the force. Since March 2013, the DOD has made cuts to official travel, facilities maintenance and other non-essential activities. It has also imposed hiring freezes and is planning a furlough for civilian personnel for 11 days from July until the end of September 2013.<sup>47</sup> However, analysts note that while these reductions will have tactical effects, they are not expected to challenge any of the larger acquisition programmes, which are difficult for Congress to alter. It is important to note, however, that some cuts which are easy to make in the short term, such as those connected to research and development, modernisation programmes and exercises, may have considerable long-term effects.<sup>48</sup>

A long-term trend that is perhaps even more problematic is the shifting balance between different posts within the defence budget. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have augmented personnel costs, which will soon constitute one-third of the total defence budget.<sup>49</sup> The US military has adopted higher pay scales and enhanced healthcare benefits in order to recruit soldiers to fight in these wars. In addition, the number of veterans receiving government medical care has grown in the aftermath of Iraq and Afghanistan. Spending by the Department of Veteran Affairs has correspondingly increased from USD 50 billion in 2001 to USD 140 billion in 2013 and is likely to continue to grow in the coming years.<sup>50</sup> Another large share of the budget is devoted to the acquisition of new weapon platforms, the most expensive of which is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter programme, to replace aging systems.<sup>51</sup>

In addition, Secretary of Defense Hagel has pointed out that overhead costs have become disproportionate to the current size of the military forces. Over time, the number of staff in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands and the defence agencies, also known as the “Fourth Estate”, has remained at the same level even though forces have decreased in size. According to Hagel, these growing imbalances within the defence budget

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<sup>47</sup> Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), ‘Speech’ delivered by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, National Defense University, 3 April 2013 and N. Simeone, and K. Parrish, ‘Hagel Announces Fewer Furlough Days for DOD Employees’, *American Forces Press Service*, 14 May 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with analysts in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>49</sup> J. Stiglitz and L. Blimes, ‘No US peace dividend after Afghanistan’, *Financial Times*, 23 January 2013.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> ‘Mr. Hagel’s budget challenge’, *Washington Post*, 8 April 2013.



threaten to reduce the means available for procurement, operations and measures that ensure the readiness of the forces.<sup>52</sup>

Some analysts argue that the challenging budgetary situation also provides opportunities. It is a chance to align future defence strategies to the resources available rather than the other way around. Similarly, it is an opportunity for the US to become more selective in identifying its priorities and focus on its core national interests before engaging in other parts of the world.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, some believe that the defence sector should see it as an opportunity to improve its efficiency. One interviewee said there was much to learn from the private sector, for example in terms of reducing unnecessary hierarchies and removing structural stovepipes.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the budgetary situation arguably contributes to current thinking on military capabilities and operations, as is discussed throughout this report.

## 2.2.2 The UK Defence Budget and its Military Consequences

In the UK, the most urgent task of the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition after the general election in 2010 was to tackle the government's budget deficit. This ambition lay at the heart of the 2010 National Security Strategy and the accompanying Strategic Defence and Security Review. The government decided to cut the defence budget by 7.5 per cent in the next four years. However, these reductions had a double effect as the government simultaneously had to handle an inherited overcommitment in the defence budget from the previous government.<sup>55</sup> This led to highly visible capability cuts, the most prominent of which were the decisions to retire the carrier-strike capability, to operate only one of two previously commissioned aircraft carriers, and to cancel the maritime patrol aircraft programme.<sup>56</sup>

The government also decided to reduce the number of service personnel as well as the number of civil servants in the MOD by 2015, and to stop the basing of troops in Germany by 2020.<sup>57</sup> However, this was not sufficient to meet the austerity targets and in July 2011 the government announced that the army would be cut by 20 per cent by 2020, from 102,000 to 80,000 service personnel. At the

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<sup>52</sup> Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 'Speech' delivered by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, National Defense University, 3 April 2013.

<sup>53</sup> S. M. Walt, 'The sequester, defence spending, and US grand strategy', *Foreign Policy*, March 8 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Interviews with analysts in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>55</sup> M. Chalmers, 'Mid-Term Blues? Defence and the 2013 Spending Review', *RUSI Briefing paper*, February 2013, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> HM Government, 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review', p. 22-23 and 27.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

same time, the number of part-time reservists in the Territorial Army would increase from 19,000 to 30,000.<sup>58</sup>

Many analysts argue that the 2010 SDSR and the accompanying cuts in defence spending have not adequately addressed the issue of the UK's global ambitions and role in the world. They ask whether it is still possible for the UK to remain a global power, given its limited resources. Some experts believe that the SDSR is unaffordable and that the number of personnel in the armed forces will have to come down still further. Others criticise the increasing reliance on part-time reserve forces in the Territorial Army, claiming that they will not be able to make up for the reductions of personnel in the regular army.<sup>59</sup>

In December 2012, the UK government announced that the austerity measures would not end after four years, but instead continue for a further two years. The spring 2013 spending review will look at detailed spending reductions for the 2015/16 financial year.<sup>60</sup> The announcement was controversial as Cameron had previously promised, in connection with the 2010 SDSR, that there would be no further reductions in defence spending beyond 2015 and that the equipment budget would rise by one per cent in real terms between 2015 and 2020. The government subsequently clarified that the total defence budget would not grow until financial year 2016/17, but that the equipment budget would start to rise from financial year 2015/16.<sup>61</sup> This means that the reductions foreseen in the 2013 spending review could fall disproportionately on the non-equipment defence budget. The cuts will also reduce the baseline from which the promised future increases in defence spending will be calculated. Some experts argue that these cuts will lead to such reductions in UK capability that there will be a need to review the 2010 SDSR.<sup>62</sup> It should be noted however that in February 2013 Cameron indicated a willingness to consider the possibility of diverting money from the aid budget to finance peacekeeping and other security-related developments.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, from the 2016/17 financial year, the replacement of the UK's nuclear deterrent will take an increasingly large share of the UK equipment budget. Divergent opinions within the coalition government mean that a decision on replacing the Trident ballistic missile system has been postponed until the

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<sup>58</sup> 'Redesigned British Army: smaller, with more reserves', *IISS Strategic Comments*, vol. 19, comment 1, January 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Interviews with analysts in London, February 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Chalmers, M., "Mid-Term Blues? Defence and the 2013 Spending Review", *RUSI Briefing paper*, February 2013, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Wintour, P., "Defence budget rise applies only to equipment, says Downing Street", *The Guardian*, 31 January 2013.

<sup>62</sup> M. Chalmers, 'Mid-Term Blues? Defence and the 2013 Spending Review', *RUSI Briefing paper*, February 2013, pp. 4-5 and 14.

<sup>63</sup> 'Aid money could go to defence: David Cameron', *BBC News*, 21 February 2013.

next SDSR, which will be published after the general election in 2015. The Conservative Party argues that the Vanguard successor submarine programme and a continuous at-sea presence constitute the most cost-effective way of ensuring a deterrent effect. The Liberal Democrats, however, make the case for alternatives, which has motivated a Trident Alternatives Review.<sup>64</sup> Critics reason that nuclear deterrence is not an appropriate means to address today's long-term threats and that it is not applicable to threats emanating from non-state actors. Without an accompanying increase in defence spending, the Trident replacement also risks leading to further shortfalls in the UK's conventional capabilities.<sup>65</sup>

### **2.2.3 The French Defence Budget and its Military Consequences**

In France, defence spending was also a key issue in the work leading up to the 2013 White Paper on Defence and National Security. In fact, the White Paper could not be finalised before the economic prerequisites were laid down.<sup>66</sup> In March 2013, two different scenarios for defence spending were debated for the next six-year defence planning period (2014–2019). In the light of the worsening economic situation and with economic growth close to zero, the Ministry for Budget proposed a scenario in which the defence budget would be reduced from EUR 31.4 billion in 2013 to EUR 28 billion in 2015. The total cost savings over the six-year period would be EUR 30 billion. There were media reports that such cuts would have serious consequences for the defence sector, including a reduction of 50,000 employees in the armed forces and the loss of 30,000 industrial jobs. Furthermore, they would halve the organisational structure of the armed forces, lead to the cancellation of major equipment programmes and confine France's carrier strike capability to its home port. In terms of capacity for external interventions, the armed forces would maintain the capability to carry out a single operation with a force of 7,000 soldiers.<sup>67</sup>

A second scenario prepared by the Ministry of Defence proposed the freezing of the defence budget for the period 2014–2016, after which economic growth might allow the defence budget to maintain its level in real terms. The total cost savings over the six-year period amounted to EUR 15 billion. Although this scenario aimed to maintain the essential functions and capabilities of the armed forces, it would still lead to a loss of 35,000 employees in the armed forces and a

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<sup>64</sup> P. Hammond, 'The alternatives to Trident carry enormous risk', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 February 2013.

<sup>65</sup> D. Browne and I. Kearns, 'Trident is no longer key to Britain's security', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Interviews with analysts in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>67</sup> N. Guibert, 'Défense: les scénarios noirs des coupes budgétaires', *Le Monde*, 25 March 2013.

30 per cent reduction of defence equipment. France would have a force of 15,000 soldiers for international interventions.<sup>68</sup>

These two scenarios led to a heated debate among politicians, defence experts and the defence industry. Some claimed that the scenarios proposed by the Budget Ministry would kill the Ministry of Defence, lead to irreparable damage to the defence industry and constitute the end of French military power.<sup>69</sup> Experts noted that the cuts would come on top of already significant defence reforms, including the reduction of 54,900 employees mandated in the White Paper issued by former President Nicholas Sarkozy in 2008.<sup>70</sup> Some parliamentarians proposed that French defence spending should be excluded from the 3 per cent limit on government budget deficits in the eurozone. This could be justified by the fact that France takes such a large responsibility for Europe's security, most recently in Mali.<sup>71</sup> The limited political support for making dramatic cuts to the defence budget led President Hollande to announce at the end of March that the defence budget for 2014 would be frozen at the 2013 level.<sup>72</sup>

The White Paper on Defence and National Security published in April 2013 confirmed the budget trajectory proposed by the Ministry of Defence. For the first two to three years, the defence budget will be frozen at the 2013 level, not adjusted for inflation, and a slight increase is envisaged thereafter.<sup>73</sup> The White Paper foresees a reduction in the armed forces of 34,000 employees (including a 10,000 reduction already planned for in the 2008 White Paper).<sup>74</sup> Further savings will be generated by greater differentiation between units of the armed forces, for example when it comes to modernisation and equipment, and by increased pooling of resources between services as well as with other ministries and partner countries.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, the White Paper prioritises the acquisition of enablers for interventions, such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), strategic air transport and air-to-air refuelling.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the carrier-strike capability will be maintained as well as the nuclear deterrent, the latter an issue which was kept outside the White Paper deliberations. The White Paper provides continued support to the defence industry and will maintain major equipment programmes, although the numbers ordered will shrink and deliveries will be postponed. The

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> E. de Durand, 'Ne réduisons pas le budget de la défense', *Le Monde*, 1 March 2013.

<sup>71</sup> 'Mobilisation pour préserver le budget de la défense', *Le point*, 26 March 2013.

<sup>72</sup> A. Ruello, 'Budget de la Défense: « En 2014, le même montant qu'en 2013 », promet Hollande', *Les Echos*, 28 March 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Interviews with analysts in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>74</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 138.

<sup>75</sup> N. Guibert, 'Livre blanc de l'armée: la France prépare les guerres de demain avec des ambitions réduites', *Le Monde*, 29 April 2013.

<sup>76</sup> J. Blitz, 'Livre Blanc: France has learned the lessons of the UK's defence cuts', 1 May 2013.

budget for research and development will be preserved at current levels.<sup>77</sup> Even though it could have been worse, some analysts note that even a frozen defence budget will be very challenging and affect the armed forces' capability for large-scale and simultaneous operations. Moreover, there is a significant risk that the economic situation will not improve after the first two to three years, which might lead to further reductions.<sup>78</sup> In July 2013 the government will present its final decision on the future direction of the armed forces for the period 2014–2019, which will be subject to debate in the National Assembly.<sup>79</sup>

## 2.3 Implications: US, British and French Perceptions of their Role in the World

Defence cuts coupled with domestic concerns are bringing the issue of how the US, the UK and France view their roles in the world to a head. To what extent do they feel that they have a global responsibility to contribute to international peace and stability? To what extent do they feel that they can take a step back and focus on immediate problems at home? There is a sense when speaking to experts following the current debate that these countries stand at a crossroads in terms of decisions on their role in the world.

In the UK, the debate on the country's place in the world is becoming increasingly vocal. The British National Security Strategy of 2010 asserts that the UK will extend the "nation's influence in the world".<sup>80</sup> The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, has confirmed this a number of times, for instance in September 2011 when justifying the pledge that no embassies or high commissions would be closed but that new ones would open: "This effort is aimed at preventing what I call the strategic shrinkage of Britain's influence in the world".<sup>81</sup> The insistence by the government of the importance of maintaining the UK's influence in the world, however, is starting to be questioned. The House of Commons Defence Committee, in a review of the NSS and the SDSR, noted that there was a clear contradiction between rejecting any shrinkage of the UK's global influence, on the one hand, and defence cuts, on the other.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> N. Guibert, 'Livre blanc de l'armée: la France prépare les guerres de demain avec des ambitions réduites', *Le Monde*, 29 April 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with analyst in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>79</sup> 'Livre blanc de la défense: l'armée française appelée à se serrer la ceinture', *Le Monde*, 29 April 2013.

<sup>80</sup> HM Government, 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainties: The National Security Strategy', October 2010.

<sup>81</sup> 'William Hague Foreign Office speech in full', *politics.co.uk*, 8 September 2011.

<sup>82</sup> House of Commons Defence Committee, 'The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2010-12', Ninth Special Report of Session 2010-12, 10 November 2011.

Furthermore, a review of the NSS published by a Parliamentary Committee in March 2012 called on the government to consider whether the UK should continue to be as involved in US military engagements if the US were to focus on the Asia-Pacific.<sup>83</sup> Many question whether the so-called special relationship between the UK and the US, based on the two countries' close political, cultural, economic and military links, has lost some of its spark. One analyst interviewed for this report noted that the US-UK relationship has always been unbalanced, but that the discrepancy of late has become even more pronounced. British defence cuts and subsequent capability gaps have made the UK a weaker and less attractive ally. In addition, there is a sense that lacklustre performances by the British military in Basra, Iraq, and Helmand, Afghanistan, dented the British reputation, or at least its self-confidence, in the conduct of counterinsurgency warfare.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, there are those who highlight President Obama's lack of sentimental attachment to Europe and that developments in the world mean new powers are emerging that are more important to the US.<sup>85</sup> However, all the analysts interviewed for this study agree that while the relationship might be changing, the UK remains a leading ally of the US.

France is coming from a different starting point. Like the UK, France is struggling to make ends meet, but there is much less debate in Paris on whether France can still play a role on the international stage. While the UK's confidence may have received a blow after experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is a pronounced sense of pride in France over recent military engagements in Libya – and possibly even more so in Mali. Having stood outside of NATO's integrated military command since 1966, only returning in 2009, during which time Paris mainly focused on Europe rather than the US, France is now gaining credibility in the eyes of its allies. France's ability and willingness to take swift action in Mali, not too long after having put its best foot forward in Libya, have impressed. One analyst in Washington even suggested that there might be a small section in the US government that looked on France as a more reliable ally than the UK.<sup>86</sup>

Consequently, while there is a pronounced reluctance in both France and the UK to enter into lengthy, costly military engagements, there is also a sense of wanting to assert their continued relevance as global powers. In London, the sense of confidence and optimism is arguably more muted. The UK wants to

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<sup>83</sup> House of Lords, House of Commons, Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, "First review of the National Security Strategy 2010", 8 March 2012.

<sup>84</sup> S. Griffin, 'Iraq, Afghanistan and the future of British military doctrine: from counterinsurgency to Stabilization', *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 2, 2011, p. 318-321.

<sup>85</sup> D. E. Mix, 'The United Kingdom and US-UK Relations', Congressional Research Service, 15 April 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with analyst in Washington, DC, March 2013.

maintain global influence, but also realises that severe capability cuts may require a reassessment of possible objectives. For economic reasons, some experts judge it highly unlikely that the UK will engage in new operations any time soon.<sup>87</sup> France is experiencing a boost in confidence after receiving praise for its proactive military stances, and the subsequent decision only to freeze the defence budget illustrates that Paris wants to be an international player. That said, the two countries' latest defence reviews reveal that the UK government still has higher ambitions than France in terms of capabilities for overseas interventions. The 2010 SDSR envisages that UK armed forces should be able to conduct three simultaneous interventions involving up to 9,500 personnel or, with longer preparation, contribute up to 30,000 forces to a time-limited operation.<sup>88</sup> In France, the April 2013 White Paper on Defence and National Security states that the French military should be able to conduct two to three simultaneous crisis-management operations with a total of 6,000 to 7,000 forces. With longer preparation (six months), the armed forces should be ready to engage in high-intensity operations with up to 15,000 soldiers.<sup>89</sup> It is, however, uncertain whether these differences in ambition reflect anything more than the different economic and security contexts at the time of publishing the documents and, consequently, whether the UK's goals are still valid. Also open to question is the extent to which officially set ambitions really influence decisions on interventions. It should be added that while both countries have concluded that any military engagement must be limited in time and scope, there is naturally always a risk that events will take an unexpected turn and result in lengthy commitments.

In the US, problems at home have also revived the debate between those who think the US should enter a period of isolationism and get its own house in order before venturing out in the world, and those who argue that the US must engage internationally to help prevent conflict and ensure economic growth.<sup>90</sup> A majority of the analysts interviewed for this report believed that the administration will encourage diplomatic solutions, international cooperation and burden-sharing as far as possible. However, if direct national interests are under threat, the US will be prepared and able to engage militarily. This is in line with interpretations of President Obama's foreign policy of pragmatism. Arguably, this pragmatic approach means that Obama is more of a transactional leader than a transformational leader – one who manages things the way they are as opposed

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<sup>87</sup> Interviews with analysts in London, February 2013.

<sup>88</sup> HM Government, 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review', 2010, p. 19.

<sup>89</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 92.

<sup>90</sup> See e.g. B. R. Posen, 'Pull Back – The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Jan/Feb 2013, and S. G. Brooks, J. Ikenberry and W. C. Wohlforth, 'Lean Forward – In Defense of American Engagement', *Foreign Affairs*, Jan/Feb 2013.

to those who seek to make a big difference. Having studied the impact of different US presidents in the 20th century, Joseph Nye emphasises the important role skilled transactional leaders have played in history: “I would argue that in foreign policy, as in medicine, it’s important to start with the Hippocratic Oath: above all, do no harm. For these reasons, the virtues of transactional leaders with good contextual intelligence and management skills – such as [former US President George H.W.] Bush 41 – are extraordinarily important”.<sup>91</sup>

This chapter has dealt with the domestic context in the US, the UK and France by addressing priorities of the present policy makers and the economic constraints that they are facing. To close, the text has considered how this setting is affecting the perceptions in the US, UK and France of their role in the world. The ensuing chapter will look more closely at the geographical focus of defence efforts in these countries.

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<sup>91</sup> J. Nye, ‘Do US Presidents Matter?’, transcript, Chatham House, 8 May 2013.



### 3 Centres of Gravity: A Geographical Focus

*[O]ne must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain centre of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed.*<sup>92</sup>

Clausewitz spoke of centres of gravity to explain the main strengths of belligerents.<sup>93</sup> They present “the most effective target for a blow”.<sup>94</sup> What are the US and Europe preparing to strike against? Who do they see as the biggest enemies in the future, and as the most potent threats? Geographical interests, however, are not only perceived as threats. Other countries also represent potential trade partners and strategic allies. This is arguably even more true in modern times, due to the increasingly dense web of interdependence. Thus, international links and partners are key to solidifying a nation’s own centre of gravity. An analysis of where the interests, enemies and threats dominating the current security policy debate in Washington, London and Paris are seen to be is set out below.

#### 3.1 US Rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific

The US rebalancing towards Asia constitutes the most prominent and publicly pronounced shift of geographical priorities in recent years. During his first presidential election campaign in 2009, President Obama recognised Asia’s importance to US prosperity and argued for an enhanced policy towards the region. However, the so-called pivot was first publicly presented in connection with Obama’s trip to Asia in November 2011.<sup>95</sup> The new strategy was then spelled out in an article in *Foreign Policy* by Hillary Clinton, and in several speeches by Obama and his team.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by M. Howard and P. Paret, Everyman’s Library, 1993, Book Eight, Chapter Four, p. 720.

<sup>93</sup> For a discussion on the diverse interpretations of what Clausewitz meant by centre of gravity, see e.g. J. L. Strange and R. Iron, ‘Center of Gravity – What Clausewitz Really Meant’, *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 35, October 2004.

<sup>94</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by M. Howard and P. Paret, Everyman’s Library, 1993, Book Six, Chapter Twenty-Seven, p. 587.

<sup>95</sup> M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal and M. E. O’Hanlon, *Bending History – Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, p. 25-26 and 57-58.

<sup>96</sup> H. Clinton, ‘America’s Pacific Century’, *Foreign Policy*, November 2011, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, ‘Remarks by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon – As Prepared for Delivery’, 15 November 2012, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, ‘Remarks By

### 3.1.1 Content of the Strategy

The US repositioning is, according to the administration, based on the fact that the Asia-Pacific region is becoming increasingly important to the global economy and the home of many of the engines of economic growth. It also houses half the world's population, as well as several key allies and emerging powers. In order to promote economic growth at home and globally, the US has an interest in maintaining peace and security and promoting a new economic and security architecture in the region.<sup>97</sup> The security architecture in Asia, furthermore, is considered to be less developed than in Europe and the rebalancing is characterised as a response to the demands of partners and allies across the region.<sup>98</sup>

The rebalancing towards Asia is a multidimensional strategy with security, economic and foreign policy aspects, focused on five lines of action.<sup>99</sup> First, the administration is seeking to strengthen and modernise its security alliances in the region, first and foremost with Japan and South Korea. The US has also signed an agreement with Australia allowing the rotational deployment of up to 2,500 marines to northern Australia in order to promote joint training and exercises.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the US has announced that it will enhance its partnership with Thailand on regional humanitarian and disaster relief and increase cooperation with the Philippines on maritime security and counterterrorism.<sup>101</sup> Second, the US is promoting closer links with emerging powers in the region, most notably India and Indonesia.

The most prominent emerging power, China, is the focus of the third line of action. Recognising that the relationship with China contains elements of cooperation as well as conflict, the administration has promoted increased dialogue with Chinese leaders, from the head of state level to ministries and agencies. In the economic field, the US has worked closely with China in the G-20 to manage the financial crisis. In the security field, strategic talks involving military officers were initiated in 2011 as part of the annual US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.<sup>102</sup> However, the US-China relationship has also been tested in recent years. For the US it is essential that China take increasing

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President Obama to the Australian Parliament', 17 November 2011; The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President – As Prepared for Delivery', 11 March 2013.

<sup>97</sup> H. Clinton, 'America's Pacific Century', *Foreign Policy*, November 2011.

<sup>98</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon – As Prepared for Delivery', 15 November 2012.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal and M. E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History – Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, p. 59.

<sup>101</sup> H. Clinton, 'America's Pacific Century', *Foreign Policy*, November 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid and M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal and M. E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History – Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, p. 31-32 and 54-55.

responsibility for the management of global security, for example when it comes to North Korea. However, Chinese leaders do not yet seem ready to assume such a role. The US is also increasingly concerned about intensifying cyber attacks targeted at US businesses, which emanate from China.<sup>103</sup> For their part, Chinese leaders were taken by surprise by the launch of the US pivot to Asia in November 2011 and do not look favourably on the strategy receiving such warm support among so many countries in the region. Chinese analysts are suspicious that the US is trying to constrain or undermine China's rise.<sup>104</sup>

The fourth element of the strategy focuses on strengthening regional institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and to some extent signals a rebalancing of US interests in Asia in favour of South East Asia. President Obama is for example set to participate in annual meetings at the level of heads of state in ASEAN as well as the regular East Asia Summits. The multilateral institutions in South East Asia are judged to be key for maintaining stability in the region and to provide an arena for the resolution of disputes by diplomatic means. Such stability is seen as vital to sustaining regional and international trade in the region.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, the fifth line of action concerns the building of a regional economic architecture to promote growth and improve trade relations in the Asia-Pacific. The US is working through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and bilaterally to lower economic barriers and expand trade. It has signed a US-South Korea Free Trade Agreement and is striving to expand the Trans-Pacific Partnership to more countries in the region.<sup>106</sup>

The most recent US strategic guidance for defence, launched in January 2012, stresses that also the US military will be rebalanced towards the Asia-Pacific region. President Obama has declared that he will modernise the US defence posture across the region and that the reductions in US defence spending will not come at the expense of the Asia-Pacific.<sup>107</sup> The US will also adjust the naval balance from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with 60 per cent of its naval forces to be deployed in the Pacific by 2020. The air force will follow a similar pattern.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President – As Prepared for Delivery', 11 March 2013.

<sup>104</sup> M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal and M. E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History – Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, p. 61-62.

<sup>105</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President – As Prepared for Delivery', March 11, 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament', 17 November 2011.

<sup>108</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President – As Prepared for Delivery', 11 March 2013.

In the defence strategic guidance, China and North Korea are singled out as particular concerns. In response to the growth of China's military power, it is emphasised that the US must invest in order to be able to project power in areas where US access and freedom to operate are being increasingly challenged. This includes for example maintaining and developing undersea capabilities, stealth bombers, missile defences and space-based capabilities.<sup>109</sup>

The strategic guidance also stresses that the US will work with allies and regional powers to deter and defend against provocation by North Korea.<sup>110</sup> In connection with renewed North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile testing, and the more assertive threat rhetoric from North Korean leaders at the beginning of 2013, the administration reiterated that it will not allow North Korea to become a nuclear state.<sup>111</sup> In view of the threat to US territory posed by North Korean missiles, the Pentagon in March 2013 announced that it will expand the West Coast-based missile defence system by placing 14 additional interceptors in Alaska.<sup>112</sup> In April 2013, the US also deployed a ballistic missile defence system to the US military base in Guam in order to protect against medium-range missiles from North Korea.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.1.2 Outcome of the Strategy

Since the pivot to Asia was announced in 2011, the administration has gone to great lengths to publicly explain what the new strategy entails and, more importantly, what it does not mean. Many analysts question the substance of the new strategy, seeing little evidence for a changed focus other than an increase in the frequency of trips to and high level meetings in the region. Furthermore, they point out that the movement of military capabilities has so far been limited. Some argue that the US rebalancing is flawed and that it will need to continue to be involved in both Europe and the Middle East. Unforeseen events are likely to arise and the Middle East remains a highly insecure region that requires US engagement. Furthermore, US military infrastructure and bases in Europe are seen as key for interventions in other parts of the world, including the Middle

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<sup>109</sup> Department of Defense, 'Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense', January 2012, p. 2 and 5.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President – As Prepared for Delivery', 11 March 2013.

<sup>112</sup> J. E. Barnes, K. Johnson and D. Nissenbaum, 'US Boosts Defence From North Korea', *Wall Street Journal*, March 16-17 2013.

<sup>113</sup> J. E. Barnes and A. Entous, 'With an Eye on Pyongyang, US Sending Missile Defenses to Guam', *Wall Street Journal*, 4 April 2013.

East.<sup>114</sup> Some recall that both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush advocated a shift to Asia, but eventually became embroiled in other parts of the world.<sup>115</sup>

Other experts perceive the US repositioning as a significant strategic shift that will be achieved over time and have long-term implications. The effects of the related strategies, capabilities and concepts being developed today will not be seen for some time. Many analysts argue that the main reason why the US is rebalancing towards the Asia Pacific is to prepare for the long-term growth of China's power and influence. They highlight increasing nationalism among Chinese leaders and the enhanced strength and assertiveness of the Chinese military.<sup>116</sup> Some academics claim there are few exceptions to the rule that an emerging power is drawn into conflict with the existing hegemonic power. An explicit objective of containing China might lead to an arms race and eventually make conflict with China a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>117</sup> The increasing military strength of China could also lead to situations in which accidents and miscalculations might easily occur. It is easy to imagine China misinterpreting the US rebalancing strategy if there is no consensus even in the US on what it entails. At the same time, however, it is important to recognise that the US and China are mutually dependent in the economic field, which makes any large-scale military confrontation less likely.<sup>118</sup>

In terms of capabilities, the military rebalancing to Asia translates into a shift of US focus from land forces to air and sea forces. The much talked about Air-Sea Battle Concept aims to improve inter-service communication between the navy and the air force, and to establish networked and integrated forces able to attack-in-depth.<sup>119</sup> This will enable the US to overcome the threats to access posed by ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced submarines and fighters, electronic warfare and mines. Air-Sea Battle forms part of the overarching Joint Operational Access Concept, which focuses on improving working relations between all the services operating from different bases. The forward basing of four littoral combat ships to Singapore, the rotational deployment of US Marines to Australia and an increased presence in Guam are so far the most concrete

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<sup>114</sup> Interviews with analysts in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>115</sup> T. Sharp, 'Over-promising and under-delivering? Ambitions and risks in US defence strategy', *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 5, p. 991.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with analysts in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>117</sup> T. Sharp, 'Over-promising and under-delivering? Ambitions and risks in US defence strategy', *International Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 5, p. 983, see also J. D. Pollock, 'China's Rise and US Strategy in Asia', in Pawlak, P. (ed.), *Look East, Act East: transatlantic agendas in the Asia Pacific*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2012, p. 56.

<sup>118</sup> Interview analyst in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>119</sup> N. A. Schwartz and J. W. Greenert, 'Air-Sea Battle, Promoting Stability in an Era of Uncertainty', *The American Interest*, 20 February 2012.

examples of US ambitions to strengthen its presence in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.1.3 US Rebalancing as Seen From Europe

The US rebalancing towards Asia has not gone unnoticed in Europe. The discussion has to a large extent focused on the possible consequences for Europe of the US repositioning its forces. However, the US shift of focus has also led to a discussion on whether Europe should join US efforts in the Asia Pacific or, alternatively, some sort of division of labour should be agreed in which Europe shoulders a larger responsibility for security in other parts of the world. While most European countries recognise the importance of trade relations with South East Asia, there is little expectation that Europe will assume a more active military role in the region. At the same time, some experts believe that it might be in Europe's interests to work for regional stability and to secure the sea lines of communication between Europe and South East Asia.<sup>121</sup>

The UK and France recognise Asia's strategic importance and are the two European countries that maintain military bases in the region.<sup>122</sup> In its National Security Strategy of 2010, the UK government highlights the rise of China and India and the importance of strengthening British bilateral ties with the two countries.<sup>123</sup> However, the promotion of these bilateral relationships is primarily confined to trade and economic interests, including defence exports.<sup>124</sup> For example, in February 2013, Cameron visited India for the second time since coming to office, taking with him the largest UK business delegation ever.<sup>125</sup> In the security field, the UK chief of defence staff has indicated an increased UK military engagement in the framework of the Five Power Defence Agreement between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>126</sup>

In France, the US rebalancing to Asia is one of four major strategic developments emphasised in the White Paper on Defence and National Security of April 2013. The analysis in the White Paper is that US defence cuts will lead

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<sup>120</sup> 'New US military concept marks pivot to sea and air', *IISS Strategic Comments*, vol. 18, comment 20, May 2012.

<sup>121</sup> D. Keohane, 'The EU's Role In East Asian Security', in Pawlak, P. (ed.), *Look East, Act East: transatlantic agendas in the Asia Pacific*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2012, p. 45-50.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>123</sup> HM Government, 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy', October 2010, pp. 15-16.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with analyst in London, February 2013.

<sup>125</sup> A. Osborn, 'British PM Cameron on India trade trip amid graft scandal', *Reuters*, 17 February 2013.

<sup>126</sup> N. Norton-Taylor and N. Hopkins, 'Defence chief signals major UK military presence in Gulf', *The Guardian Defence and Security Blog*, 18 December 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/defence-and-security-blog/2012/dec/18/british-army-the-gulf-defence> (accessed 25 April 2013).

to a more pronounced geopolitical prioritisation of US engagement and a demand that European countries take on larger responsibility for their own security.<sup>127</sup>

With regard to Asia, France's primary security interest is to preserve security in the Indian Ocean and keep the sea lines of communication with Asia open. Like the UK, France has important economic and defence industrial interests in Asia.<sup>128</sup> President Hollande visited India just days before Cameron, seeking to secure a contract for the purchase of 126 *Rafale* fighter jets.<sup>129</sup> Although the White Paper stresses that France must take responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council in case of an open conflict in Asia, analysts interviewed for this report doubt whether France will have the capacity to increase its military engagement in the region.<sup>130</sup>

## 3.2 Continued Relevance of the Middle East and South Asia

The US troop drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan coupled with the pivot to Asia have raised concern about diminished US engagement in the Middle East and South Asia. Experts note that terrorism is no longer treated as a strategic threat to the US, but the defence strategic guidance of January 2012 discusses continued activity by Al Qaeda and its affiliates in countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia. The threat of violent extremism will thus require continued US engagement in the Middle East and South Asia.<sup>131</sup>

In the Middle East, Iran continues to pose a significant challenge to the US. After reaching out unsuccessfully to the Iranian leadership at the beginning of his presidency, President Obama in 2010 pressed for a new sanctions regime against Iran in the UN Security Council.<sup>132</sup> He has repeatedly stated that the US will not accept an Iranian state with nuclear weapons and that all options are on the table to prevent such a situation, including military instruments.<sup>133</sup>

The civil war in Syria risks destabilising the whole of the Middle East. Increasing Islamist fundamentalism and sectarianism in Syria could easily spread

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<sup>127</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 9, pp. 29-30.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>129</sup> 'Rafale jets top agenda on Hollande's India trip', *France 24*, 14 February 2013.

<sup>130</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 58 and interviews with analysts in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>131</sup> Interviews with analysts in London and Washington, DC, February and March 2013 and Department of Defense, 'Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense', January 2012, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal and M. E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, pp. 202-203.

<sup>133</sup> J. Goldberg, 'Obama to Iran and Israel: "As President of the United States, I Don't Bluff"', *The Atlantic*, 2 March 2012.

throughout the region, and have implications for the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>134</sup> Although Obama has so far resisted military engagement, he has warned the Assad regime as well as opposition forces that any larger scale movement of or use of chemical weapons would change the US calculus.<sup>135</sup>

In sum, several challenges remain unresolved in the Middle East. According to most of the US analysts interviewed for this report, these and other unpredictable events make the case for continued US engagement in the region. At the same time, there are those who think that US interest there might fade should the US become energy self-sufficient through increased shale gas extraction.<sup>136</sup> US oil imports have fallen by 40 per cent since 2006 and some project that that in 15 to 20 years the US will no longer rely on energy imports from the Middle East.<sup>137</sup> That said, it is important to keep in mind that many US allies, including those in East Asia, continue to be dependent on energy resources from the region. Hence, the US would continue to have an interest in stability there in order to protect energy flows to its allies in Asia.<sup>138</sup> In addition, oil and gas flows from the Middle East affect the global price of energy.<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, as one analyst interviewed for this report noted, one unintended consequence could be that the US ends up safeguarding China's energy imports, given that China is likely to continue to rely on oil and gas imports from the Middle East. Such a development would give the US more leverage over China.<sup>140</sup>

In the UK, the National Security Strategy of 2010 singles out terrorism as one of the four biggest risks facing the country. The terrorist threat is seen to emanate from both international terrorism and terrorism related to Northern Ireland, but the principal threat is thought to come from Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan and its affiliated groups in Somalia, Yemen and Iraq, as well as lone terrorists inspired by Al Qaeda's ideology.<sup>141</sup> The strategy also emphasises the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and the need to prevent Iran

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<sup>134</sup> V. R. Nasr, speech at EU Washington Forum, Transatlantic Security in 3D: from Afghanistan to Mali, organised by the European Institute for Security Studies and the Center for Transatlantic Relations, 14 March 2013.

<sup>135</sup> J. Bell, 'Obama issues Syria a "red line" warning on chemical weapons', *Washington Post*, 20 August 2012.

<sup>136</sup> I. Dreyer and G. Stang, 'The shale gas "revolution": Challenges and implications for the EU', *Brief Issue*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2013, p. 4.

<sup>137</sup> 'US need for foreign oil falls dramatically', *IJSS Strategic Comments*, vol. 19, comment 6, March 2013.

<sup>138</sup> K. Campbell, 'America must be responsible in its pivot to Asia', *Financial Times*, 19 March 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Interviews with analysts in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with analyst in London, February 2013.

<sup>141</sup> HM Government, 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy', October 2010, p. 11, 22 and 28-29.



from acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>142</sup> The countries in the Persian Gulf are of particular interest to the UK. In connection with a visit to the region in November 2012, David Cameron stressed that the UK has strong commercial and military interests in the Gulf.<sup>143</sup> In addition, UK citizens are spread across the Gulf.<sup>144</sup> In December 2012, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir David Richards, indicated that two adaptable brigades would be assigned to the Middle East in order to promote cooperation with countries in the Gulf and Jordan. Preparations for an increased UK presence in the Gulf, including forces withdrawn from Afghanistan, have been labelled a reversal of the East of Suez policy of 1968, when the UK left its imperial bases in this region.<sup>145</sup>

In France, the White Paper on Defence and National Security also identifies terrorism as the most likely threat to French territory or citizens. The policy document states that the threat of terrorism remains in Afghanistan-Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Somalia, the Sahel and Nigeria.<sup>146</sup> Further references to the Middle East include highlighting that the civil war and increasing sectarianism in Syria as well as the threat of a nuclear attack from Iran constitute important future challenges in the region. The latter is seen to pose a direct threat to countries on the Arabian Peninsula, with which Paris has signed defence cooperation treaties and where France has reinforced its military presence.<sup>147</sup>

Hence, all the three countries that are the focus of this report recognise the important challenges that lie ahead in the Middle East. However, there is a pronounced reluctance in both the US and Europe to take the lead in tackling these issues, reflecting an underlying fear of getting drawn into another protracted and expensive conflict. There is sensitivity to the complicated power relations in the region, and economic preoccupations at home deter intervention. Instead, a collaborative, international approach with regard e.g. to Syria and Iran seems to be the preferred option, promising increased opportunities for diplomatic solutions as well as burden-sharing.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>143</sup> 'David Cameron defends arms deals with Gulf states', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 2012.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with analyst in London, February 2013.

<sup>145</sup> N. Norton-Taylor and N. Hopkins, 'Defence chief signals major UK military presence in Gulf', *The Guardian Defence and Security Blog*, 18 December 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/defence-and-security-blog/2012/dec/18/british-army-the-gulf-defence> (accessed 2013-04-25).

<sup>146</sup> 'Livres Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 44, 48.

<sup>147</sup> 'Livres Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 28, 56.

### 3.3 Responsibility for Europe's Neighbourhood

Analysts on both sides of the Atlantic seem to agree that Europe needs to take more responsibility for handling conflicts in its immediate neighbourhood, especially against the backdrop of the US rebalancing to Asia. Many experts stress that the interventions in Libya and Mali, where the UK and France took the lead, constitute a model for the future. Europe's neighbourhood is for the purposes of this study broadly seen as covering the Mediterranean countries, including North Africa, as well as the belt of insecurity and terrorism in sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Russia.

The US strategic guidance for defence of 2012 states that the US military will mainly focus on building partnership capacity in Africa through innovative, low-cost and small-footprint approaches.<sup>148</sup> At the same time, experts note that the threat from terrorism and the spread of Al Qaeda have increased US interest in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>149</sup>

Analysts in both the UK and France point to the deteriorating security situation in the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring – the revolutionary wave which spread across the Middle East and North Africa region after December 2010. In North Africa, Islamist fundamentalist movements are gaining ground in the new political systems. In addition, the revolts in North Africa and the resulting fragility of the borders there have created a belt of insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa that stretches from West Africa, the Sahel, Chad, Darfur and South Sudan to Somalia. Several challenges to Europe's security, including illegal drug flows, arms proliferation and jihadist extremism, originate in this belt.<sup>150</sup>

In the light of their colonial pasts and status as permanent members of the Security Council, the UK and France are expected to play a more prominent role in Africa than other European countries.<sup>151</sup> For France, the primary regions of interest are defined in the White Paper on National Defence and Security as the Maghreb, the Sahel and the French-speaking part of sub-Saharan Africa, while the UK is expected to assume larger responsibility for the English-speaking parts of the region.<sup>152</sup> Although the UK and France have proved willing to intervene if needed, their ability to do so is increasingly being questioned. Most recently, in Mali, the French intervention depended on key US resources for intelligence,

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<sup>148</sup> Department of Defense, 'Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense', January 2012, p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> Interviews with analysts in London, February 2013.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with analyst in London, February 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Interviews with analysts in London, February 2013.

<sup>152</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 54; and interviews with analysts in London, February 2013.

surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), strategic airlift and air-to-air refuelling.<sup>153</sup> However, France received widespread recognition for its ability to deploy quickly to address the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Mali. The swift decision-making system in France and its forward basing of troops in Africa are viewed as key factors in the rapid intervention.<sup>154</sup> As a result, political support gained ground in France for developing defence and security partnerships with states in Africa, including the prepositioning of forces, and this was subsequently reflected in the White Paper.<sup>155</sup>

Analysts interviewed for this report also assert that Europe will need to take growing responsibility for protecting the sea lines of communication. As Europe becomes increasingly dependent on trade with Asian countries, experts argue that it is in Europe's interests to safeguard the trade routes in the Mediterranean, around the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean.<sup>156</sup>

Conversely, challenges emanating from Russia and Eastern Europe were rarely mentioned during the interviews conducted for this study. None of the three countries identifies Russia as a direct threat to Europe in their official documents. At the same time, all three stress the need to uphold Article 5 commitments in NATO.<sup>157</sup> US rebalancing to Asia has, however, triggered doubts in both the US and Europe about US readiness to tackle Russia's growing military strength.<sup>158</sup> The French White Paper on Defence and National Security recognises the need to monitor the security situation in the Eastern neighborhood and carefully manage the relationship with Russia, noting that it contains contradictory elements.<sup>159</sup>

### 3.4 Global Challenges

In addition to region-specific challenges to security, the US, the UK and France have all identified threats of a more international character. The challenge posed by climate change and natural disasters is one such area. Illegal cross-border flows, including for example drugs, arms and trafficking, constitute another threat to peace and stability. In addition, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional and small arms continues to weigh on

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<sup>153</sup>C. Roulo, 'Air Force Continues Support to France in Mali', *American Foreign Press Service*, 29 January 2013.

<sup>154</sup> Interviews with analysts in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>155</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 55.

<sup>156</sup> Interviews with analysts in London and Paris, February and April 2013.

<sup>157</sup> Department of Defense, 'Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense', January 2012, p. 3, HM Government, 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy', October 2010, p. 30, 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 52.

<sup>158</sup> Interviews with analysts in London and Paris, February and April 2013.

<sup>159</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 36-37 and 54.

policymakers' minds. Developments in fields such as nanotechnology and space now make threats previously only dreamed of in science fiction novels less distant. Moreover, technical progress has already resulted in the world's first gun having been made from 3D printer technology.<sup>160</sup>

One security threat which has been specifically highlighted by all three countries is cyber security. The UK listed hostile attacks on UK cyberspace as one of four tier-one risks in its National Security Strategy of 2010.<sup>161</sup> France, in its 2013 White Paper on Defence and National Security, also singled out cyber attacks as a potential threat,<sup>162</sup> and the US in its National Security Strategy of 2010 said cyber security threats represented "one of the most serious national security, public safety, and economic challenges we face as a nation".<sup>163</sup> Moreover, all three countries have produced national strategies to meet the threat. The UK's cyber security strategy was published in November 2011,<sup>164</sup> France's in February 2011,<sup>165</sup> while the US issued its in February 2003.<sup>166</sup>

Before discussing the topic further, it should be noted that it is a challenge to find a conclusive and unambiguous definition for the term cyberspace.<sup>167</sup> It is used in this report to signify the virtual world of computers, encompassing the notional place in which communication over computer networks takes place, including the Internet. A cyber attack can for example involve cyber-espionage, cyber-disruption, attacks on civilian infrastructure or economic systems, or attacks on the cyber aspects of military warfare. An example of the latter would be an enemy trying to target the computerised command-and-control of military systems and equipment in times of war.

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<sup>160</sup> See e.g. R. Morelle, 'Working gun made with 3D printer', *BBC*, 6 May 2013.

<sup>161</sup> The other tier-one risks are international terrorism, a major accident or natural hazard and an international military crisis. See HM Government, 'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainties: The National Security Strategy', October 2010.

<sup>162</sup> Other highlighted threats were aggression by another state against French territory, terrorist attacks, intrusions with scientific and technical implications, organised crime, major crises in areas of natural hazards, health, technology, industry or accidents, as well as attacks against French citizens abroad. See 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', pp. 47-48.

<sup>163</sup> The White House, 'National Security Strategy', May 2010.

<sup>164</sup> Cabinet Office, 'The UK Cyber Security Strategy: Protecting and promoting the UK in a digital world', November 2011, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/60961/uk-cyber-security-strategy-final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60961/uk-cyber-security-strategy-final.pdf).

<sup>165</sup> Agence Nationale de la Sécurité des Systèmes d'Information, 'Information systems defence and security – France's strategy', February 2011, [http://www.ssi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2011-02-15\\_Information\\_system\\_defence\\_and\\_security\\_-\\_France\\_s\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.ssi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2011-02-15_Information_system_defence_and_security_-_France_s_strategy.pdf).

<sup>166</sup> 'The National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace', February 2003, [http://www.us-cert.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cyberspace\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.us-cert.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cyberspace_strategy.pdf).

<sup>167</sup> For a discussion on the definition see e.g. D. J. Betz and T. Stevens, 'Cyberspace and the State: Toward a Strategy for Cyber-power', *Adelphi*, no. 424, November 2011.

One illustration of global interconnectedness and the potentially far-reaching consequences of cyber attacks was the attack on 15 August 2012 against the state-owned Saudi Arabian oil company Aramco – the world’s largest oil producer. A computer virus erased data on three-quarters of Aramco’s corporate computers, and reportedly aimed to halt oil and gas supplies.<sup>168</sup> Anonymous US officials attributed the attack to Iran, but others argue that design errors and other features of the virus indicate that the attack was probably executed by a lone individual.<sup>169</sup>

A fundamental challenge in defending against cyber attacks is the question of attribution. The boundless nature of the technology and possibility of remaining anonymous on the Internet can have many positive implications, allowing for example for political dissent. However, the other side of the coin is that it is often difficult to determine with any certainty the source of a cyber attack. The fact that cyber attacks can stem from many different types of intent – malicious or not – makes them even harder to trace. Perpetrators can range from a lone hacker driven by ideological fervour, or just by the technical challenge of hacking an advanced system, to criminal groups trying to steal data or money, or state-sponsored groups trying to secretly or overtly undermine a rival state.

Countries are usually wary of making any direct accusations about which states are sponsoring cyber attacks, but experts and media reports regularly accuse Russia, China and Iran of masterminding cyber operations.<sup>170</sup> The US, however, departed from its usual caution when in May 2013 it explicitly stated that China appeared to have mounted attacks on US government computer systems.<sup>171</sup> This was after the US cyber security company Mandiant had attracted much attention in February 2013 by pointing the finger at China for having been behind extensive and systematic cyber attacks in the past seven years.<sup>172</sup> Illustrating the major challenge of determining the origin of cyber attacks, Mandiant had spent many years analysing hundreds of investigations before concluding that the operators conducting these attacks were probably part of the People’s Liberation

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<sup>168</sup> See e.g. C. Hall and J. Blas, ‘Aramco cyber attack targeted production’, *Financial Times*, 10 December 2012; N. Perlroth, ‘In Cyberattack on Saudi Firm, US Sees Iran Firing Back’, *New York Times*, 23 October 2012.

<sup>169</sup> See e.g. M. Riley and E. Engleman, ‘Code in Aramco Cyber Attack Indicates Lone Perpetrator’, *Bloomberg*, 25 October 2012.

<sup>170</sup> See e.g. M. Clayton, ‘Cyber security in 2013: How vulnerable to attack is US now?’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 January 2013, or US Committee on Homeland Security, ‘Subcommittee Hearing: Cyber Threats from China, Russia and Iran: Protecting American Critical Infrastructure’, 20 March 2013.

<sup>171</sup> Department of Defense, ‘Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2013’, 6 May 2013.

<sup>172</sup> Mandiant, ‘APT1: Exposing One of China’s Cyber Espionage Units’, February 2013, [www.mandiant.com](http://www.mandiant.com).

Army (PLA) Unit 61398 – a military unit thought to engage in harmful computer network operations.

Significantly, such attacks are not one-sided. The US or Israel – or the two working together – are for example widely believed to have designed the so-called Stuxnet computer worm which was discovered in 2010, and which was used to attack Iran's Natanz uranium-enrichment plant.<sup>173</sup> Researchers have since discovered a version of the Stuxnet worm that was used to attack Iran's nuclear programme in November 2007, which was in development as early as 2005.<sup>174</sup>

The technical know-how and software required for cyber attacks are readily available to most and also offer a relatively cheap but potentially potent weapon for smaller and non-state actors. Moreover, the fact that it is the most developed countries that are also the most interconnected makes them most vulnerable to disruptions to computerised systems, meaning that cyber attacks are a powerful weapon for the weak against the strong. On the other hand, there are those who argue that the move of conflicts into cyberspace reinforces existing asymmetries of power, providing already powerful states with increased capability.<sup>175</sup>

Underpinning this argument is the complexity of weaponising cyberspace. In addition, the questionable longevity of an attack suggests that strategic effect requires a combination of other resources – just like when using other types of weapons.<sup>176</sup>

### 3.5 Implications: Geographical Priorities versus Undesirable Realities

Current trends suggest that there is an emerging geographical division of labour between the US and Europe. As the US makes a strategic shift towards Asia in order to prepare for the future rise of China, European countries need to prioritise their increasingly unstable neighbourhood in North Africa and beyond. One lingering question, however, is whether Europe is capable of assuming such responsibility. In reality, US expectations of European allies are not high, especially after having to provide key enablers in the recent European engagements in Libya and Mali. Furthermore, European countries are divided on which parts of the neighbourhood to prioritise. While East and Central European countries are wary of the challenges emanating from the Eastern neighbourhood, countries around the Mediterranean naturally pay greater attention to the threats

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<sup>173</sup> See e.g. 'Cyber-warfare: Hype and fear', *The Economist*, 8 December 2012.

<sup>174</sup> J. Finkle, 'Researchers say Stuxnet was deployed against Iran in 2007', *Reuters*, 26 February 2013.

<sup>175</sup> D. J. Betz and T. Stevens, 'Cyberspace and the State: Toward a Strategy for Cyber-power', *Adelphi*, no. 424, November 2011.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

emanating from North Africa. This makes larger European coalitions of the willing less likely.<sup>177</sup>

Despite the withdrawal of military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, continued insecurity and fundamentalism in the Middle East and South Asia will remain a source of concern for both the US and Europe. Future challenges in the Middle East will make the case for increased levels of cooperation across the Atlantic, for example when it comes to Syria and Iran.<sup>178</sup> The security of the sea lines of communication around the Gulf is also of vital importance for global trade and the energy market.

Moreover, many of the threats facing the US, the UK and France defy national borders. Natural disasters, illegal cross-border flows, and technical advances that increase the risk of arms proliferation are just some of the areas of concern. Threats to cyber security are a major concern of the military as well as society as a whole, given today's widespread interconnectedness. Ultimately, unforeseen crises and undesirable realities can quickly disrupt even carefully laid strategies. Accordingly, future events are likely to shape policies in both the US and Europe and may force a reassessment of previously developed geographical priorities.

This chapter has highlighted the geographical focus of defence efforts as well as key global challenges faced by the US, the UK and France. It has suggested that a certain division of labour is emerging between the countries at the same time as unpredictable crises and future events are likely to be of importance for these countries' future military engagements. Chapter 4 looks more closely at how these countries are preparing to face future enemies and threats. What is the operational focus of their armed forces?

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<sup>177</sup> Interview with analyst in London, February 2013.

<sup>178</sup> Interviews with analysts in Washington, March 2013.

## 4 Reducing the Fog of War: Operational Focus

*War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.*<sup>179</sup>

Clausewitz emphasised the uncertainty of warfare – the fog of war.<sup>180</sup> What he called “friction” in warfare are all of those things that can go wrong, small as well as big, causing unexpected hiccups – for example bad weather or mechanical breakdowns: “Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult [...] Friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper”.<sup>181</sup> Some level of friction is unavoidable, and as long as “perfect information” is not possible, some level of fog will always blur the vision. Preparedness for expected threats is one way of trying to thin out the fog. An effective and efficient force can act to reduce both fog and friction. This section considers the likely priorities of the US, the UK and France as they set out to form their defences to best respond to future enemies and threats.

### 4.1 Revival of the Light Footprint

The deep reluctance to become entangled in another drawn out conflict together with economic restraints and budget cuts have led to a revival of the light footprint approach. Unlike nation-building and stabilisation missions, the light footprint sets out to resolve imminent or existing security threats by fast, surgical operations. The approach involves a relatively greater focus on special operations forces, high readiness and advanced technology, and it embraces preventive strategies such as capacity building.

#### 4.1.1 Farewell to COIN?

It is noteworthy that much of the thinking today on reducing the military footprint abroad echoes former US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld’s doctrine, which called for slim and fast forces that rely on the latest

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<sup>179</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by M. Howard and P. Paret, Everyman’s Library, 1993, Book One, Chapter Three, p. 117.

<sup>180</sup> While “friction” was explained in detail in *On War*, Clausewitz did not use the expression the “fog of war” in the book, or use the fog metaphor much.

<sup>181</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by M. Howard and P. Paret, Everyman’s Library, 1993, Book One, Chapter Seven, p. 138.



technology.<sup>182</sup> The focus then, as it is largely today, was on expeditionary forces, airpower and indigenous allies as opposed to peacekeeping operations and other bulky and lengthy ground forces missions.

While there is sometimes a tendency to want to “fight the last war” – to prepare for the contingencies of the most recent past – sometimes the opposite is the case – as, for example, in the wake of the Vietnam War. Like then, there is now a pronounced reluctance to get dragged into another protracted and costly stability operation like those fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. Accordingly, there is a distinct sense, especially in the US, that counterinsurgency, or COIN, has gone out of fashion. This is not only due to the fact that budgetary restraints are nudging COIN aside. The counterinsurgency doctrine is also seen to have had limited success in Afghanistan and there are those who question whether COIN really worked in Iraq, or whether it was local circumstances that were decisive.<sup>183</sup> In addition, the jury is still out on the outcome in Iraq, with no durable political settlement in place and only slow development of national institutions.<sup>184</sup>

Thus, as is corroborated by many of the interviewees in this study, no one really speaks of COIN anymore – it is yesterday’s buzzword which gained traction under General David Petraeus, former commander of coalition forces in Iraq and later in Afghanistan. That said, one analyst suggested that the British Army may not be ready to give up on COIN just yet as the doctrine endorses large troop numbers for the army.<sup>185</sup> In addition, some commentators and analysts warn that completely turning one’s back on COIN and related thinking may result in the loss of valuable insights and the capacity gained over the past 10 years.<sup>186</sup> As Fred Kaplan notes, counterinsurgency is a technique rather than a strategy.<sup>187</sup> It encompasses guidelines based on lessons learned in certain given contexts. David Ucko identifies the benefits gained from COIN as including the principles of gaining a nuanced political understanding of a campaign, operating under a unified command, making use of intelligence, isolating insurgents from the population, using the minimum amount of force to achieve objectives, and maintaining perceived legitimacy among the population.<sup>188</sup> General Frank

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<sup>182</sup> See e.g. R. Haddick, ‘This Week at War: Rumsfeld’s Revenge’, *Foreign Policy*, 8 July 2011.

<sup>183</sup> D. H. Ucko, ‘Counterinsurgency after Afghanistan: A Concept in Crisis’, *PRISM* 3, no.1, December 2011.

<sup>184</sup> F. Kaplan, ‘The End of the Age of Petraeus: The Rise and Fall of Counterinsurgency’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2013).

<sup>185</sup> Interview with analyst in London, February 2013.

<sup>186</sup> See e.g. P. Feaver, transcript from ‘To COIN or Not?’, *Foreign Policy*, 18 March 2013.

<sup>187</sup> F. Kaplan, ‘The End of the Age of Petraeus: The Rise and Fall of Counterinsurgency’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2013).

<sup>188</sup> D. H. Ucko, ‘Counterinsurgency after Afghanistan: A Concept in Crisis’, *PRISM* 3, no.1, December 2011.

Kearney believes it is important not to retrench from interagency campaign-planning and the joint service approach.<sup>189</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Special Operations Forces

Special Forces are viewed as an instrument that is highly suited to the small footprint approach and irregular threats such as terrorism. The US, France and the UK have all therefore chosen to focus on this capability.

In the US, investments in Special Operations Forces shot up in the wake of 9/11. US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) nearly doubled in size, from a staff of about 37,000 staff in the early 1990s<sup>190</sup> to a total of 66,594 civilian and military personnel assigned to USSOCOM in FY 2013.<sup>191</sup> The aim is to continue to grow to a strength of 71,000 by FY 2015.<sup>192</sup> In connection with the publication of the Defense Strategic Guidance, Secretary of Defence Panetta stated: “Lastly, as we reduce the overall defence budget, we will protect our investments in special operations forces, new technologies like ISR and unmanned systems, space and cyberspace capabilities and our capacity to quickly mobilize”.<sup>193</sup>

The commander of USSOCOM, Admiral William McRaven, warned however that even if USSOCOM’s budget is expected to remain largely unchanged, Special Operations will feel the pinch from cuts to the services which Special Forces depend on for support, such as the use of aircraft or submarines to move forces.<sup>194</sup>

The UK also emphasises the value of its Special Operations Forces. The Special Forces were one of the few winners in the SDSR of 2010, which pledged to maintain the size of the regular Special Forces front line units while significantly enhancing support capabilities.<sup>195</sup> The Special Forces are viewed not only as an efficient and effective military resource, but also as a niche capability which

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<sup>189</sup> Lieutenant General F. Kearney, transcript from ‘US Special Operations Forces’, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 15 April 2013.

<sup>190</sup> ‘9/11 Anniversary: Shadow Army of CIA, Special Ops Drives Counterterrorism’, *International Business Times*, 5 September 2011.

<sup>191</sup> United States Special Operations Command, ‘FY2013 Budget Highlights’, [http://www.socom.mil/News/Documents/USSOCOM\\_FY\\_2013\\_Budget\\_Highlights.pdf](http://www.socom.mil/News/Documents/USSOCOM_FY_2013_Budget_Highlights.pdf).

<sup>192</sup> ‘Hearing on National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 2013 and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programmes before the Committee on Armed Services – Full Committee Hearing on Budget Requests from US Central Command, US Special Operations Command, and US Transportation Command’, House of Representatives, 7 March 2012.

<sup>193</sup> Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), ‘News Release’, Statement as Prepared by Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta on the Defense Strategic Guidance, 5 January 2012.

<sup>194</sup> J. Herb and C. Muñoz, ‘Special operations not immune to sequester cuts, commander says’, *The Hill*, 2 May 2013.

<sup>195</sup> HM Government, ‘Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review’, October 2010.

London prides itself on and which is seen to elevate the UK's international standing, especially vis-à-vis the United States but also in France. A small group of British Special Forces soldiers were reportedly in Mali, assisting the French commanders.<sup>196</sup> In connection with a visit to the US in May 2013, the UK's Defence Secretary, Philip Hammond, wrote: "The United Kingdom is committed to remaining America's most capable ally and the leading force in Europe. [...] We are investing in our world-class special forces and the whole force will be supported by the air transport, air-to-air refuelling, cyber and intelligence and surveillance capabilities that are vital to today's operations".<sup>197</sup>

However, the Special Forces are expected to be scaled back amid broad economic cuts in the UK defence budget. According to media reports, a restructuring programme is being considered to bring the elite units back to pre-Iraq levels.<sup>198</sup> The proposals would be implemented after the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan and involve cuts to the Special Forces Group of between 1,750 and 2,000 soldiers and marines, compared to the current strength of 3,500. Moreover, the plans involve taking the 21 and 23 SAS territorial units out of the Special Forces command to serve with the regular army. These reductions would put an end to a period of expansion which started in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001.

The French have singled out Special Operations Forces as something which they want more of. Experiences in Libya and Mali only accentuated this conviction. In an interview with *The New York Times* in February 2013, France's Defence Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, said that despite imminent cuts in some areas, some investments seemed inevitable: "like intelligence and special forces".<sup>199</sup> The White Paper on Defence said that Special Forces would be increased in size and their means of command would be strengthened.<sup>200</sup>

In the US, there is a debate over whether Special Forces should focus on the direct or the indirect approach.<sup>201</sup> The direct approach signifies unilateral, surgical strike action, such as the hunting down, killing or capturing of a terrorist. The indirect approach, or special warfare, includes those operations in which Special Forces work through or with others to shape and influence environments and populations, e.g. by training foreign security forces.<sup>202</sup> One analyst, Linda

<sup>196</sup> N. Hopkins, 'UK special forces active in Mali', *The Guardian*, 22 January 2013.

<sup>197</sup> P. Hammond, 'The Special Relationship Under Austerity', *Foreign Policy*, 3 May 2013.

<sup>198</sup> S. Rayment, 'Revealed: nearly half of Special Forces could go in deepest cuts in 50 years', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 March 2013.

<sup>199</sup> S. Erlanger, 'An Unexpected Mission for France's Defense Minister', *New York Times*, 19 February 2013.

<sup>200</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013'. p. 94.

<sup>201</sup> A. Feickert, 'US Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report for Congress, 6 February 2013.

<sup>202</sup> L. Robinson, 'The Future of US Special Operations Forces', Council on Foreign Relations, Council Special Report no. 66, April 2013.

Robinson, holds that while the indirect approach has been rhetorically prioritised as the most important aspect, in practice this has not been the case, and that most of the focus over the past decade has been directed towards the direct approach.<sup>203</sup> According to Robinson, this suboptimal way of using Special Forces can be explained by a general lack of understanding of what they can do, and also a belief among some that sending Special Forces to take out a threat provides a quick fix to problems:<sup>204</sup> “The net result is that special operations forces are stuck conducting endless strikes on terrorist target lists that are consistently repopulated with new individuals”.<sup>205</sup>

At the same time, questions have also been raised about whether the expansion of the Special Forces means that they are encroaching on what should be the domain of conventional forces.<sup>206</sup> In the US, the army is moving towards specialisation which was previously largely left with the Special Forces.

#### 4.1.3 Regional Specialisation

Prompted by insight gained in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US Army is introducing regionally aligned brigades. While this is a tactical measure to improve the effectiveness of the forces, it also indicates a move towards a more specialised army focused on close collaboration with partner countries. Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno announced the new programme in March 2012, stating that recent history had shown that *all* army units – not merely Special Forces or Civil Affairs – need cultural and regional awareness.<sup>207</sup> Regionally aligned forces will receive cultural and language training for the specific region to which they will be assigned. Small units from each brigade will be deployed for limited periods to separate missions in their designated region in order to support security cooperation activities and military exercises.<sup>208</sup> A first regionally aligned brigade, the so-called “Dagger” Brigade, was to be assigned to US Africa Command (AFRICOM) in May 2013.<sup>209</sup> Full implementation of the regionally aligned force concept is expected by 2016.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> L. Robinson, transcript from ‘US Special Operations Forces’, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 15 April 2013.

<sup>205</sup> L. Robinson, ‘The Future of US Special Operations Forces’, *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council Special Report no. 66, April 2013.

<sup>206</sup> See e.g. E. Schmitt and T. Shanker, ‘A Commander Seeks to Chart a New Path for Special Operations’, *New York Times*, 1 May 2013.

<sup>207</sup> Gen R. Odierno, ‘Regionally Aligned Forces: A New Model for Building Partnerships’, 22 March 2012, <http://armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2012/03/aligned-forces/>.

<sup>208</sup> US AFRICOM Public Affairs, ‘General Ham: Small, Tailored US Military Presence Best for Supporting African Nations’, 26 March 2013.

<sup>209</sup> D. Vergun, ‘11th ACR Testing “Dagger” Soldiers for AFRICOM Missions’, *Army News Service*, 12 March 2013.

<sup>210</sup> US Army, ‘Today’s Focus: Regionally Aligned Forces’, *STAND-TO!*, 20 December 2012.

On the positive side, this innovative programme of regionally aligning troops will obviously sharpen the abilities of the military units and make them more perceptive and effective on the ground by providing them with local understanding and expertise. This can arguably be realised at a much lower cost than if the same soldiers had been forward deployed or based overseas to support partnership operations.<sup>211</sup> However, there are many specifics relating to the programme which remain unknown.<sup>212</sup> Among the creases which need to be ironed out are issues such as the costs of carrying out the programme, who exactly will receive the training, how and when the training will be carried out, whether training will be provided over the soldiers' whole careers and how to sustain this training.

One analyst interviewed for this report noted that such specialisation of troops, which has previously been the domain of Special Operations Forces, was likely to be expensive.<sup>213</sup> There is also the issue of how to retain these soldiers once they have received their costly training. The army would have to compete with the more lucrative private sector, which is always interested in people with sought-after language and cultural skills. Similarly, the relatively costly training means that it will be in the interests of the army to encourage retention of staff within units with the same regional expertise. This may be a challenge as the army must at the same time be able to offer soldiers opportunities for development and promotion.<sup>214</sup> Another question is whether enabling units will be regionally aligned. According to Steve Griffin, there are not sufficient numbers of support and functional brigades to commit them to specific regions while at the same time meeting ongoing contingency or operational needs.<sup>215</sup>

#### 4.1.4 Building the Capacity of Others

The increased investment in Special Forces and the cultural and language training of army personnel are both seen as enhancing the capability to assist in strengthening partner capacity. Indeed, a current buzzword is capacity building or security force assistance (SFA).

Capacity building and military assistance are by no means new, and they are also part of counterinsurgency. There were a number of programmes for example during the Cold War, and the so-called Nixon Doctrine involved US military and

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<sup>211</sup> S. Griffin, 'Regionally-Aligned Brigades: There's More to This Plan than Meets the Eye', *Small Wars Journal*, 19 September 2012.

<sup>212</sup> A. Feickert, 'Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Background and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report for Congress, 5 March 2013.

<sup>213</sup> Interview with analyst in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>214</sup> S. Griffin, 'Regionally-Aligned Brigades: There's More to This Plan Than Meets the Eye', *Small Wars Journal*, 19 September 2012.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

economic assistance to allies, where the receiving country was to assume the main responsibility for providing the manpower for its defence. Providing security sector capacity building fits the light footprint model like a glove. It does not require a large military presence and it is viewed as a preventive strategy, whereby the assistance is seen to stabilise the country in question and provide the means for the receiving country to take care of its own problems. Importantly, it has also come to represent an exit strategy for interventions – something which was very much the case in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It is notable that capacity building was also seen to offer the US an exit strategy in Vietnam.

The UK in its SDSR of 2010 sets out that it will identify and manage risks before they reach the UK by preventing conflicts and building local capacity to handle problems.<sup>216</sup> The US states in its NSS that its military will continue to improve its capacity to partner with foreign counterparts as well as to train and assist security forces.<sup>217</sup> The French White Paper highlights the importance of a well-functioning security apparatus to the stability of states and underscores that France has much experience in offering such assistance.<sup>218</sup>

Nonetheless, providing others with military assistance is not without potential difficulties.<sup>219</sup> One challenge is identifying which states are legitimate and appropriate recipients and under what circumstances. RAND recently published a comprehensive analysis of 29 countries to which the US has provided assistance since the end of the Cold War with the aim of building partner capacity (BPC).<sup>220</sup> The conclusion reached was that prospects for effective capacity building are especially good if efforts are based on shared interests and matched to partner objectives and the ability to absorb and retain the materiel and training. This arguably underlines the difficulties in providing support to more fragile countries which do not always have much capability in place to absorb such assistance.

Importantly, security sector capacity building requires a comprehensive approach, in which support is provided not only to the military but also to the police and to rule of law institutions. Unfortunately, however, efforts all too often focus on train-and-equip programmes, paying less attention to for example the strengthening of institutions. The explanations for this are many, but some stem from a desire or pressure to produce quick results. The focus on measuring

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<sup>216</sup> HM Government, 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review', October 2010.

<sup>217</sup> The White House, 'National Security Strategy', May 2010.

<sup>218</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 81.

<sup>219</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of capability building see C. Nilsson and K. Zetterlund, *Arming the Peace: The Sensitive Business of Capacity Building*, Stockholm, Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2011.

<sup>220</sup> C. Paul et al., 'What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?', RAND, 2013.

progress also plays a role, as it is easier to count the number of soldiers trained and the amount of equipment provided than how much a ministry has been strengthened.

The case of Mali illustrates this conundrum. The US had supported Mali's security forces for many years before the military overthrew the government in March 2012. The coup was led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, who himself had received military training in the US on several occasions.<sup>221</sup> AFRICOM Commander General Carter F. Ham admitted that Malian training had focused on tactical and technical matters: "We didn't spend, probably, the requisite time focusing on values, ethics and military ethos".<sup>222</sup>

One counter argument to the dangers of militarily supporting states and other actors, expressed by Lieutenant General Frank Kearney, former Deputy Combatant Commander of US special operations forces, is that being on the ground entails the possibility of exerting some influence: "If you're absent, you're absent. You can't influence after the fact and people don't really want you to come in when you didn't play in the game from the get-go".<sup>223</sup>

A closely linked issue which has come to the fore with Iraq and Afghanistan is security assistance to non-state actors. In Iraq, the "Anbar Awakening" or "Sons of Iraq" programme involved providing assistance to a group of predominantly Sunni tribal leaders who decided to stop fighting coalition forces and turn their back on Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups. In Afghanistan, support has been provided to the Afghan Local Police, which in essence is made up of local defence groups, including local militia. This bottom-up approach of backing local security groups raises a number of questions, including which groups to select for such support, how to connect the local security level with that of the state, and the potential danger of "creating monsters" further down the line by militarising parts of society which may not be linked to the state's security apparatus.

## 4.2 Drones and Robots: Fighting from Afar

Advances in military weaponry are facilitating the light footprint approach. While many features of war have changed little over the centuries, some of today's technical developments promise far-reaching consequences for war fighting. Space-based technologies, which facilitate positioning, navigation and timing, are key to modern warfare. In addition, weapons are becoming

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<sup>221</sup> C. Whitlock, 'Leader of Mali military coup trained in US', *Washington Post*, 24 March 2012.

<sup>222</sup> T. C. Marshall Jr, 'AFRICOM Commander Addresses Concerns, Potential Solutions in Mali', *American Forces Press Service*, 24 January 2013.

<sup>223</sup> Lieutenant General F. Kearney, transcript from 'US Special Operations Forces', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 15 April 2013.

increasingly autonomous. Robotic warfare no longer seems mere fantasy and combat can be fought from afar by means of sensors and cameras.

Human Rights Watch and International Human Rights Clinics distinguish between three types of robotic weapons: Human-in-the Loop Weapons, which are robots that can choose targets and use force only under human control; Human-on-the-Loop Weapons, which can choose targets and use force with the oversight of a human operator who can overrule the robot; and Human-out-of-the-Loop Weapons, which are robots that can choose targets and use force without any human involvement.<sup>224</sup> Research and development is quickly moving towards increasingly autonomous weapons. The UN stated in a report in April 2013 that while completely autonomous weapons are yet to be deployed, the US, the UK, Israel and South Korea are already using technologies that are precursors to fully autonomous systems.<sup>225</sup> There are also plenty of partly autonomous weapons already in use. One case in point is the exponential increase in recent years in the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones.

#### 4.2.1 The Increasing Popularity of Drones

Drones have been employed extensively in recent military interventions, for example in Afghanistan, Libya and Mali. They have also been the weapon of choice for the US in its fight against terrorists in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. Although there are no official data, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism and *The Long War Journal* have calculated that the US has launched more than 330 drone strikes in Pakistan since the start of its programme in 2004 – of which a clear majority have been launched since 2008.<sup>226</sup>

Although 76 countries reportedly possess UAVs, only three – the US, the UK and Israel, are said to be using armed drones.<sup>227</sup> According to data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies published in 2012, the US has at least 678 drones of 18 different models, including over 100 armed MQ-1B Predator

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<sup>224</sup> Human Rights Watch and International Human Rights Clinics, 'Losing Humanity: The Case against Killer Robots', November 2012.

<sup>225</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns', Human Rights Council, 9 April 2013, A/HRC/23/47.

<sup>226</sup> Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 'Obama 2013 Pakistan drone strikes' <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2013/01/03/obama-2013-pakistan-drone-strikes/>, and The Long War Journal, 'Charting the data for US airstrikes in Pakistan, 2004 – 2013', <http://www.longwarjournal.org/pakistan-strikes.php>.

<sup>227</sup> Drone Wars UK, 'Shelling Out: UK Government Spending on Unmanned Drones', September 2012, and H. J. Martin, 'The UK and Armed Drones', British American Security Information Council, January 2013.



drones.<sup>228</sup> As of May 2013, the UK reportedly had a total of 500 drones, confirming an increasing trend in line with the MOD's ambition that one-third of the Royal Air Force should consist of drones by 2030.<sup>229</sup> This fleet includes five MQ-9 Reaper drones, a number that is set to double when five additional Reaper drones are deployed for combat and surveillance in Afghanistan.<sup>230</sup> Underscoring London's continued investment in drones, for the first time the UK's UAVs flying in Afghanistan in April 2013 were remotely piloted from a base in the UK.<sup>231</sup> Prior to that, British Reaper drones had been operated from Nevada, US, as the UK did not have the capability.

The Mali intervention showed France that it had a shortage of drones, and the French White Paper emphasises the need to increase efforts in the field of intelligence, including the acquisition of additional unarmed UAVs. According to the IISS data from 2012, France had 23 UAVs.<sup>232</sup> In connection with the Mali operation, where the US has provided intelligence gathered from surveillance drones, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told *The New York Times* that the lack of French surveillance drones was incomprehensible, noting that France only had two drones in theatre.<sup>233</sup> In answer to the question of whether national pride and a refusal to buy US equipment explained this lack, he replied: "I'm trying to remedy this impasse and this pride", adding, "It is a real question for us". According to media reports, Paris is considering buying unarmed Reaper drones from the US.<sup>234</sup> France is also, together with Italy, Sweden, Spain, Greece and Switzerland, developing the nEUROn unmanned combat air vehicle (UCAV).<sup>235</sup> In addition, France and the UK are designing a UAV together, while France and Germany are talking about collaborating on a UAV.<sup>236</sup>

The use of this new technology is spreading rapidly. In terms of armed drones, other countries are not far behind the US, the UK and Israel in developing their own. China for example has reportedly been stepping up its research on drones,<sup>237</sup> and Russia is looking to develop its own strike UAVs, possibly putting the first one into service by the end of 2014.<sup>238</sup> Importantly, the technology is

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<sup>228</sup> S. Rogers, 'Drones by country: who has all the UAVs?', *The Guardian*, 3 August 2012.

<sup>229</sup> N. Hopkins, 'British military has 500 drones', *The Guardian*, 6 May 2013.

<sup>230</sup> N. Hopkins, 'UK to double number of drones in Afghanistan', *The Guardian*, 22 October 2012, and S. Rogers, 'Drones by country: who has all the UAVs?', *The Guardian*, 3 August 2012.

<sup>231</sup> 'Armed drones operated from RAF base in UK, says MoD', *BBC News*, 27 April 2013.

<sup>232</sup> S. Rogers, 'Drones by country: who has all the UAVs?', *The Guardian*, 3 August 2012.

<sup>233</sup> S. Erlanger, 'An Unexpected Mission for France's Defense Minister', *New York Times*, 19 February 2013.

<sup>234</sup> T. Kelly, 'France "to buy US drones"', *France 24*, 8 April 2013.

<sup>235</sup> Dassault Aviation, 'The nEUROn makes its maiden flight', 1 December 2012.

<sup>236</sup> J. de Week and B. Parkin, 'European Drone Plan Seeks Political Backing as in Boost to EADS', *Bloomberg*, 21 January 2013.

<sup>237</sup> See e.g. M. McDonald, 'Growth in China's Drone Program Called "Alarming"', *International Herald Tribune*, 27 November 2012.

<sup>238</sup> 'Russian Army to Receive First Indigenous Strike UAV in 2014', *RIA Novosti*, 28 June 2012.

also being acquired and used by non-state actors as well as international organisations. The United Nations for example is looking into how to benefit from the use of UAVs, and plans to deploy surveillance drones in its peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).<sup>239</sup> The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) used UAVs in Haiti as part of its restoration work after the earthquake, providing surveillance for the International Organization for Migration (IOM).<sup>240</sup> An example of a non-state actor gaining access to the technology is Hezbollah, which in October 2012 launched what was reportedly an Iranian-made unarmed drone into Israeli airspace.<sup>241</sup> Israel claims that it has destroyed a Hamas drone programme.<sup>242</sup> Surveillance drones are also used for domestic purposes, for example by US law enforcement authorities. As the technology becomes more readily available, it is arguably only a question of time before drones pass into the hands of terrorists.

#### 4.2.2 The Pros and Cons of Autonomous Weapons

Fully or partly autonomous weapons have a number of potential benefits. Perhaps the most pronounced advantage is that they allow countries to fight from afar and thereby avoid having to risk the lives of soldiers on the ground. A drone, for example, can be sent to country X while the operator sits in the safety of a control room looking at screens in country Y. This means that governments do not have soldier casualties to explain to their electorate, which in war-averse times could gain them many votes. Similarly, in the case of UAVs, having drones in the air may be a more viable option in cases where the country in question feels foreign troops would ignite opposition and protest among the local population.<sup>243</sup> There is also the advantage of removing the limitations set by the human body. An unmanned drone can for example make aerial manoeuvres which a person would not be able to handle in terms of speed, acceleration or altitude. In addition, while a robot may need fuel, it does not have to rest or sleep after a certain number of hours. Similarly, the size and weight of a vehicle must be larger if it is to carry a person. UAVs can also reach rugged, difficult terrain which soldiers cannot access as easily. The precision of drones and other technologically developed weapons may also help minimise the number of

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<sup>239</sup> C. Lynch, 'UN wants to use drones for peacekeeping missions', *Washington Post*, 8 January 2013.

<sup>240</sup> UNITAR, 'UNOSAT carries out first UAV mission for IOM in Haiti', 17 February 2012, <http://www.unitar.org/unosat-carries-out-first-uav-mission-iom-haiti>.

<sup>241</sup> 'Iran: Hezbollah drone proves our capabilities', *Associated Press*, 14 October 2012, and A. A. Dareini, 'Report: Iran has drone pictures of Israeli bases', *Associated Press*, 29 October 2012.

<sup>242</sup> 'Israel says it knocked out Hamas drone program', *CBS News*, 16 November 2012.

<sup>243</sup> See e.g. P. Bergen and K. Tiedemann, 'Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the US Drone Program in Pakistan', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90, no. 4, July/August 2011.

civilian casualties and avoid property damage.<sup>244</sup> Soldiers battling on the ground to reach their target arguably risk much larger civilian casualties.<sup>245</sup> The ability of UAVs to remain over a suspected target for extended periods, collecting intelligence, may also result in better and more accurate target selection.

However, the use of autonomous weapons raises some serious questions for policymakers and the military alike. Their use and proliferation are not unproblematic and many of the potential benefits of autonomous weapons can also be seen as potential risks.

Importantly, while the technology allows war fighting from a safe distance, it also means that the threshold for using force is much reduced. Arguably, it is easier to push the kill button when watching events on a screen than when facing the enemy for real. However, the problem of acting from a distance is not unique to UAVs – it also exists for manned systems, e.g. for fighter pilots ordering up strikes from far above the actual target. At the same time, the stark contrasts in the life of a soldier operating these weapons can cause problems. There have been reports of elevated stress levels among drone operators due to the abrupt shift between realities – spending the day in a war on the other side of the world and the evening doing grocery shopping and talking to the children about their day at school.<sup>246</sup> There are also counterarguments to the view that not putting boots on the ground avoids protests among the local population. Indeed, some say that drones can breed more enemies and facilitate the recruitment of terrorists, as well as worsening the international standing of their operators.<sup>247</sup>

Similarly, while scientists are trying to improve the technology so that robots are able to discriminate more carefully in their target selection, it is hard to imagine a robot being able to make judgements in the same way as a person – for example with regard to whether the target is showing signs of wanting to surrender. In addition, the fact that drones cannot apprehend or question the enemy means that potentially useful intelligence may be lost.<sup>248</sup> Arguably even more troubling is the fact that the target never gets a chance to argue his or her innocence. Accountability for any action taken is also an issue of concern. Who is to blame for a mistake made by an autonomous robot – the manufacturer? Moreover, completely computerised systems introduce a risk that systems can be hacked

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<sup>244</sup> See e.g. K. Anderson and M. Waxman, 'Law and Ethics for Robot Soldiers', Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Policy Review, no. 176, 1 December 2012.

<sup>245</sup> T. McCrisken, 'Obama's Drone War', *Survival*, vol. 55, no. 2, April-May 2013.

<sup>246</sup> See e.g. R. Martin, 'Report: High Levels of "Burnout" in US Drone Pilots', *NPR*, 18 December 2011.

<sup>247</sup> See e.g. Stanford Law School and NYU School of Law, 'Living Under Drones', September 2012, <http://www.livingunderdrones.org/>.

<sup>248</sup> P. Bergen and K. Tiedemann, 'Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the US Drone Program in Pakistan', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90, no. 4, July/August 2011.

and/or tampered with so that the weapons fail or, even worse, attack an unintended target.

The legal and moral issues connected with the use of drones are considerable, and the exponential increase in the interest in and use of these weapons mean that such concerns will not go away, but rather only emphasise the urgent need for debate and clarification.

Importantly, physical detachment from the actual war fighting has resulted in less democratic control of the use of force. Human Rights Watch and International Human Rights Clinics argue that emotionless robots could provide an efficient instrument for repressive dictators, who would not have to worry about their troops turning on them.<sup>249</sup> Analyst Peter W. Singer draws attention to the fact that when politicians no longer have to send soldiers into harm's way, and consequently do not have to face the impact that body bags have on voters and the news media, weighty matters of war are no longer treated in the same way.<sup>250</sup> He notes that the US drone campaign in Pakistan, which is carried out by the CIA, has, for example, never been voted on by the US Congress.<sup>251</sup> Similarly, President Obama never sought congressional authorisation for US military involvement in Libya. Lawmakers from both parties complained, but the White House defended its decision not to ask for approval from Congress by arguing that US forces were only playing a limited, supporting role in a multinational coalition.<sup>252</sup>

The question of democratic control over the use of force becomes even more questionable in the case of US drone operations in Pakistan. The fact that the CIA runs the show means less transparency in terms of informing the population, for example, of how targets are selected and the number of people killed, but it also translates into less political control. According to a detailed and widely publicised media account in *The New York Times*, Obama signs off on every drone strike in Yemen and Somalia – where the Pentagon handles the operations, but only about one-third of the drone strikes carried out in Pakistan – the more complex and risky strikes.<sup>253</sup>

The US administration's reported acceptance of the CIA's method for counting civilian casualties also makes transparency debatable.<sup>254</sup> According to this system, all males of military age caught in a strike zone are considered

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<sup>249</sup> Human Rights Watch and International Human Rights Clinics, 'Losing Humanity: The Case against Killer Robots', November 2012.

<sup>250</sup> P. W. Singer, 'The Robotics Revolution', Brookings, Opinion, 11 December 2012.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Department of State and Department of Defense, 'United States Activities in Libya', 15 June 2011, <http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/wh-libya.pdf>.

<sup>253</sup> J. Becker and S. Shane, 'Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will', *New York Times*, 29 May 2012.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

combatants. This explains how CIA Director John Brennan, at the time the White House Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser, could state in June 2011 that for nearly a year there had not been “a single collateral death because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities”.<sup>255</sup> According to assessments made by the *New America Foundation*, as of 7 May 2013, between 2,003 and 3,321 people had been killed in US drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004.<sup>256</sup> Of these, 1,558 to 2,700 were militants.

The White House, however, is said to be working on a detailed manual that imposes stringent standards and rules,<sup>257</sup> and is preparing to shift the CIA’s drone programme to the Pentagon.<sup>258</sup> Many argue that such a move would enhance accountability as strikes would be more closely scrutinised by military lawyers, and placed more clearly within the military chain of command.<sup>259</sup>

The use of drones has also raised legal questions in the UK. The UK Parliament’s Defence Committee has stated that among the topics it plans to examine in its efforts to help shape the next SDSR is the use of drones, including the legal aspects.<sup>260</sup> Accusations that British intelligence is helping the US to direct its strikes, and thereby encouraging or assisting murder, have even led to legal action.<sup>261</sup> Although the High Court decided it could not legally review whether UK intelligence agencies are passing information to the CIA, the lawsuit highlighted a delicate issue. Moreover, David Anderson, the UK’s independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said in June 2012 that there were signs of a wave of compensation claims connected to potential complicity in the targeting of terror suspects.<sup>262</sup> London has neither confirmed nor denied that it shares intelligence with the US for drone strikes.<sup>263</sup>

Concerns have also been expressed internationally. In April 2013, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, summary or arbitrary executions,

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<sup>255</sup> J. Brennan, ‘Obama Administration Counterterrorism Strategy’, Q&A session following speech given at Johns Hopkins University, Nitze (Paul H.) School of Advanced International Studies, 29 June 2011, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/300266-1>.

<sup>256</sup> New America Foundation, ‘The Year of the Drone’, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones> (accessed on 7 May 2013).

<sup>257</sup> G. Miller, E. Nakashima and K. DeYoung, ‘CIA drone strikes will get pass in counterterrorism ‘playbook,’ officials say’, *Washington Post*, 19 January 2013, and S. Shane, ‘Election Spurred a Move to Codify US Drone Policy’, *New York Times*, 24 November 2012.

<sup>258</sup> D. Klaidman, ‘Exclusive: No More Drones for CIA’, *Daily Beast*, 19 March 2013.

<sup>259</sup> See e.g. P. Bergen and K. Tiedemann, ‘Washington’s Phantom War – The Effects of the US Drone Program in Pakistan’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90, no. 4, July/August 2011.

<sup>260</sup> UK Defence Committee, ‘Defence Committee Future Programme’, 10 December 2012.

<sup>261</sup> R. Somaiya, ‘Drone Strike Prompts Suit, Raising Fears for US Allies’, *New York Times*, 30 January 2013.

<sup>262</sup> T. Whitehead, ‘Terror watchdog warns of wave of compensation claims over drone strikes’, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 June 2012.

<sup>263</sup> S. Swann, ‘CIA drone strikes: Is the UK involved?’, *BBC*, 21 December 2012.

Christof Heyns, presented a report in which he called for states to establish national moratoria on aspects of lethal autonomous robotics, and recommended the establishment of a high-level panel to formulate international policy on the issue.<sup>264</sup> Separately, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism, Ben Emmerson, launched an inquiry into the impact on civilians of drone strikes and other forms of targeted killings.<sup>265</sup>

Worries over and the arguable lack of transparency in the use of UAVs can have implications for public support both at home and abroad. An opinion poll carried out by the Pew Research Center in the spring of 2012 showed widespread opposition to the US drone campaign, with more than half of respondents in 17 of 20 countries disapproving of the use of drone strikes by the US to target extremists. In France, for example, 63% of respondents disapproved and 37% approved. Two of the three outliers, however, were the UK (44% approved, 47% disapproved) and the US (62% approved, 28% disapproved).<sup>266</sup> A comprehensive study carried out by YouGov in 2013 also showed that the British are divided on whether the use of drones is beneficial to Western security. While a majority supported the policy of targeted drone strikes in principle, there was also concern about the civilian and political costs of drone warfare and that it could perhaps make foreign intervention too easy.<sup>267</sup> This concern over and potential opposition to drones shows that policymakers must take these issues seriously in order to safeguard both votes and international reputations.

Different actors offer different recipes for resolving concerns related to autonomous weapons. In April 2013, a group of NGOs launched a large civil society campaign to “Stop Killer Robots”, promoting an international ban on the development and deployment of fully autonomous robot weapons.<sup>268</sup> However, there are also those who argue that the incremental development and deployment of such systems as well as the potential humanitarian advantages which stem from their precision mean that prohibitive treaties will not be possible and anyway are ethically questionable.<sup>269</sup> Instead, they see a solution in the gradual shaping of international ethical and legal norms on acceptable systems and their appropriate use.

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<sup>264</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/23/47, 9 April 2013.

<sup>265</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘UN Counter-Terrorism Expert to launch inquiry into the civilian impact of drones and other forms of targeted killings’, 22 January 2012, and ‘UN launches inquiry into drone killings’, *BBC News*, 24 January 2013.

<sup>266</sup> The third outlier was India. Pew Research Center, ‘Global Opinion of Obama Slips, International Policies Faulted’, 13 June 2012.

<sup>267</sup> J. Faulkner Rogers, ‘British attitudes to drones’, *YouGov-Cambridge*, 3 April 2013.

<sup>268</sup> Campaign to stop killer robots, ‘About us’, <http://www.stopkillerrobots.org/about-us/>.

<sup>269</sup> K. Anderson and M. Waxman, ‘Law and Ethics for Robot Soldiers’, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Policy Review, no. 176, 1 December 2012.

Ultimately, and crucially, while drones can carry out surgical strikes and take out individual terrorists or other enemies, they do not provide a silver bullet for all potential threats to peace and security. Indeed, as is noted above, it is possible that they can actually destabilise countries. Most importantly, there will be situations in which it will be impossible to provide security without troops on the ground.

### 4.3 Meeting the Cyber Threat

All the attention currently dedicated to meeting the cyber threat does not mean that there are no questions left unanswered. On the contrary, given the speed of technical progress and the increasing use of, and dependency on, the Internet, responding to the threat of cyber attacks remains an evolving and challenging task. To underline the sense of urgency, a Pentagon report written by the US Defense Science Board in January 2013 set out that with current capabilities and technologies it is not possible for the DOD to say with confidence that the most sophisticated cyber attacks can be defended against.<sup>270</sup> The Pentagon is ramping up its efforts. At the beginning of 2013 it was reported that it plans to expand its cyber security force more than fivefold.<sup>271</sup> The Cyber Command will grow from about 900 personnel to 4900 troops and civilians.

The question of defence, however, is not straightforward. As is noted in section 3.4, it remains a challenge to identify an attacker with any degree of certainty. There is then the question of whether the attack had malicious intent. The targets of the attack must also determine the extent of the attack and an appropriate response, as any defensive reaction should arguably meet the requirements of necessity, proportionality, imminence and immediacy.

It is important to note that cyber warfare gives the attacker the advantage, as opposed to Clausewitz's argument that defence is the stronger form of waging war.<sup>272</sup> It is nearly impossible to defend against all possible assaults and, if there are no repercussions for a failed operation, the attacker can keep trying until something works.<sup>273</sup> Passive defence must therefore be complemented with active defence, which includes damaging or eliminating the enemy's ability to carry out cyber attacks or imposing other costs on the attackers, for example, in the form of economic sanctions or even kinetic military attacks. Both resilience

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<sup>270</sup> Department of Defense, Defense Science Board, 'Task Force Report: Resilient Military Systems and the Advanced Cyber Threat', January 2013.

<sup>271</sup> See e.g. E. Nakashima, 'Pentagon to boost cybersecurity force', *Washington Post*, 27 January 2013.

<sup>272</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Everyman's Library, 1993, Book Six, Chapter One, pp. 427-430.

<sup>273</sup> H. Lin, 'Escalation Dynamics and Conflict Termination in Cyberspace', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Fall 2012.

under and after attack, and deterrence have an important role [or something like this].

This highlights one of the issues in the field of cyber security which still needs an answer: What should the balance be between defensive and offensive cyber capabilities? Analyst Gustav Lindström takes the question one step further and asks what the implications are of an increase in offensive cyber capabilities. Could it perhaps result in a cyber arms race?<sup>274</sup>

These are some of the questions which are causing headaches in many countries. The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn has attempted to codify how international law applies to the field of cyber security. An international group of independent experts spent three years developing the “Tallinn Manual”, which was published in March 2013.<sup>275</sup> The experts found that there was no relevant body of law which was inapplicable to cyber activities, but the Project Director admitted that there could be interpretative uncertainty because cyber activities can, for example, cause devastation without causing physical injury.<sup>276</sup>

One issue on which the group found it challenging to reach a consensus was how to define “armed attacks”. In the end, whether a cyber attack represented an armed attack was thought to depend on its scale and effects, but uncertainty over how to define scale and effects plagued the discussions.<sup>277</sup> The State Department legal adviser, Harold Koh, in September 2012 gave the US view of what constitutes the use of force in the cyber sphere: “cyber activities that proximately result in death, injury or significant destruction would likely be viewed as a use of force”.<sup>278</sup> In France, the White Paper on Defence and National Security states that a cyber attack with large-scale consequences could be considered an act of war.<sup>279</sup> Koh said that a cyber attack which amounts to an armed attack or the imminent threat thereof would justify self-defence. Most experts behind the Tallinn Manual agree that pre-emptive self-defence is permissible.<sup>280</sup> How to determine that an attack is imminent, however, remains open to interpretation.

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<sup>274</sup> G. Lindström, ‘Meeting the Cyber Security Challenge’, *GCSP Geneva Papers – Research Series*, no. 7, June 2012.

<sup>275</sup> M. N. Schmitt (ed.), *The Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

<sup>276</sup> M. N. Schmitt, ‘International Law in Cyberspace: The Koh Speech and Tallinn Manual Juxtaposed’, *Harvard International Law Journal*, vol. 54, December 2012.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> Department of State, ‘International Law in Cyberspace’, Remarks, Harold Hongju Koh, Legal Advisor US Department of State, USCYBERCOM Inter-Agency Legal Conference, 18 September 2012.

<sup>279</sup> ‘Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013’, p. 49.

<sup>280</sup> M. N. Schmitt, ‘International Law in Cyberspace: The Koh Speech and Tallinn Manual Juxtaposed’, *Harvard International Law Journal*, vol. 54, December 2012.



Once again, the challenge of attribution as well as the possible speed of an attack makes self-defence – especially pre-emptive defence – complex.

As is mentioned above, an appropriate response may not be obvious, and could actually escalate the conflict. The scientist Herbert Lin has drawn attention to the danger of escalation and chain reactions linked to factors such as misinterpretation, the unintended consequences of an operational action or the involvement of third parties provoking two parties to engage in conflict.<sup>281</sup> There is, therefore, a need for all countries to deliberate carefully on their doctrine for conflict in cyberspace. The UK Defence Committee has called on the government to develop doctrine with regard to cyber security, noting that there is much work to be done to determine which attacks would warrant a military response.<sup>282</sup>

The effects of a successful cyber attack could be devastating but, as many analysts stress, the cyber threat in the realm of national security should not be exaggerated. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the main responsibility for defending against cyber attacks may not fall to the military. One view is that cyber instruments are more likely to be enablers in times of conflict.<sup>283</sup> Others believe that states will adapt to the evolving threat and that transparency and democracy, rather than the short-term temptation to introduce authority and control into cyberspace, will facilitate such adaptation.<sup>284</sup> International cooperation can be part of such efforts to adapt, and a working group on cyber security recently set up by China and the US constitutes a positive example.<sup>285</sup> Another example is the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn. The US is already a sponsoring nation, and the UK has said it plans to send a national representative to the Centre.<sup>286</sup>

It is crucial that all key stakeholders are involved. An executive order signed by President Obama in February 2013 is evidence of attempts to involve the private sector, encouraging better information sharing about cyber threats between the

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<sup>281</sup> H. Lin, 'Escalation Dynamics and Conflict Termination in Cyberspace', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Fall 2012.

<sup>282</sup> House of Commons Defence Committee, 'Defence and Cyber-Security: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2012-13', Sixth Special Report of Session 2012-13, HC 719, 22 March 2013.

<sup>283</sup> G. Lindström, 'Meeting the Cyber Security Challenge', *GCSP Geneva Papers: Research Series* no. 7, June 2012.

<sup>284</sup> D. J. Betz and T. Stevens, 'Cyberspace and the State: Toward a Strategy for Cyber-power', *Adelphi*, no. 424, November 2011.

<sup>285</sup> 'US, China agree to work together on cyber security', *Reuters*, 13 April 2013.

<sup>286</sup> House of Commons Defence Committee, 'Defence and Cyber-Security: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2012-13', Sixth Special Report of Session 2012-13, HC 719, 22 March 2013.

government and private enterprises handling critical infrastructure.<sup>287</sup> Also the hacking community must be incorporated. As one cyber security analyst recently noted, many hackers prefer defending because it is more difficult: “Do the Avengers need to rise?”, he asked, “When do they rise? They rise when the system doesn’t sufficiently fight evil”.<sup>288</sup>

## 4.4 Strengthening Collaboration with Allies

Defence budget cuts and the subsequent reductions in capabilities in the US and Europe make the case for strengthened cooperation with partners and allies. However, the multilateral institutions in Europe which traditionally promote cooperation on security and defence seem unable to define and agree on future priorities. Instead, the concept of collaboration between smaller groups of willing and able states is gaining ground. This is the case when it comes to both operations and capability development.

The burden of today’s complex operations means that even militarily strong states are seeking collaborative frameworks and burden-sharing. Furthermore, the comparatively quick decision-making processes of coalitions of the willing compared to multilateral institutions make them all the more attractive. Indeed, their ability to act quickly has proved critical in the initial stages of recent operations, as was demonstrated for example in Libya. At the same time, multilateral institutions and informal contact groups including local and regional stakeholders remain important to provide legitimacy to an operation. Multilateral institutions such as NATO can also provide valuable structures for command and control.<sup>289</sup>

In the recent operation in Mali, France chose to intervene unilaterally given the rapidly deteriorating security situation on the ground. It could be argued that such a quick reaction is only possible in a national system such as that of France, where the executive has substantial decision-making power. However, France’s allies, most importantly the US, provided key enablers in support of the operation. In fact, the US demonstrated that it is the only country with a global logistics system able to facilitate operations all over the world.<sup>290</sup>

Economic strains in the defence field have also prompted initiatives, such as pooling and sharing, and smart defence, to increase cooperation on capability development within Europe. Although these initiatives originated within the

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<sup>287</sup> M. S. Schmidt and N. Perlroth, ‘Obama Order Gives Firms Cyberthreat Information’, *New York Times*, 12 February 2013.

<sup>288</sup> M. J. Gross, ‘World War 3.0’, *Vanity Fair*, May 2012.

<sup>289</sup> S. Rynning, ‘Coalitions, institutions and big tents: the new strategic reality of armed intervention’, *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 1, 2013, p.56.

<sup>290</sup> Interviews with analyst in Washington, DC, March 2013.

framework of the EU and NATO, respectively, defence collaborations increasingly take the form of bilateral or regional initiatives limited to a smaller number of states. The tangible results of these defence collaborations, however, have so far been limited. States continue to fear that their freedom of action may be jeopardised if partners block the use of shared resources in an operation. In times of economic constraint, states are also reluctant to commit to ambitious initiatives that incur high costs in the short term. A case in point is how the UK eventually refrained from adapting its planned second new aircraft carrier so that French aircraft could land on it.<sup>291</sup>

In the US, President Obama attaches more value to cooperation with European allies than his predecessor did. Although the military relationship with the UK remains special, France is considered an increasingly capable and reliable ally. It should be added, however, that there is still some scepticism in the US over French assertions of strategic independence and the protection of its defence industry.<sup>292</sup>

For the UK, the so-called special relationship with the US continues to be of key importance. The analysts interviewed told how some British military leaders feared that the UK had not lived up to US expectations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that this might have negative consequences for the relationship. British cooperation with France has deepened since the Lancaster House agreement on defence cooperation was signed in 2010. The UK views the bilateral relationship with France as an alternative to European defence cooperation. The expeditionary nature of France's armed forces, which is similar to that of the UK's forces, means that France is thought to stand apart from the rest of Europe.<sup>293</sup>

France, for its part, has become more pragmatic when it comes to defence cooperation within the EU and NATO. The Libya mission demonstrated to France that NATO's integrated military structures work. France has traditionally promoted collaboration with both the UK and Germany in the area of defence, but Berlin's reluctance to play an assertive military role has dampened prospects for defence cooperation with Germany.<sup>294</sup> This will probably increase the incentives for France to strengthen cooperation with the UK and the US, at least with regard to operations.<sup>295</sup> At the same time, however, France remains wary

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<sup>291</sup> C. M. O'Donnell, 'Time to bite the bullet on European defence', Center for European Reform, February 2013.

<sup>292</sup> Interviews with analysts in Washington, DC, March 2013.

<sup>293</sup> Interviews with analysts in London, February 2013.

<sup>294</sup> Interviews with analysts in Paris, April 2013.

<sup>295</sup> L. Michel, 'Construct a US-UK-French "Entente Cordiale"', *defensenews.com*, 7 April 2013 and B. Gomes, 'France-UK Defence Cooperation and Mali', Expert Comment, Chatham House, 31 January 2013.

that deepened cooperation on smart defence within NATO will primarily benefit the US defence industry.<sup>296</sup>

In Europe, the UK and France continue to be the dominant states in when it comes to defence. They share an expeditionary strategic culture and seem to agree that the best way to secure stability in the region and prove their value to the US is to take care of Europe's neighbourhood and maintain complementary capabilities to the US. There is an urgent realisation, however, that they still depend on the US for enablers. Furthermore, the increased importance of coalitions of the willing and of bilateral and regional collaborative frameworks for capabilities raises the issue of the future of European defence cooperation. With the UK and France increasingly cooperating bilaterally and with the US, what role can other European states, most notably Germany, play in future defence collaborations in Europe?

In addition, while it is possible to discern a certain division of labour emerging in terms of geographical priorities, the countries seem to focus on largely the same operational approach. The shared view among the US, the UK and France is that future military engagements will likely be relatively quick, involve few boots on the ground, and be supported by advanced technology and information systems. This arguably leads to a potential risk of group think. If all countries prepare for the same war, there is also a risk that they will prioritise the same niche capabilities. This is even more the case at a time when multilateral defence collaborations, which can promote synergies and complementary capabilities, seem to be struggling.

This chapter has discussed the operational focus of the armed forces in the US, the UK and France in facing future enemies and threats. It highlights the revival of the light footprint approach, the increasing use of drones and robots, the challenges in meeting the cyber threat, and the perceived advantages of cooperation with allies. Chapter 5 summarises and draws conclusions, and discusses the future defence priorities of the three countries.

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<sup>296</sup> 'Livre Blanc Défense et Sécurité Nationale: 2013', p. 63.

## 5 Concluding Remarks

What is on the cards for European and US military forces as they gradually pull out of Afghanistan? Where and on what will the US, the UK and France focus their defence efforts? What is likely to be the next military engagement? The research for this study has unequivocally shown a widespread fatigue with long drawn out military interventions after years spent in both Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a feeling that these operations have not only been costly but also had only limited success. Moreover, economic troubles at home coupled with political discontent mean that policymakers face pressure to prioritise domestic problems rather than venture out on expensive international missions.

Clausewitz lent this text some guidance in terms of structure, and in line with his recognition that the use of military means is merely the continuation of politics we started by looking at the domestic context shaping policies in the US, the UK and France. The leaders of these three countries all share a pragmatic approach to policymaking. This arguably makes it harder to make predictions about their future policies, as decisions are likely to be made on a case-by-case basis. That said, which threats and capabilities are prioritised depends to a large extent on how they and other influential decision makers view their countries' roles in the world. France's self-esteem, for example, has received a notable boost after its military engagement in Mali. Paris's swift and capable proactivity received international praise and helped to further advance relations with Washington – relations which have gradually improved since France's reintegration into NATO's military command. The UK, on the other hand, is increasingly questioning its global standing in the wake of defence cuts and a sense of operational failure in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the fact that the UK's military expenditure still outpaces that of France, London is more guarded and wary than Paris. This could translate into a relatively more cautious approach in the UK compared with France in the face of new security threats.

The US is in a class of its own. Its defence budget continues to dwarf those of the UK and France and – as was proved in the recent interventions in Mali and Libya – the US is still a power on which its allies depend. However, a reluctance to be dragged into another extended conflict and the urgency of resolving problems at home are at least as evident in the US as in Europe. The difference is that should Washington decide that it needs to act, it has the military means to do so. While the US also has to prioritise amid ongoing defence cuts, it can still maintain a force that is able to meet full spectrum operational requirements.

History has shown that there are always different forces at play in deciding national policies. In the defence and security field, the defence industry is an important actor. Arguably, its economic clout gives the defence industry an even stronger role in these times of economic austerity. One case in point is the continued investments being made in the US on building the Abrams tank,

despite the fact that experts and senior army officers would prefer the money to be spent elsewhere.<sup>297</sup> Some argue that there are forces within the military which are eager for a more activist approach as this would justify their existence. Similarly, in various crisis scenarios there may be overwhelming pressure “to do something”.

Clausewitz spoke of centres of gravity to explain the main strengths of belligerents. Accordingly, we considered where the geographical priorities of the US, the UK and France lie, representing perceived interests as well as potential threats. A major strategic decision which, if not today, is likely to have more substantial consequences further down the line is the US rebalancing to Asia. The policy has raised many questions and caused some unease among those who fear it means the US is turning its back on Europe. This is not likely to be the case, but it does mean that Washington is encouraging Europe to shoulder larger responsibility for security in its own neighbourhood. This is widely understood and debated in both London and Paris. The possible consequences of this, which can be witnessed today, include France’s decision to maintain military bases in Africa and the UK solidifying its presence in the Persian Gulf.

Although international troops are withdrawing from Afghanistan, the Middle East and South Asia continue to be key regions of concern for the US, the UK and France. The Arab awakening has led to increased instability across the Middle East and North Africa. The civil war in Syria and the battle for influence between Iran and Saudi Arabia pose significant security challenges for Europe and the US. Stability in the Middle East and South Asia is also vital to protect energy flows and the sea lines of communication between Asia and Europe.

Clausewitz understood that there is always a level of uncertainty in warfare and that small as well as big things can go wrong. We looked into the operational preparations the US, the UK and France are making to try to minimise uncertainty by creating efficient and effective forces. The shared vision among the three countries is that future military engagements need to be quick and surgical, involving few boots on the ground and supported by advanced information and intelligence systems, such as drones and cyber capabilities. This prompts a number of questions. A critical one is the potential risk of group think. While a division of labour is to some extent emerging in terms of geographical priorities, the countries seem to focus on largely the same operational approach. Given the notable consensus with regard to future warfare, there is a risk that all countries will prioritise the same niche capabilities. It is also important to bear in mind that such advanced technological capabilities are costly. Moreover, there are innumerable conceivable conflicts and crises which could never be resolved by quick, surgical strikes. This underlines the unpredictability of events and the

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<sup>297</sup> R. Lardner, ‘Abrams Tank Pushed By Congress Despite Army’s Protests’, *Associated Press*, 28 April 2013.

importance of maintaining flexibility to meet the uncertain. What one does not want to do is one thing, but what one ends up having to do can be something completely different.

In this sense, future interventions need to build on the lessons learned from past operations, for example the importance of civil-military coordination and joined up efforts to ensure sustainable peace and stability. It should also be recognised that there are substantial risks involved in a light footprint approach. There are for example reports that the use of drones is actually breeding more enemies and facilitating the recruitment of terrorists. Moreover, when building the capacity of partners it is critical that institutions are also strengthened to ensure sustainability and control over the use of force. If not, support might even contribute to destabilisation and reinforce the enemies of tomorrow.

The increasing importance of coalitions of the willing for operations and of bilateral and regional cooperation on capability development raises the issue of the future of European defence collaboration. With the UK and France increasingly cooperating bilaterally and together with the US, where does this leave other European states – most importantly Germany?

It is the unpredictable and unexpected events that will shape tomorrow. However, the priorities made today will be decisive in how to be prepared in the best possible way to meet tomorrow's challenges. It is important to bear in mind that each decision might have unwelcome consequences and send unintended signals. Thus, while this is not the objective, US policy to focus increased attention on the Asia Pacific region might be misinterpreted by China as an act of aggression. In times of uncertainty and changing power dynamics, communication and transparency become all the more important.

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## Interviews

### London, February 2013

Dana H. Allin, Editor, Survival and Senior Fellow for US Foreign Policy and Transatlantic Affairs, The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Chris Brown, Department of International Relations, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Malcolm Chalmers, Research Director and Director, UK Defence Policy, Royal United Services Institute.

Michael Codner, Senior Research Fellow and Director, Military Sciences, Royal United Services Institute.

Christopher Coker, Department of International Relations, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Andrew Dorman, Defence Studies Department, King's College London.

Rem Korteweg, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for European Reform.

Nick Witney, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations.

### **Washington, DC, March 2013**

Guy Ben-Ari, Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, Sneha Raghavan, Research Assistant, Defense-Industrial Initiatives Group and T.J. Cipoletti, Research Associate, Henry A. Kissinger Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Hans Binnendijk, Senior Fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Steven P. Bucci, Director, Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies, the Heritage Foundation.

Frances G. Burwell, Vice President and Director, Program on Transatlantic Relations, Franklin D. Kramer, Distinguished Fellow, Robert A. Manning, Senior Fellow, and Magnus Nordenman, Deputy Director, The Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, Atlantic Council.

Thomas X. Hammes, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies and Frank Hoffman, Director NDU Press, National Defense University.

Stuart E. Johnson, Senior Policy Analyst, RAND Corporation.

Thomas L. McNaugher, Senior Visiting Professor, Security Studies Program, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University.

Leo Michel, Distinguished Research Fellow, Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University.

Clara Marina O'Donnell, Senior research fellow, Centre for European Reform and Nonresident Fellow, Center on the United States and Europe Foreign Policy, The Brookings Institution.

### **Paris, April 2013**

Etienne de Durand, Director of the Security Studies Centre, French Institute of International Relations.

Camille Grand, Director, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique.

François Heisbourg, Special Adviser, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique.

Jean-Pierre Maulny, Deputy Director, Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques.

Antonio Missiroli, Director and Patryk Pawlak, Senior Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies.

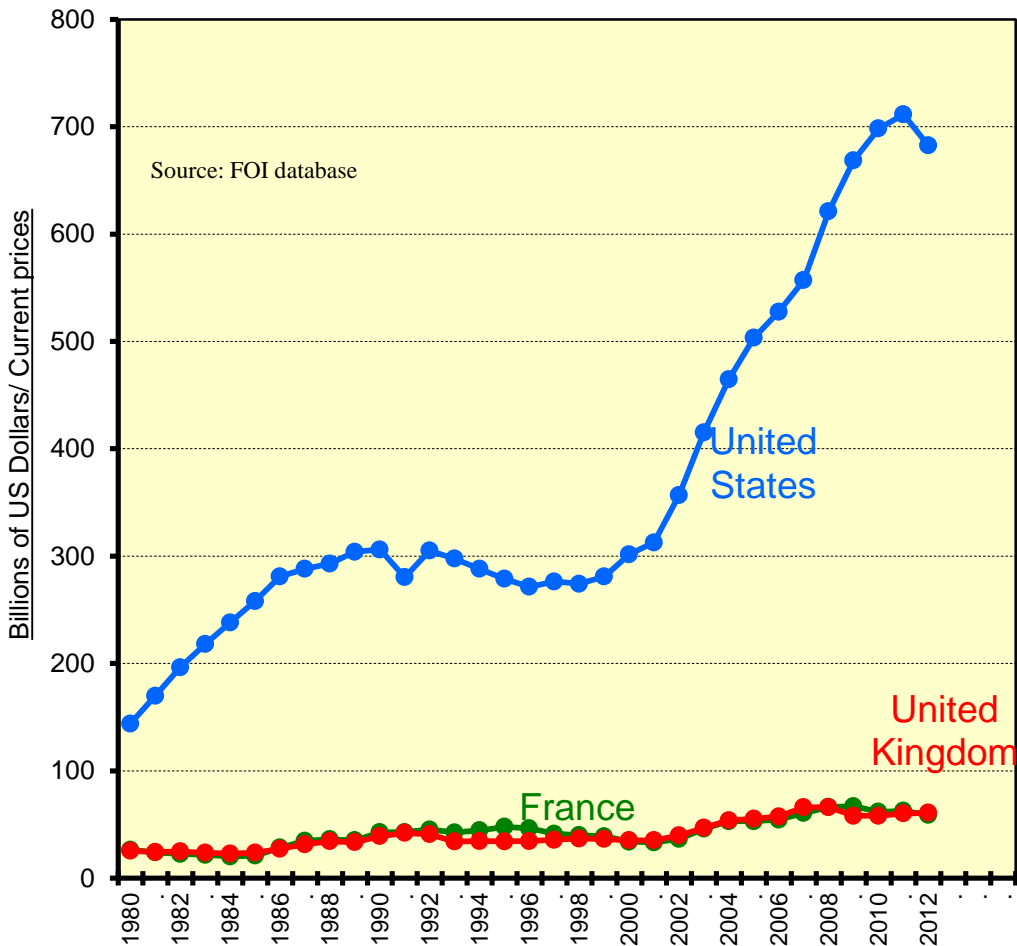
## **Annex 1 Military Expenditures in the US, the UK and France**

## **France, the UK and the US:**

### **Military Expenditures,**

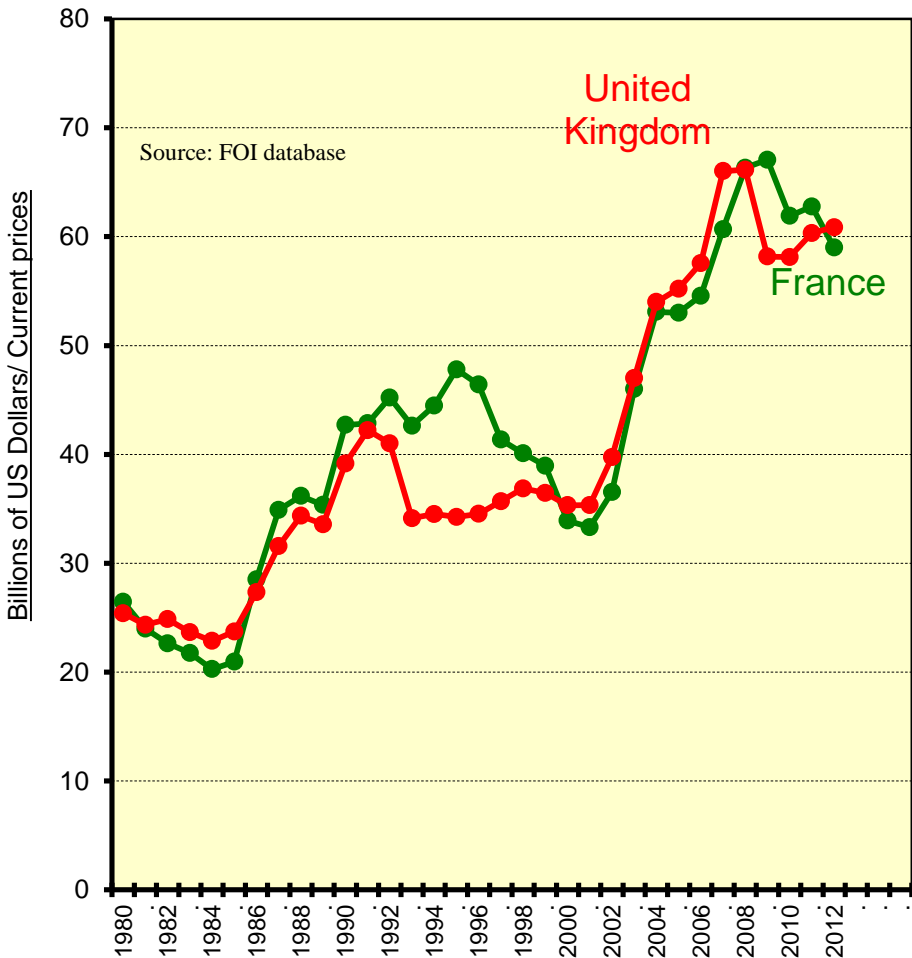
**Billions of US Dollar/ Current prices**

This graph shows military expenditures for the three countries in current prices (calculated by market rates) and current exchange rates. This kind of graph includes a lot of "inflationary air" and is also influenced by exchange rate movements. Such graphs give therefore no impression on how the military expenditure of a particular country has developed over time, but place countries in the right order in relation to each other. Notably, changes in US military expenditures have occasionally been larger than total military spending in France or the UK, meaning that from one year to another, US may increase or decrease its military allocation with "one France" or "one UK".



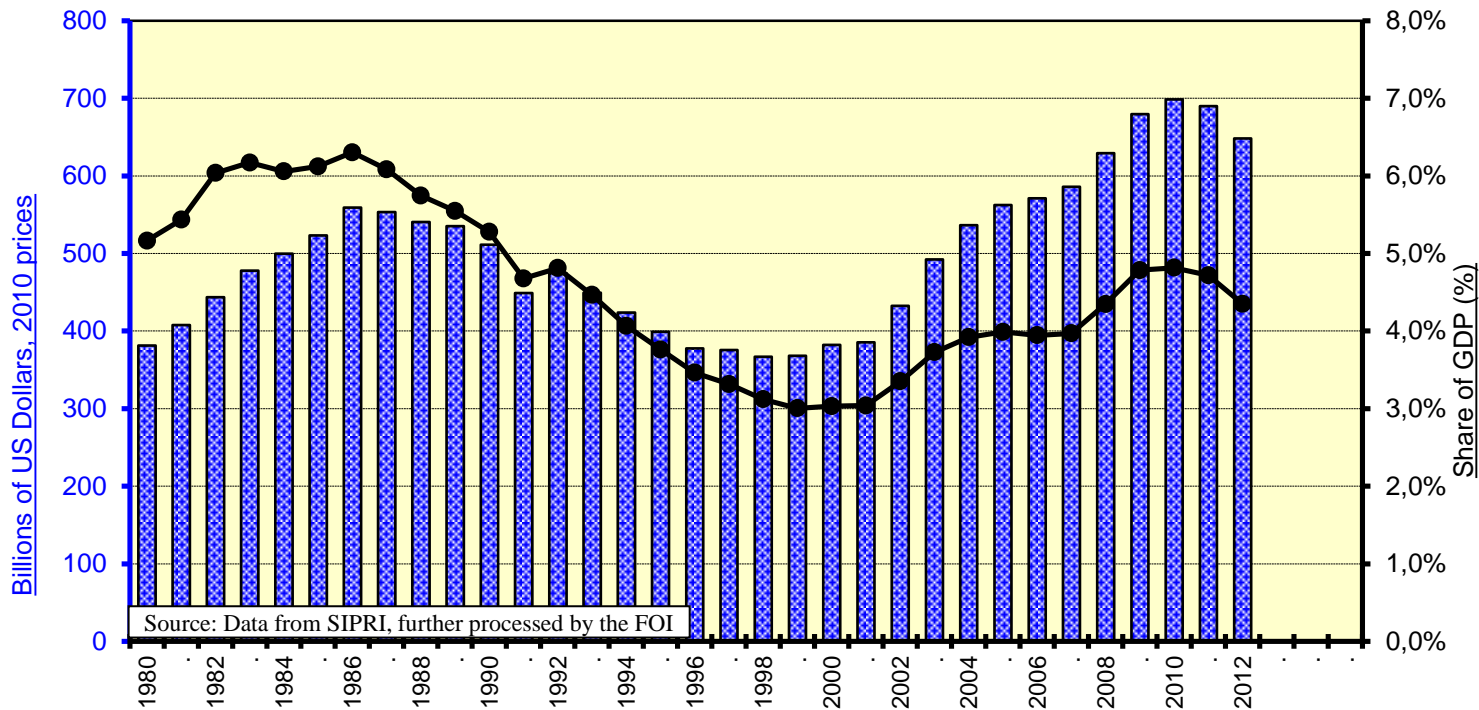
**France and the UK (/the US):**  
**Military Expenditures,**  
**Billions of US Dollar/ Current prices**

This graph shows military expenditures for the three countries in current prices (calculated by market rates) and current exchange rates. This kind of graph includes a lot of "inflationary air" and is also influenced by exchange rate movements. Such graphs give therefore no impression on how the military expenditure of a particular country has developed over time, but place countries in the right order in relation to each other. Notably, changes in US military expenditures have occasionally been larger than total military spending in France or the UK, meaning that from one year to another, US may increase or decrease its military allocation with "one France" or "one UK".

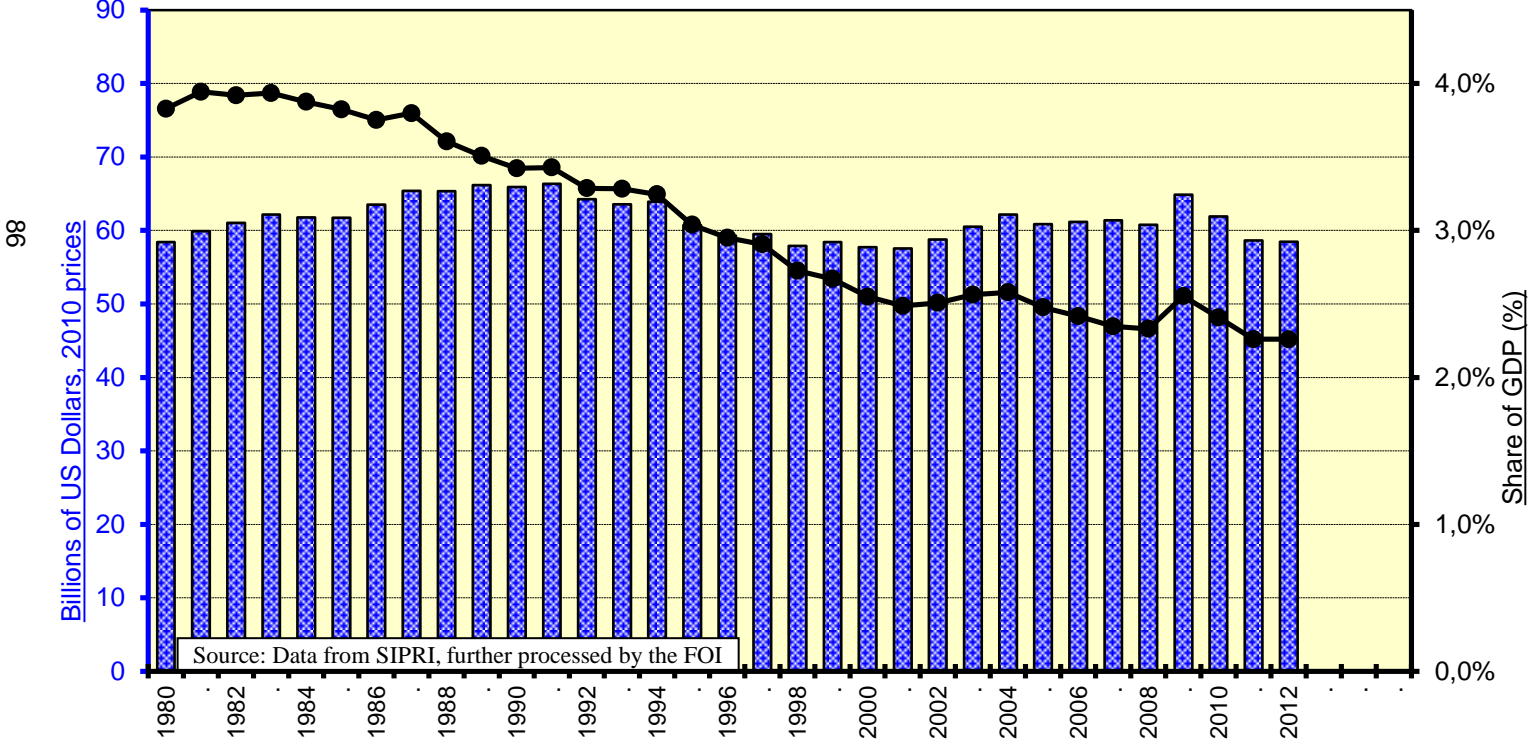




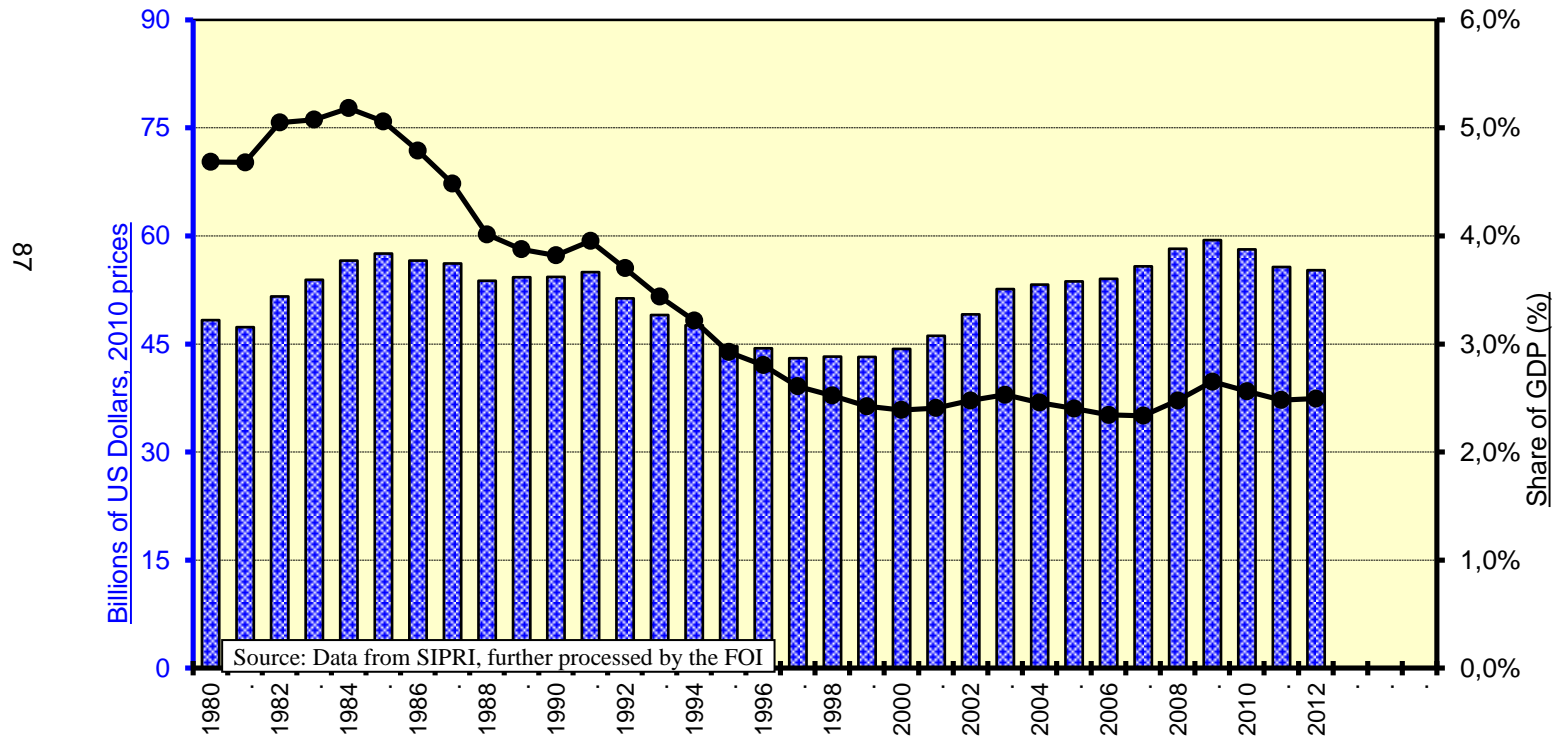
**United States: Military Expenditures,**  
**Billions of US Dollars, 2010 Prices [blue columns] -/- Share of GDP (%) [black line]**



**France: Military Expenditures,**  
**Billions of US Dollars, 2010 Prices [blue columns] -/- Share of GDP (%) [black line]**



**United Kingdom: Military Expenditures,**  
**Billions of US Dollars, 2010 Prices [blue columns] -/- Share of GDP (%) [black line]**



This study analyses the thinking among policymakers and security policy experts in the United States, the United Kingdom and France with regard to the future focus of defence policies and programmes.

What are the new priorities likely to be in these countries, given tight defence budgets, uncertain threats and the removal of Afghanistan as the main focus of military efforts? The combination of limited resources and the breadth of potential threats means that prioritising becomes all the more central. Similarly, the restricted purse strings could call for cooperation between allies to achieve synergies, as well as a certain division of labour in terms of niche capabilities or geographical focus.

The study considers whether the three countries agree or diverge on future defence needs, revealing possible causes of friction in collaborative efforts. The analysis examines the countries' domestic policy setting, their perceived interests and threats in terms of geographical focus, and their chosen doctrinal and operational approaches to meet tomorrow's uncertainties.