

The Russian wake-up call to Europe

French, German and British security priorities

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Sammanfattning

Denna studie analyser om och hur de tre europeiska stormakterna – Frankrike, Storbritannien och Tyskland – har förändrat sin respektive säkerhets- och försvarspolitik i förhållande till de aktuella säkerhetshoten, i synnerhet Rysslands förändrade säkerhetspolitiska agerande och militära uppbyggnad.

Studien visar att Frankrike, Storbritannien och Tyskland betraktar Rysslands agerande som en allvarlig säkerhetspolitisk utmaning och de är alla engagerade i NATO:s militära återförsäkransåtgärder i Östersjöområdet. Den globala terrorismen betraktas dock som det främsta hotet och en stor del av deras uppmärksamhet och resurser är därmed riktade till säkerhetsutmaningarna på den södra flanken. Detta engagemang kan påverka NATO:s östra och norra flank eftersom stormakternas begränsade resurser inskränker deras militära och säkerhetspolitiska handlingsutrymme. De pågående militära reformerna kommer inte att förändra detta i närtid.

Men samtidigt har Tyskland genom sitt geografiska läge och Storbritanniens genom sina åtaganden i NATO visat allt större uppmärksamhet mot säkerheten i Östersjöområdet. Frankrike är också fast beslutet att fortsätta sina åtaganden i regionen, om än i mindre utsträckning än vad som ursprungligen planerats. Gemensamt för Frankrike och Storbritannien är att de fortsätter att se sig själva som stormakter med global räckvidd - trots sina brister. De har därför svårt att göra strategiska val, mellan inre och yttre säkerhetshot och mellan olika geografiska områden. Genom sin roll i EU och som medlare i Ukraina, har Tyskland internationella roll stärkts och landet framstår som mer öppet för att använda militär medel som ett utrikespolitiskt verktyg.

Nyckelord: Frankrike, Storbritannien, Tyskland, europeiska stormakter, Ryssland, Ukraina, säkerhetspolitik, försvarspolitik, hotuppfattning, EU, NATO, återförsäkransåtgärder.

Summary

This study analyses whether and how the three European great powers – France, the UK and Germany – have reacted to and remodelled their respective security and defence policies to the current security threats, especially Russia's challenge to the European security order.

Neither of the three views Russia as a direct threat to its territory or national security. The ongoing reforms in their defence and security policies are not triggered by Russia. Still, their understanding is that Russia has undermined the European security order and that its position has changed from being a partner to an internationally unreliable actor and a potential threat to their allies.

France, the UK and Germany are all committed to NATO's military reassurance in the Baltic Sea region. But it is terrorism that is the primary threat and part of their attention and resources is directed to the southern flank. This engagement may affect NATO's eastern and northern flank since all three are militarily overstretched. Still, Germany is caught up with its commitment to Northern and Eastern Europe through its geographic location, the UK's commitment to NATO have led to increased attention to Baltic security, and France is set to continue its engagements in the region, although to a lesser extent than originally planned.

Common to France and the UK is their perception of great powers with global reach and finding it hard to make strategic choices. Germany international role has increased and the country seems more willing to use force as a foreign policy tool. Concerning the conflict in Ukraine, none of the three envisage a military solution. Diplomacy and negotiations are the way forward.

Keywords: France, the UK, Germany, European great powers, Russia, Ukraine, security policy, defence policy, threat perception, EU, NATO, reassurance.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This study, commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence, analyses whether and how France, the United Kingdom and Germany have reacted and are remodelling their respective security and defence policies to the current and evolving security threats. It also gives valuable insights on how the three view their role in international security landscape and within multilateral organisations, such as the EU and NATO.

The study has been produced within the Nordic and Transatlantic Security Programme (NOTS) at FOI. NOTS studies security and military-strategic developments within three main areas: the Nordic and Baltic regions, the European major military powers and the foreign-, defence- and security policy of the United States. Defence economics, defence reform, capabilities and conditions for military operations in Northern Europe are also included in the field of study. Exercise patterns, different countries and relevant multilateral security organisations (NATO and EU) means of action of relevance to security in the Northern European region also forms part of the studies.

The report has benefitted from valuable input by several officials and experts. The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the interviewees from the organisations listed in the bibliography. Dr. Barbara Kunz at Institut français des relations internationales in Paris reviewed the draft and provided insightful and constructive comments that substantially improved the study.

Stockholm in May 2016,

Niklas Granholm

Programme Manager, NOTS

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAR	Central African Republic
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (Germany)
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy (EU)
CSU	Christian Social Union (Germany)
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
G8	Group of Eight developed economies
GBP	pound sterling (£)
GDP	gross domestic product
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IS	Islamic State
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
LPM	Loi de la Programmation Militaire (France)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFIU	NATO Force Integration Unit
NRF	NATO Response Force
NSS	National Security Strategy (UK)
OHQ	operational headquarters (EU)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RAF	Royal Air Force (UK)
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review (UK)
SNP	Scottish National Party
SPD	Social Democratic Party (Germany)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USD	US dollar (\$)
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (NATO)

1 Introduction

In Paris, London and Berlin efforts are under way to handle the greatest challenges to the European security order since the end of the Cold War. Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the war in Ukraine have upended European assumptions about European security and have triggered a changed security situation in the Black Sea and Baltic Sea regions, with repercussions for the rest of Europe. On Europe's southern flank, stretching from the Middle East across North Africa, there is a set of interconnected problems of wars, terrorism and refugees. The conflict in Syria has spilled over into Iraq and the civil war in Libya is a proxy war for several leading Middle Eastern states. In traditional security terms, however, the major spot of tension for Europe is Northern Europe, and more specifically Sweden's neighbourhood. It is in this part of Europe that the West borders Russia and that any rules of engagement similar to those that eventually stabilised the Cold War are sorely lacking. Simultaneously the unity of the European Union (EU) has been put to the test by economic and political pressure from within the member states. This applies to all the three great powers in Europe, France, the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany, upon which the other nations of Europe place expectations. This study analyses how these three powers are adapting to the present security challenges.

By great powers here we mean states which are recognised as having the ability to exert influence on a global scale. They characteristically possess military, economic and diplomatic power, which may cause medium-sized and small powers to consider and follow the great powers' opinions before taking action. When designating France, Germany and the UK as European great powers we lean on traditional historical perceptions of them as such, widely recognised in literature and reflected in their roles internationally. In the case of France and the UK the self-image of being a European great power is central. While Germany lacks this notion of great-power identity, the country is nevertheless perceived by others in this way. While France and the UK, to varying degrees, have been great powers in the areas of the economy, diplomacy and military matters since the end of World War II and have a colonial past which has caused a global presence, Germany's power has, through a series of political and military reservations, been limited to the economy. Despite the strong German presence throughout European history, it has to be added that Germany only evolved as a state at the end of the 19th century.

There are also several other different features that set France, Germany and the UK apart as European great powers. All three are key members of both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU and can shape the way in which these organisations respond, including a rescue of the European security order. France and the UK are also permanent members of the United Nations (UN)

Security Council. Although they do not have the reach of the American armed forces their military capabilities are significant, and they have the capacity to intervene overseas – outside Europe. They both have nuclear arsenals. Germany does not share these characteristics. What makes Germany stand out are (a) the fact that it is central to European affairs, especially European integration and the Eurozone, and (b) its economy, which is larger than that of either France or the UK. All three are among the world's largest economies, and each of them larger than the Russian economy.¹

The crisis for the European security architecture could be expected to tip the balance in favour of close coordination between the three European great powers in regard to Europe. However, the three have not always seen eye to eye on international politics in the past and should not be expected to agree on everything in the future. At this juncture the Russian challenge comes on top of a crisis for European integration, NATO refocusing to Europe, and expectations of more problems and threats due to the worsening situation on Europe's southern flank.

1.1 Purpose and questions

This study analyses *whether* and *how* France, Germany and the UK have reacted to Russia's challenge to the security order and remodelled their respective security and defence policies, or whether other factors seem to have influenced possible changes. It looks at what changes – if any – the three have made to their policies and whether they see the challenges to European security in the same way. It will also be possible to see indications of them moving in different directions in the long run.

Questions analysed are:

- How have France, Germany and the UK judged and countered Russia's challenge to the European security order and other security challenges?
- What are their basic understandings of their own role in international security and their role in relation to multilateral security organisations, such as the EU and NATO?
- What are their defence priorities, and have they been influenced by their judgements on Russia's challenge to the European security order or other security threats?

¹ World Bank, Gross domestic product 2014 – Ranking, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table>. Note that using purchasing power parity the Russian Federation would trump the other three: according to the 2014 figures of the World Bank, all four economies would still be among the ten top economies globally.

- What do the reactions and choices of the three European great powers say about the future of European security, especially relations with Russia and Nordic security?

1.2 Method and material

By studying the strategic postures of the three countries it will be possible to understand more of their different priorities but also what their actions imply for the EU and NATO in a wider European context. Key areas of study are the strategic documents, and political declarations linked to European security, as well as changes in military behaviour and changes in defence spending. These areas are expected to show both long-term trends in threat perceptions and policies and the immediate response to these threats. This study is intended to be an overview of use for policy making, but does not employ any one international relations theory.

It is assumed that a great catalyst for change and reform in the three countries is Russia's behaviour, in terms of changed economic, diplomatic and military behaviour, and notably Russia's annexation of Crimea and its actions in regard to the war in Ukraine. It is possible that other factors may have been influential in any possible changes and therefore we look at their respective threat perceptions in general, not exclusively their views on Russia.

One challenge for the study has been that the three countries are in different "loops" in terms of when they publish their national security strategies and that changes in defence priorities tend to take time before they have practical implications. Accordingly, the official reaction of the three countries to Russia may be somewhat circumspect. Another difficulty is that the security context and perceptions of the security situation are not static but on the contrary have changed considerably during the past year when this study was being written.

The analysis builds on several different kinds of sources for different sections of the text, mainly from 2014 and 2015. Much of the country analysis makes use of academic, media and policy sources. In October 2015 the authors also conducted interviews in Paris and London as well as in Brussels. In November 2015 and February 2016 a number of interviews over the phone were carried out with German sources in Berlin and with persons in Stockholm as well as in the Baltic states. The interviews range over several of the topics and include experts both inside and outside government. A comprehensive list of the organisations interviewed is to be found in the Bibliography. But, since all interviews were conducted on the premise of anonymity, none of the interviewees is quoted by name.

1.3 Constraints of the study

There are several factors that have an impact on European security and this study does not cover all of them. It is mainly focused on three states and their different reactions and remodelling of their respective security and defence policies as a reaction to Russia's behaviour and/or other security challenges.

This study does not cover the major Western power, the US. Albeit not an EU member, the US is of fundamental importance to European security both as a member of NATO and as a close partner of each of the three European great powers. It will be referred to when comparing the three European powers, when discussing the balance between them and in regard to NATO. For further reading on the US and Russia the forthcoming FOI study "Irreconcilable Differences: Analysing the Deteriorating Russia-US relations" is recommended.²

Neither NATO nor the EU is at the centre of this study. Still, the actions of the three great powers for, or in the case of the UK possibly against, European integration will have an impact on European security. Of at least equal importance is how the three conduct themselves in regard to NATO, in terms of both revamping its original purpose and, more specifically, their responsibilities as NATO allies in Sweden's neighbourhood. This study does not cover other security institutions in Europe, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Consequently it will not offer a comprehensive view of the European security architecture, or, as some will have it, its ruins.

In our work we have benefitted from valuable input from the research conducted by analyst Madelene Lindström at FOI. She has analysed the measures taken by the EU and NATO in reaction to Russia's changed behaviour. Madelene Lindström has also contributed extensively to the present study on the European great powers and has among other things conducted interviews in Brussels and Paris.

1.4 A changing security climate

This section will give a short overview first of what is referred to in this report as Russia's changed behaviour and, second, of some of the reactions to this behaviour.³

² Märta Carlsson, Mike Winnerstig, Irreconcilable Differences: Analysing the Deteriorating Russia-US relations, Stockholm, forthcoming FOI-report.

³ For a more detailed overview of the development see Niklas Granholm, Johannes Malminen and Gudrun Persson (eds) A Rude Awakening: Ramifications of Russia's Aggression Towards

Russia's military reforms and the build-up of its armed forces have been a matter of concern in the West for several years. This unease has grown when the build-up has been accompanied by an increased Russian military pretence outside the country's borders. A number of military exercises and unannounced readiness checks, which the West has labelled as aggressive, have increased the tension while reducing mutual confidence. The political and military pressure on neighbouring countries has accelerated through violations of borders and the undermining of the national sovereignty – like the kidnapping of the Estonian security officer Eston Kohver. At the same time, Russia has proved unwilling to cooperate with the West, e.g. in the investigation on the downing of flight MH17, the Malaysian civilian airliner shot down in Ukraine in 2014.

The Russian intervention in Ukraine started in February 2014 when masked Russian troops without insignia and pro-Russian separatists took control over important sites across Crimea. A pro-Russian government was installed and the area was recognised as an independent state by Russia's President Vladimir Putin. A Crimean referendum was held in March 2014 on forthcoming integration into the Russian Federation. Following the results of the referendum, Crimea, until then an integral part of Ukrainian territory, was annexed by Russia and officially welcomed by President Putin in a speech in Kremlin.

After the September 11 attacks on the US in 2001, the European great powers, like most of the Western world, came to view the main security threat as directed at their own core from an unstable periphery challenging their views and their political and economic order. The security and defence priorities were changed and military efforts were primarily directed towards international operations. With the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea, an interstate conflict in Europe over political and territorial integrity once again became a possibility.

In response to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea the international community has reacted on several levels. The referendum and the subsequent annexation have been widely criticised as a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. They have been recognised as a breach of international law and of different agreements, including the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, the 1975 Helsinki Accords on relations between East and West, and the treaty on

Ukraine, Stockholm, FOI-R--3893--SE, (2014) and Madelene Lindström, Johan Eellend, Mike Winnerstig, *Från insats till försvar – NATO:s militära strukturer under omvandling*, Stockholm, FOI-R--4056--SE.

friendship, cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine from 1997.

At first European efforts to settle the situation were carried out within what is called the Weimar format by Germany, France and Poland. However, in June 2014 this format was replaced by the Normandy format which was created on the initiative of France. The Normandy format consists of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. After a number of high-level meetings and negotiations a ceasefire between the Ukrainian government and the Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine was signed in September 2014. This agreement was repeatedly violated and was followed by a new ceasefire agreement in February 2015, the Minsk 2 Agreement.

Both the EU and the US have imposed targeted sanctions on Russian individuals and businesses. As the situation has escalated in Ukraine the sanctions have been extended on several occasions. In March 2014 the first travel bans and asset freezes against persons involved in actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity were imposed. Targeted economic sanctions were imposed in July 2014 and reinforced in September 2014. The EU declared itself ready to reverse its decisions and re-engage with Russia if it started contributing actively and without ambiguities to finding a solution to the Ukrainian crisis. The EU has moreover decided on other actions, e.g. the establishment of a Task Force to address Russia's disinformation campaigns as well as the launching of a civilian mission to assist Ukraine in security sector reform. On several occasions different EU representatives have repeated that Russia's strategic partnership with the EU has ended.

The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution rejecting both the annexation and the referendum (GA Resolution 68/262, 27 March 2014). A number of international forums have been closed to Russia, for example, in March 2014, Russia was suspended from the Group of Eight developed economies (G8) and some weeks later NATO suspended all practical cooperation with Russia, keeping only the political channels open in order to discuss the situation in Ukraine.

NATO has on several occasions released satellite imagery of Russian forces on Ukraine's borders as well as inside the country. At the NATO summit held in Wales in September 2014, the NATO allies agreed on a number of reassurance measures (the Readiness Action Plan) in order to increase the NATO presence in the eastern part of the alliance in the air, on land, and at sea. NATO has reorganised and doubled the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and established a rapidly deployable "Spearhead Force", the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The VJTF builds on NATO's Response Force, the NRF, and will become operational in 2016. The aim of the VJTF is to be able to move within 48 hours, compared to the five days the NRF is allowed to take before it begins to be deployed. It will involve having materiel already in place in Eastern Europe. NATO has also set up eight new command centres (NATO Force Integration

Units, NFIUs), located in eastern ally countries with the aim of facilitating exercises and the deployment and reinforcement of NATO forces in the region. As part of NATO's reassurance to its allies the scope and intensity of NATO military exercises in the eastern parts of Europe have increased. The Readiness Action Plan from the 2014 will most likely be continued by more "deterrence"-oriented efforts at the summit in Warsaw in July 2016.

1.4 Guide to the contents

The study consists of three content chapters and a final chapter with a comparative analysis.

Chapters 2 to 4 each cover a country, France, Germany and the UK. The countries are studied separately, but in such a way as to offer a high degree of comparability. Every chapter deals with the respective conditions of each country in terms of their security and defence policies, and ends with a discussion and analysis of country-specific conclusions, further developed in the final chapter.

The final chapter highlights important differences and similarities between the three in terms of their priorities. It also shows the dynamics between them; are they going in the same direction? If not, what is different about their analysis and decisions? What are the possible consequences for European security and Nordic security to be drawn from this? The final chapter also looks ahead and offers some thoughts about the trends, or trajectories, of each of the three.

2 France – Between North and South, and Everywhere

Anna Sundberg

2.1 Introduction

Over the last few years, French representatives have viewed international developments as increasingly serious. The security challenges identified are multiple, the terrorist threat and Russia's changed behaviour being two of them. France has often felt prompted to act. Well in line with its traditional posture, France has had an active and prominent role on the international stage under President François Hollande. It has had key roles in various foreign policy initiatives, such as the negotiations with Ukraine and Russia within the Normandy format.⁴ The fight against terrorism is being carried out both at home and abroad. Apart from the national security operation Sentinelle, established after the terrorist attacks in France in January 2015, Hollande has also launched operations in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Sahel region. Moreover France is participating in the West's coalition against the Islamic State (IS), Daesh, in Syria and in Iraq with air strikes.⁵

A dominant and recurring feature of the French approach to its international role is the emphasis on strategic autonomy – traditionally reflected in the development of a nuclear deterrent, special status within NATO, the balancing of the US, unilateral interventions and a strong national defence industry. French political declarations often highlight that France takes on responsibility and fills a great-power role that others expect it to take. The country claims that it acts not only in its own interests but also for the sake of Europe and the world.⁶ Furthermore, the ability to project force coupled with fast, centralised decision making and a

⁴ The Normandy format consists of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine with the aim of resolving the conflict in Ukraine. It was created in June 2014. In February 2015 the Minsk 2 Agreement on a ceasefire was signed.

⁵ Rick Noack in *The Washington Post*, 21 August, (2014) Losing his battle at home, French President Hollande fights abroad. See also Elysée, 20 August, (2014); and Benoît Gomis, November, (2014).

⁶ Anna Sundberg, (2003); Elysée, 14 January, (2015); and Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014). For a definition of strategic autonomy (*stratégie autonome*), see *Le Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale*, (2013), pp. 88-89.

political willingness are stressed as important.⁷ At the same time, in many declarations there is a sense of frustration and irritation concerning other countries' reluctance to engage in international operations. During recent years French representatives have often prompted others to step alongside France in the fight against terrorism. After the deadly terrorist attacks in January and November 2015 this message was heard once again.⁸

François Hollande, from the Socialist party, was elected president in May 2012. Just like his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, François Hollande has had to face many challenges during his time in office. In addition to major security issues, the economic crisis and unemployment have been tougher than expected. Hollande has also struggled with declining public support and according to several opinion polls he has had the lowest support of any French president under the Fifth Republic, i.e. since 1958.⁹ The next presidential and parliamentary elections will take place in 2017.

2.2 France and Russia

2.2.1 A flexible view on Russia

Concerning French-Russian relations in recent years it is worth mentioning that former President Nicolas Sarkozy (2007–2012) during his first year in office openly criticised Russia and Vladimir Putin's policies in various areas. Sarkozy, son of a Hungarian father, called himself half East European and showed an interest in Europe's eastern parts. France has otherwise often been perceived as not interested in the smaller countries in the eastern parts of Europe.¹⁰ The initial critical position on Russia was however abandoned step by step and instead Sarkozy expressed willingness to finally overcome the Cold War, seeking to revive the relation in several areas. According to some sources the shift could to a certain extent be explained by Sarkozy's experiences from the negotiations between the parties in the Russo-Georgian war. As holder of the rotating presidency of the EU

⁷ Elysée, 29 April, (2015). See also Michael Shurkin, November 2015.

⁸ Elysée, 23 January, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 19 February, (2015); Le Figaro, 17 November, (2015) Attentats : la France a demandé l'assistance militaire à d'autres Etats.

⁹ Le Monde, 4 September, (2014); Claire Guélaud in Le Monde, 7 May, (2015) Un anniversaire bien tristounet; David Revault d'Allones in Le Monde, 5 May, (2015) Hollande, trois ans à l'Elysée et déjà en campagne; The Economist, 25 July (2015) The President's thankless burden; and Angela Diffley, 6 May, (2013).

¹⁰ Interview Paris October 2015; Marcel H. van Herpen, February, (2010), pp. 4-5; and RFE/RL, 8 October, (2007).

he was personally engaged in the development of a peace plan. France and Russia also saw an opening for deeper trade relations. It was Sarkozy who in 2011 signed the contract for sale of the two Mistral warships to Russia, which became a source of tension between France and other EU and NATO members, not least after the Russian involvement in Ukraine.¹¹

The present government has launched “la diplomatie économique” and in 2012 Jean-Pierre Chevènement, a former government minister, was nominated as special representative for Russia “to mobilise public and private actors in favour of political, economic, commercial, scientific and cultural relations” between the two countries. Trade between the countries increased rapidly for some years with large French firms discovering Russia and French exports to Russia have grown considerably.¹²

When the relationship with Russia is discussed in France it is often pointed out that there are historical, cultural and economic ties between France and Russia that characterise the French view of Russia even today. There are three different aspects, linked to each other, which tend to be highlighted in the analysis. First, the French perception of Russia is considered to be influenced by the French national self-image of a great power and the classic quest for autonomy and independence. The promotion of good relations with Russia was for many years an inherent part of efforts to balance the relationship between Europe and the US. One of the respondents in Paris described in a caricatured way the most extreme manifestation of this as “beware of the US, welcome Russia”.¹³ France on the other hand has had a reputation in Russia of being a reliable partner, known for having an independent foreign policy, for example staying outside NATO’s integrated military structures.¹⁴

Second, economic considerations are given weight. France has until recently had extensive economic relations with Russia and in Europe is one of the largest

¹¹ Ariel Cohen in Daily signal 3 March, (2010); and Matthieu Goar and Benoît Vitkine in Le Monde, 13 April, (2015). For more on France, Sarkozy and the Russo-Georgian war see The Economist, 11 September, (2008); and Tomas Valasek, August (2008).

¹² Chevènement.fr – Le blog 26 November, (2012); and Diplomatie, La France et la Russie.

¹³ A more detailed discussion of the French self-image and Gaullism is available in Anna Sundberg (2003). See also Interviews Paris October 2015; and on France’s traditional relationship to Russia see Diplomatie, 23 January, (2015) Entretien de M. Laurent Fabius avec la Radiotélévision suisse.

¹⁴ Interviews Brussels October 2015. For references in the debate to the historic relationship between the two countries see Rémy Berthonneau in Le Figaro, 4 August, (2015) Mistral: 8 raisons de lever les sanctions contre la Russie.

investors and trading partners of Russia after countries like Germany.¹⁵ Third, it is said that the conservative rhetoric that President Vladimir Putin uses finds its supporters in parts of French society and in various political parties like the Front National and Les Républicains, former President Sarkozy's party, as well as on the far left.¹⁶

This close relationship manifests itself in different ways. In the present situation, President Hollande states that he wants to use the historical relationship between France and Russia to restore peace in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine but also to re-establish good relations between Europe and, in Hollande's own words, "the great country" Russia.¹⁷ France's identity and role of a great power and the perception of Russia as its equal are an integral part of this and, to a certain degree, the sense of mutual understanding and respect. In the most extreme forms, there is a strongly pro-Russian attitude, expressed through articles and various actions in support of Russia and its political leadership. In line with this there is an understanding for Russian ambitions and activities in Ukraine, and overt criticism of the EU sanctions and of the halting of the delivery of the French Mistral ships to Russia. Some choose to argue that France has gone too far in its efforts to promote a good relationship with the US.¹⁸ What is notable is that some of the most pro-Russian voices in the French debate are prominent well-known figures, like former ministers and political leaders. According to former President Sarkozy, no one can blame Crimea for "joining" Russia and Europe has to be aware that the

¹⁵ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Diplomatie, La France et la Russie. See also reporting in the Russian Russia Today, John Wight, 17 August, (2015) MP's Crimea visit – not all well within French political class over anti-Russian sanctions.

¹⁶ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Siobhan O'Grady, 29 October, (2015). Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right party, the former Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), was renamed Les Républicains in 2015. For more on attitudes towards Russia see for example a report by the Sénat: "France-Russie: pour éviter l'impasse" published in October 2015; and Le Figaro, 21 February, (2016) Mélenchon « félicite » la Russie pour son intervention en Syrie.

¹⁷ "Je suis allé aussi à Moscou pour m'entretenir avec le président Poutine, parce que la France a avec la Russie une relation historique et que nous devons utiliser ce lien pour que la Russie revienne dans cette relation que je souhaite encore affermir entre l'Europe et ce grand pays"; and Elysée, 16 January, (2015). On their traditionally good relations see e.g. Diplomatie, 23 January, (2015).

¹⁸ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015. Le Figaro, 4 September, (2015) Mistral: Le Pen et Mélenchon accusent Hollande de "soumission" aux Etats-Unis; Pierre Avril in Le Figaro, 21 June, (2015) Un ex-diplomate français suggère que Washington pourrait être à l'origine de la crise ukrainienne; Rémy Berthonneau in Le Figaro, 6 August, (2015) Mistral: les dessous d'un triple scandale; and Eléonore de Vulpillières in Le Figaro, 1 August, (2015) Renaud Girard: « la France doit cesser d'être le caniche des États-Unis ».

United States' interests when it comes to Russia do not necessarily coincide with European interests.¹⁹

Among groups that have a more nuanced view of the development and are critical of Russia's actions, there are those who ask themselves how much the West is really willing to sacrifice for a country like Ukraine and how far this conflict is a violation of international law in the light of the fact that Crimea was Russian once upon a time and that Ukraine is in what is described as a peripheral part of the world.²⁰

At the same time, it is important to stress that these approaches are not the official French position, although some oral sources hint that the French official view of Russia even today differs from that in other countries in that it is said to be more flexible, moderate and open. Some experts have also underlined that France's engagement in the negotiations with Ukraine and Russia has in fact reduced France's margin for manoeuvre. It is important to keep the trust of the parties and the perception of being an honest broker.²¹ This does not mean that Hollande or government representatives totally refrain from criticism and condemnation regarding Russia's aggression on Ukraine. There are official descriptions of Russia as a security concern and disapproval of Russia's actions, pointing to violations of international law and "the undermining of the foundation of collective security".²² In the summer of 2015, the then minister of foreign affairs, Laurent Fabius, was for example very critical to a group of French MPs travelling to Moscow and to Crimea. The visit to Crimea was in his view a direct breach of international law, and might be seen as a recognition of the area as Russian. In addition, it could affect the image of France and weaken the country's role as a mediator in the conflict.²³

As for how the French perception of Russia may have been affected by Russia's actions in Ukraine, there are two separate interpretations of the situation. On the one hand there are those who argue that the new situation has not changed France's relationship with Russia in substance. It is described as "quite consistent" and

¹⁹ For more on Sarkozy and Russia see Siobhan O'Grady, 29 October, (2015). The stance of the former president is also making headlines in pro-Russian media such as Russia Today: RT.com 24 July, (2015) and RT.com 8 February, (2015) Crimea cannot be blamed for joining Russia. Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

²⁰ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

²¹ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

²² Diplomatie, 24 August, (2015); Diplomatie, 8 February, (2015); and Elysée, 25 August, (2015).

²³ Diplomatie, 22 July, (2015). See also Diplomatie, 2 June, (2015); and Damien Sharkov, 22 July, (2015). It is forbidden to enter Crimea from Russia without permission from the Ukrainian authorities. For more on other visits to Russia by French politicians see Siobhan O'Grady, 29 October, (2015).

Russia being a partner, although not an usual partner.²⁴ It is also pointed out that France adopts a great-power perspective on the issue and therefore sees a need to compartmentalise, i.e. to isolate different issues from each other. It is impossible to close all doors and only engage in what has been described as “Russia-bashing”.²⁵

On the other hand, there are those who argue that Russia’s actions have “changed the rules of the game” and that everything that France and the West have founded their strategic thinking on – cooperative security and partnership with Russia – is obsolete. In line with this, it is claimed that even if there is a need for a dialogue with Russia in some areas Russia is no partner (and no enemy) but rather a difficult, unpredictable actor that France “must face with open eyes”. And this will not change either easily or quickly – “We are in for a long time of tension”.²⁶

The official French position is often balancing somewhere in between the two. It is obvious that from a French perspective one does not need to preclude the other. France’s overall aim is to continue as Russia’s dialogue partner while showing an awareness that Europe is forced to re-evaluate its neighbourhood and change its approach.²⁷ The Mistral affair can be seen as one indicator of the state of the relationship. While backing the EU’s diplomatic measures and sanctions against Russia, France long continued to defend the 2011 deal and the planned delivery of the first Mistral ship. The arguments revolved around the fact that it was an important contract that represented numerous jobs and a substantial economic contribution and also involved French credibility for future deals.²⁸ For a long time France insisted that there were no obstacles to the delivery of the ships. Some claim that President Hollande expected Putin eventually to make some kind of “gesture” and present a more accommodating attitude. But with the downing of flight MH17 and the overall escalation in Ukraine it became politically untenable to continue on that route. After first temporarily suspending delivery of the ships, a settlement

²⁴ Interviews Brussels October 2015. In several official declarations in 2015 Russia is labelled as a friend of France: see for example Stéphane Le Foll, le porte-parole of the government, *Le Figaro*, 23 September, (2015) *L’Égypte va acquérir les deux Mistral non livrés à la Russie*. It is noteworthy that the same vocabulary is being used for example by former President Sarkozy. When criticising the official French stance on Russia Sarkozy calls himself a friend of Russia: Damien Sharkov, 29 October, (2015).

²⁵ Interviews Paris October 2015. See also Elysée, 20 August, (2014).

²⁶ Interviews Brussels October 2015.

²⁷ Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015).

²⁸ Benoît Gomis, November 2014, p. 32; Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015; and Elysée, 20 August, (2014). The first delivery was scheduled for October 2014 but was suspended temporarily, in a first stage to November 2014. However the suspension was prolonged. A year later, on 5 August 2015, France announced that a settlement had been reached between France and Russia on the cancellation of the contract.

was reached between France and Russia on the cancellation of the contract in August 2015.²⁹

Another occurrence worth mentioning, since it was first perceived as a shift, came after the terror attacks in Paris in November 2015. Until then France had precluded Russia as a partner in the fight against IS in Syria, referring to its support for Bashar al-Assad, who from a French perspective could in no way be part of Syria's future. Shortly after the attacks Hollande pleaded for the broadest possible international coalition against terrorism and travelled to Moscow to meet Putin – which could be seen as a practical example of compartmentalisation. Before the meeting the expressed expectations from a French perspective were about forming a broad coalition including Russia. Putin was described by Elysée representatives as “someone that we could collaborate with”.³⁰ However, after the meeting ambitions had been lowered and Hollande spoke of information sharing and coordination of air strikes.³¹ In the months since, France has repeatedly questioned Russia's motives for its engagement in Syria and the bombing of areas under rebel control.³²

When it comes to the perception of Russia as a potential threat the message is not black or white and depends on whether it is the presence of a threat to France or a threat to NATO and NATO allies that is referred to and whether the message is from official or unofficial sources.

Looking at political declarations and official documents there are some direct designations of Russia as a threat and a security concern. For example, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian states that the situation in Ukraine has revived the question of European security and stability facing the French armed forces with a new situation, encompassing “*menaces de la force*” and international conflict in whatever form it may be, on the borders of Europe or even in Europe.³³ In the same context other worrying features are pointed out – Russia's modernisation of

²⁹ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015. In August 2015 France annulled the delivery, an example of France taking responsibility for Europe's security according to then Foreign Minister Fabius. *Diplomatie*, 24 August, (2015).

³⁰ Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 26 November, (2015); and *Francetvinfo.fr*, 26 September, (2015).

³¹ Elysée, 26 November, (2015); and Yves-Michel Riols in *Le Monde*, 27 November, (2015).

³² *Diplomatie*, 11 January, (2016); *Le Monde*, 11 January, (2016); and *Le Monde*, 28 November, (2015).

³³ Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015); *Le Monde*, 8 February, (2015) Entretien de M. Jean-Yves Le Drian; and Ministère de la Défense, 6 July, (2015). The so-called “*menaces de la force*” are discussed in *Le Livre Blanc* 2013, pp. 33-39.

the armed forces, its “gesturing” with nuclear weapons (*la gesticulation nucléaire*), and its posture concerning the independence of the Baltic states.³⁴

But from the French point of view Russia is rather to be regarded only as one out of many security challenges. Russia is just another thing to relate to, and developments there are not seen as a dramatic change for France *per se* and therefore not at the top of the French security agenda. Instead, as will be expanded on below, it is the terrorist threat in Europe’s southern neighbourhood and within the nation’s borders that has the highest priority and that is more clearly manifested in France. From a French perspective Russia does not seem to be considered as a serious threat to NATO either. Several experts have strong doubts about whether Russia would actually be prepared to resort to military means in its relations with the West. Instead these experts point to the fact that Ukraine is not in NATO, and to the fact that Russia has not invaded the Baltic states, which would prove that NATO’s deterrence still works, even if we are seeing a violation of the Budapest Memorandum. At the same time, there is a clear recognition that other allies perceive Russia as a greater threat and it is emphasised that “France’s clear commitment to NATO hasn’t changed”.³⁵ On a direct question from a journalist as to whether France would be prepared “to die” for Latvia in the event of a Russian attack, Defence Minister Le Drian responded that in such an event NATO’s Article 5 would apply.³⁶ This is of course an answer that one must expect from a NATO ally, but it is still noteworthy since it shows France’s absolute ambition to keep a united front and send the message through that the collective defence subsists.

It is emphasised in our interviews that the West must make sure that President Putin understands that “Ukraine was a one-time shot”, and that one cannot give such opportunities to Russia somewhere else. At the same time it is stated that one should not exaggerate Russia’s opportunities and capabilities without consideration of its deep economic problems, for example as a result of the sanctions and the drop in oil prices.³⁷

³⁴ Ministère de la Défense, 6 July, (2015); “Dans le même temps, la Russie poursuit sa modernisation militaire à marche forcée, dans le domaine conventionnel et non conventionnel. Elle agite la gesticulation nucléaire de manière préoccupante, avec une légèreté qu’on ne voyait pas pendant la guerre froide. Elle s’interroge ouvertement sur l’indépendance de nos alliés, baltes en l’occurrence.”

³⁵ Ministère de la Défense, 19 February, (2015). Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

³⁶ Le Monde, 8 February, (2015) Entretien de M. Jean-Yves Le Drian.

³⁷ Interviews Paris October 2015.

2.2.2 Countering Russia – firm and pragmatic the way to go

When it comes to French views on how Russia could and should be handled, two main aspects are worth highlighting. First, the French position is based on the assumption that there are two parallel tracks forward – on the one hand, political and diplomatic dialogue, on the other hand, sanctions. The Minsk 2 agreement of February 2015 is seen as the basis for a lasting settlement, as well as the OSCE's monitoring of its implementation and enforcement.³⁸ Second, according to France there is no military solution to the conflict although NATO's reassurance is considered of great importance and a sign of solidarity.³⁹ A Minsk 3 is not perceived as an option in Paris and over time there has been a growing tendency to point to Ukraine's responsibility for making the Minsk 2 agreement the basis for a solid solution. The risk of a frozen conflict has been pointed out.⁴⁰

It is clear that France wants to play an active role in the handling of the situation and for several reasons even sees its participation as expected and obvious. The French commitment is well in line with Hollande's active foreign policy and the traditional French identity as a responsible country.⁴¹ At the same time, as already mentioned, France's main focus is on developments in Europe's southern neighbourhood and the threat of terrorism. It is therefore interesting to reflect on the reasons behind the French commitment to the Normandy format. In short, the French commitment and role build on France's traditional relationship with Russia, its great-power role and its cooperation with Germany.

Many French respondents point out that there was a real desire to contribute and represent Europe in the handling of a serious crisis where there was an obvious need for the mediation of impartial actors. Other factors mentioned are France's and Russia's long relationship and the image of France being able to speak with Russia, but also an acceptance by Russia and Ukraine of France as an honest broker as well the acceptance of the US and the UK. Germany, in turn, was seen as a natural partner in this process, based on the Franco-German partnership, Germany's relationship with Russia which was similar to the French, and its good relations with Ukraine's leaders. Several French sources also point to the fact that

³⁸ Diplomatie, 17 September, (2014) a); Diplomatie, 17 February, (2015); Elysée, 27 August, (2015); and Diplomatie, 7 April, (2015).

³⁹ Diplomatie, 14 January, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 19 February, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, 6 July, (2015).

⁴⁰ See e.g. Diplomatie, 22 February, (2016) for the joint article by the French and the German ministers of foreign affairs, Jean-Marc Ayrault and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and Frédéric Lemaître. See also *Le Monde*, 23 February, (2016).

⁴¹ Elysée, 7 February, (2015); Diplomatie, 17 February, (2015); and Diplomatie, 3 February, (2015). For an overview of France's diplomatic actions in Ukraine see Diplomatie, *Situation en Ukraine : l'action de la France*.

France through its involvement in the negotiations wanted to give Russia an opening, pointing to emergency exits that would enable it to back down with dignity. Hollande has indeed highlighted several reasons behind his involvement and claims that he is acting among other things in order to assist France's friend Russia, trying to prevent it from isolating itself from Europe and the rest of the world.⁴²

A statement which, according to French experts, could be such a signal to Russia – that the door is open and that France is its interlocutor – was made by President Hollande in September 2015. Unexpectedly the president declared that he was positive to lifting the sanctions if the then upcoming elections in Donetsk and Luhansk went well. Putin was also invited to the Climate summit in Paris later the same year and Hollande emphasised that even if there is disagreement on other issues the countries can still cooperate on climate. French sources claim that Putin has so far turned a blind eye to initiatives of this nature, which has annoyed France. At the same time it illustrates a weak point of compartmentalisation.⁴³

Other sources claim that another factor behind France's engagement in the process towards finding a solution to the conflict was that France wanted to anticipate both the EU and the US. In the case of the EU it would partly be explained by the perception that the EU machinery is too slow and that the conflict in itself was in part triggered by the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine, which would make it difficult for the EU to play a role in finding a solution. French sources underline that the Normandy format should not be linked to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).⁴⁴ As regards the US the French position would be based on the notion that France wants Europe to solve the crisis, not the United States. As one expert put it: "It is a great European interest that the European countries take the lead and not the US".⁴⁵ Others mention that France is currently looking for a role in Europe. Its traditional great-power role is no longer as obvious as it used to be and accordingly France must prove its relevance.⁴⁶

⁴² "Et je le fais en tant qu'Européen parce que je considère que ce qui se passe aux frontières de l'Europe nous intéresse directement. Je le fais aussi en tant qu'ami de la Russie, parce que je ne veux pas que la Russie s'isole du reste de l'Europe et du reste du monde. Je le fais aussi en tant que Français, parce que la France doit toujours être à l'initiative. Et ce qui se produit là, c'est aussi une belle image de l'alliance entre la France et l'Allemagne au service de la paix." Elysée, 7 February; (2015); see also *Diplomatie*, 17 February, (2015).

⁴³ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Andrew Rettman in *EU Observer*, 4 November, (2015). See also Elysée, 16 January, (2015) about Putin's responsibility for finding a solution to the crisis.

⁴⁴ Interview Brussels October 2015; and *Diplomatie*, 24 August, (2015). For more on the reform of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy and a call for a split see Susi Dennison and Nick Witney, 23 June, (2015).

⁴⁵ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

⁴⁶ Interviews Paris October 2015.

Although this is not easy to confirm from French sources it could well be yet another explanation for France's willingness to seek a tandem with Germany, a country that is more and more taking on a great-power role in areas other than the traditional economic one.

In this context it is interesting to mention that French sources claim that the Franco-German involvement in the Normandy format has not had any impact on the internal balance of power within the EU. At the same time it is not denied that France, and Germany, gain some leverage because they have "inside information" on Ukraine and Russia and can foresee how the two will react to various proposals, their probable red lines etc.⁴⁷

France perceives the EU's sanctions as a complement to the diplomatic talks and the implementation of Minsk 2. France supports the EU sanctions but several sources claim that during the internal negotiations within the EU France has taken on a mediating role between those who want tougher sanctions and those who want to lift them. From the French point of view, it is essential to show a united European front.⁴⁸ Several French sources admit that the sanctions and the Russian response, an embargo, affect French companies but according to the then minister of foreign affairs, Laurent Fabius, there are few other options.⁴⁹ French sources also claim that the sanctions are having the desired effect, even if it takes time before the effects on the Russian economy are seen.⁵⁰

From the French point of view, there is no military solution to the conflict. France does not intend to assist Ukraine with weapons and the official French position is that to do so would not contribute to peace. France is however participating in NATO's reassurance and exercises, suggesting that it does take responsibility for military security in the region.⁵¹

In sum, as regards the French approach in relation to Russia, it is very much about finding a balance between on the one hand openly discussing and listening and on

⁴⁷ Interviews Brussels October 2015. It is however noteworthy that, especially early on, there was some critique against the Normandy format. The critics focused on the fact that France and Germany were taking the lead, leaving the multilateral organisations behind as well as potential partners such as Poland and the UK. According to our interviews in Brussels much of the critique has been toned down as there is no viable alternative for the moment.

⁴⁸ Diplomatie, 3 February, (2015); and Diplomatie, 7 April, (2015). See also David Revault d'Allonnes in *Le Monde*, 23 June, (2015) on Hollande's balancing role in the negotiations with Greece, *Face à la Grèce, Hollande joue les équilibristes*.

⁴⁹ Diplomatie, 17 September, (2014) a). See also Elysée, 20 August, (2014); and Diplomatie, 18 December, (2014). See also Diplomatie, 2 June, (2015); and Diplomatie, 7 April, (2015).

⁵⁰ Diplomatie, 23 January, (2015); and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

⁵¹ *Le Monde*, 8 February, (2015) Entretien de M. Jean-Yves Le Drian; Diplomatie, 23 January, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, 26 August, (2015).

the other keeping a firm and clear stance, *ferme et pragmatique*. In an interview President Hollande has described the preferred approach as follows: Putin must be met with consistency and with dialogue. This means that Europe must clearly show that it is serious and will not tolerate Russia's action in the form of annexation, of infringement, of arms aid, etc. Moreover, it must stand by the sanctions and even be prepared to strengthen them further if no improvement is seen from the Russian side. At the same time, the channels must be kept open and the dialogue continue.⁵² In our interviews others stress, in line with this, that the sanctions must work as an instrument and not be perceived as static and eternal. "Russia is a fact of life" which "Europe has to interact with". The goal should therefore be "to contain the Russians not to punish them" and when "condemning only doing so in a moderate way without annoying them". Still, it is emphasised that this is no "dialogue between gentlemen, it is a matter of hard talk" where "it is important not to show weakness".⁵³

2.2.3 France and NATO's reassurance – everything counts

In addition to its diplomatic initiatives taken within the Normandy format and its support for the EU sanctions, France also emphasises NATO's reassurance measures, as a signal both to the outside world and internally to the allies – the collective security guarantees in NATO are working. French official sources underline that France is engaged in the reassurance and fulfils what can be expected.⁵⁴ France's commitment in the reassurance measures has varied over time and there are many sweeping statements of a broad participation in Sweden's neighbourhood. In Defence Minister Le Drian's short words: *Bref, nous sommes dans la réassurance* – "To put it briefly, we contribute to the reassurance".⁵⁵

The French contribution to the reassurance is summed up by a variety of sources to include ships, fighter aircraft, tank units and cyber capability. It takes the form of participation, for some years, in Baltic air policing, signals intelligence around the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, an airborne early-warning and control aircraft to boost surveillance over Poland and Romania, and land combat vehicles on standby in Poland. This year French combat aircraft are scheduled to deploy to the Baltic Air Police mission. In addition, France is also participating in various naval and army exercises in the region. In the Steadfast Jazz exercise in 2013, France participated in Poland and the Baltic states with the largest contingent of the

⁵² Elysée, 20 August, (2014).

⁵³ Interviews Paris October 2015; Interviews Brussels October 2015; and Elysée, 25 August, (2015).

⁵⁴ Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014).

⁵⁵ Le Monde, 8 February, (2015) Entretien de M. Jean-Yves Le Drian; and Ministère de la Défense, 6 July, (2015).

exercise, of 1 200 troops.⁵⁶ In 2015 the French Task Force participated in the Puma exercise in Poland together with among others the US. France has signed up as framework nation for NATO's VJTF in 2021/2022. From a French perspective it was essential that the forces committed to the VJTF could be double-hatted ("there is a red line when it comes to freezing assets to NATO") so that the contributing countries have the right to withdraw from the VJTF in the event of a situation where national interests are at stake.⁵⁷

It is hard to get a more detailed overview of French participation in the NATO reassurance but several sources indicate that there is a trend towards a reduced participation and that it did not become as extensive as France at first intended.⁵⁸ France is also, according to the same sources, joining fewer exercises and other activities within the framework of reassurance. Although it continues to take part, the actual contribution is smaller. The explanation given is that the French defence is so committed to several other operations, in France and internationally, and that this limits France's activities in reassurance.⁵⁹

At the same time, it appears clearly in Paris and in Brussels that reassurance is a sensitive subject to many French experts who feel there is a need to explain and justify: "France is not performing poorly in reassurance. The numbers don't lie!"⁶⁰ This seems to reflect an awareness that France's commitment is somewhat questioned and often looked at in relation to other countries' greater participation in reassurance. Although there is a general recognition that France is involved in other crises, interviewees of other nationalities than French sometimes allude that France's contribution to NATO's reassurance is "rather weak". According to the most critical voices France is participating in reassurance but not more than necessary; this does not greatly impress other countries and is being perceived as a lack of accountability.⁶¹

French sources on the other hand argue that it is not appropriate to measure and compare different allies' commitment. Instead French respondents say that there

⁵⁶ Interviews Brussels October 2015 and Interviews Paris October 2015; Ministère de la Défense, 19 February, (2015); and IISS, *The Military Balance 2015*, France, pp. 64-68. See also Ministère de la Défense, 26 August, (2015).

⁵⁷ Interviews Brussels October 2015 and Interviews Paris October 2015. For more information on the VJTF see NATO Response Force, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49755.htm. It is noticeable that no French forces are permanently under NATO command in peacetime. For more on Puma see NATO, *Exercise Puma 15 starts in Poland*.

⁵⁸ Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015); and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

⁵⁹ Interviews Brussels October 2015. For more on the French international commitment see for example *Diplomatie*, 30 October, (2014); and Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015).

⁶⁰ Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁶¹ Interviews Brussels October 2015.

is room for a broader, comprehensive perspective on Europe's security which takes into account what France does in other theatres. By acting in the south, France is in fact allowing for other allies doing more in the north.⁶² It is also stated that the quality of each contribution to the reassurance should be a factor to consider. In line with this, French oral sources say that from the Alliance's perspective France is a vital resource, having both credibility and capability – a nuclear state, with combat-proven troops and high deployability. One respondent says, not without irony, that France, incidentally, “contributed 1 billion euro of ‘fresh money’ to the reassurance by not supplying Mistral which is much more than any other country has done”.⁶³

As regards other allies' contributions to NATO's reassurance, one respondent alludes to the idea that reassurance for some has become somewhat of an excuse to do less in terms of real action. In this context the UK's and Germany's “under-deployment” in international operations is pointed out: it is much easier for them to participate in reassurance. There is also a geographical reality that comes into play, Germany and the UK “being just some kilometres away” from the area in question.⁶⁴ It is moreover stated that there is “a perception dimension” to reassurance: diplomatic declarations attract attention without necessarily giving an accurate picture of the reality. According to some respondents Germany has successfully got the message through about its contribution but in reality and in practical action France is not necessarily doing less.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Russia's changed behaviour has brought a change in that Russia now is being taken into consideration more and in a different way within the French administration. The realisation has, according to several oral sources, grown that Russia was given insufficient attention for too long and the manning of the intelligence side has now for example increased. With regard to the possible impact on the development of military strategy and doctrine some analysts argue that the impact of Russia's behaviour is negligible while others believe that it is a fact. According to the latter group this is reflected in increased weight and legitimacy being given to nuclear weapons and deterrence, and Russia's actions lend credence to a more traditional defence, a Cold War army.⁶⁶

In the case of the French contribution to Europe's defence, it is appropriate to mention its nuclear capability. That capability is seen to be of great importance to

⁶² Interviews Brussels October 2015 and Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁶³ Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁶⁴ Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁶⁵ Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁶⁶ “Recrédibilise une armée plus traditionnelle, une armée de guerre froide”, Interviews Paris October 2015.

France's credibility in international relations and as a guarantee of France's sovereignty, its freedom of action and decision-making ability. In French eyes it is also an important contribution to Europe's security as a whole, not least in today's security situation. Hollande underlines that there are other threats than terrorism and that nuclear deterrence has a role to play; "now is not the time to lower our guard".⁶⁷ In this context it should be mentioned that France in the years to come will have to invest a great amount of money to modernise its arsenal. There is always, particularly in the present economic circumstances, a need to justify the nuclear weapons and the costs that come with them.

2.3 France in the world

President Hollande has intensified France's international commitment during his time in power by pursuing a very active foreign policy in a variety of thematic and geographical areas – from the climate conference in Paris in December 2015 to various international negotiations, with Greece, Iran and Russia-Ukraine.⁶⁸ François Hollande has also shown a great willingness to intervene militarily and has launched the most military operations in the shortest time of all French presidents under the Fifth Republic. The common denominator of these interventions is the fight against terrorism. In November 2015 around 20 000 French soldiers were deployed outside the French hexagon, i.e. outside French territory in Europe. Of these 7 500 participated in 26 unilateral and multilateral missions, on four continents and oceans. 12 500 are based on different bases and outposts in French departments and territories overseas (DOM-TOMs) or abroad. 7 500–10 000 were deployed in metropolitan France as part of the national defence effort, operation Sentinelle. According to French sources this makes France the

⁶⁷ Elysée, 19 February, (2015); IISS Strategic Comments, France's nuclear conservatism, Volume 21, Comment 3, February, (2015); and Interviews Brussels October 2015. For more on nuclear weapons after Ukraine see Camille Grand, 12 November, (2015). Even after the return of France to NATO's integrated military command in 2008 France still emphasises its nuclear independence and has not joined the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG).

⁶⁸ It is important to emphasise that an active foreign policy is not unique to Hollande's presidency: it was a main feature for his predecessors as well. For example, in 2003, under President Jacques Chirac, France was already playing a major role in the discussions with Iran on weapons of mass destruction (see Yves-Michel Riols, *Le Monde*, 28 March, (2015) *La singularité de la position française dans le dossier nucléaire iranien*); and in 2008, under Nicolas Sarkozy, it played a role in the negotiations during the Russo-Georgian war (see Tomas Valasek, August, (2008)). Several experts however did find it unexpected that François Hollande with his meagre experience in international politics would follow in these footsteps. Hollande has also put security policy and the use of military means in the centre of policy in an unprecedented way.

European country that is most committed internationally, i.e. in terms of deployed personnel.⁶⁹

The main message in French foreign policy declarations is that the country is prepared to assume its great-power responsibilities, to act and to stay committed to international security, but that France is currently bearing a disproportionately large responsibility with costs in both human lives and resources. There is palpable frustration and irritation and the message is conveyed, among other things, in relation to crises in Africa and to the fight against terrorism. According to France the international community must become more involved, as must the countries that suffer from crises.⁷⁰ The then minister of foreign affairs, Laurent Fabius, made a direct link to the solidarity of the European states, hinting that solidarity must become a reality in practice, and asked “France’s European friends to assist France all the time and in a substantial manner”.⁷¹

Another dimension of France’s willingness to take responsibility and act is the risk of overstretch. In addition to several international operations come the extensive commitments within the framework of the national operation Sentinelle. There is little room for exercises and leave, the forces going more or less directly between missions in different parts of the world. This situation, according to one source, is similar to the experience of the UK when the country was involved in both Iraq and Afghanistan. This will lead to or has already led to overstretch of the French military forces, having a negative impact on several levels – equipment, personnel and budget. As one expert put it, “the Armed forces gain operation experience but also operation fatigue”.⁷²

⁶⁹ In addition to operations in the CAR, in Mali/Sahel, in Syria and in Iraq, France is also participating in operations in Côte d’Ivoire, Lebanon and the Horn of Africa. See Ministère de la défense, Carte des opérations extérieures, http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/rubriques_complementaires/carte-des-operations-exterieures. Nicolas Chapuis in *Le Monde*, 7 September, (2015) François Hollande: un discours de rentrée, deux tonalités. Interviews Paris October 2015; and Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014).

⁷⁰ Diplomatie, 14 January, (2015); and Elysée, 23 January, (2015). Diplomatie, 17 September, (2014), b). On France’s view of its responsibility see also Diplomatie, 25 March, (2015), a); and Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014).

⁷¹ Diplomatie, 14 January, (2015): “Si nous sommes heureux de la solidarité européenne, elle doit aussi se prouver. La France fait sa part du travail, mais ne peut pas tout faire à elle seule. Nos amis européens doivent donc nous soutenir tout le temps et concrètement”. See also Elysée, 23 January, (2015).

⁷² Interviews Brussels October 2015; and Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 27 April, (2015) Budget : la défense fait pression sur l’Elysée. Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015); Matthieu Suc and Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 4 February, (2015), Antiterrorisme: l’armée en première ligne; Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014); and Interviews Brussels October 2015. See also Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015) or the French General Desportes’ widely acclaimed book on the issue “La

Many have pointed out the problem but the solution is not evident. Given the unstable security situation and the risk of further destabilisation in the operation areas, France has continually ruled out the “relocalisation” of French troops from Africa to Iraq and Syria. But it is hoping that other states will come to its relief.⁷³ After elections had been held in the CAR, at the beginning of 2016, Hollande saw a possibility of French troops leaving the CAR and being replaced by African and European troops.⁷⁴ Due to the continued security threat to France, it has been emphasised that France cannot back down from its international engagements in the fight against terrorism.

The political declarations show an increased awareness of the problems resulting from this. Hollande admits that “the pace imposed on our forces is very high”, and he stresses the fact that 100 000 French military personnel spent more than 200 days in national and international operations in 2015.⁷⁵ The need for reforms has been identified at various levels and in some cases reforms have been initiated. The focus is mainly on personnel issues – making better use of reservists, hiring new personnel, and reviewing conditions of employment.⁷⁶

2.3.1 A solo player looking for partners

In French political foreign policy declarations it is often emphasised that France on the one hand is a great power with certain responsibilities and on the other hand has expectations of others taking on that responsibility as well. Even though it is not always easy and it does come with a price, Hollande claims that France has no choice but to act, both for its own sake and for the security of others. The following quotes from one of his many statements on this theme are particularly illustrative:

“One cannot claim to be a great Nation if one is not able to give the world what the world expects of us, i.e. of France.” [...] “France cannot do everything! France cannot act alone. But whenever she can, she will do it, to set an example.” [...] “France stands for international radiance, values, principles, freedom. We do not keep it for ourselves,

dernière bataille de France”; and Eléonore de Vulpillières in *Le Figaro*, 31 July, (2015) on the same book.

⁷³ Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 21 November, (2015) *Engagement militaire: La France ne peut pas choisir entre Sahel et la Syrie*; and Christian Lemenestrel in *Le Figaro*, 17 November, (2015) *Terrorisme: la France obtient le soutien de l'Europe*.

⁷⁴ Elysée, 15 January (2016).

⁷⁵ Elysée, 15 January, (2016) “Le rythme qui est imposé à nos forces est très dense.” See also Gregory Viscusi, 21 January, (2016).

⁷⁶ For more on the reforms see *Projet de Loi Actualisation de la Programmation Militaire 2014/2019 – Dossier thématique*; and Elysée, 15 January, (2016).

we intend to share it with the world. France will be at the forefront whenever it is necessary. [...] ”⁷⁷

Another aspect of the French approach to the country's role on the international scene is a positive assessment of its ability to handle different situations in different environments and countries through its political influence and military capability.⁷⁸ The nuclear capability is an important dimension of this, as is intelligence, the latter being perceived as providing a good basis for rapid and informed decisions. Both oral and written sources point out that the substantial involvement in actual operations has provided unique and valuable experience.⁷⁹ The other side of this is of course the risk of overstretch, as mentioned above.

The president has extensive authority in defence – more far-reaching than in many other countries – and has for example the right to decide on military interventions, needing the consent of the parliament only in the event of a prolongation after four months. This perceived quick and efficient decision making is often highlighted as an advantage by French experts. The national defence is seen as a natural instrument for the president and François Hollande explicitly makes that link in his declarations.⁸⁰ It is highlighted that, although not all threats and situations can be addressed by military means, these may give an extra credibility to diplomatic efforts.⁸¹

It has often been perceived as a paradox that while pushing for European integration and closer defence cooperation France is also emphasising its national independence and sovereignty.⁸² This paradox has been most obvious in relations with the US. However, currently the Franco-American military cooperation is in

⁷⁷ “On n’est peut pas prétendre être une grande Nation si l’on n’est pas capable de donner au monde ce qu’il attend de nous, c’est-à-dire de la France”; “La France ne pourra pas tout faire! La France ne pourra pas agir seule. Mais chaque fois qu’elle le pourra, elle le fera, pour montrer l’exemple”; “La France, c’est un rayonnement international, ce sont des valeurs, ce sont des principes, c’est un idéal de liberté. Nous ne le gardons pas pour nous-mêmes, nous entendons le partager avec le monde entier. La France sera en avant-garde quand il est nécessaire de l’être...” Elysée, 23 January, (2015); Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014); Rick Noack in The Washington Post, 21 August, (2014) Losing his battle at home, French President Hollande fights abroad; Elysée, 16 January, (2015); and Diplomatie, 25 March, (2015) b).

⁷⁸ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014).

⁷⁹ “Moyennant quoi l’armée française jouit d’une expérience opérationnelle, aujourd’hui inégalée en Europe, et figure certainement, à cet égard, dans le peloton de tête mondial.” Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014); and Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁸⁰ Elysée, 20 August, (2014). On the public view on the armed forces see Etienne de Durand and Vivien Pertusot, (2013).

⁸¹ Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014); and Interviews Brussels October 2015.

⁸² Anna Sundberg, (2003). On cooperation and independence see e.g. Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014); and Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015).

fact believed to be closer than it has been in a decade. Several experts state that France has strengthened its position as the US' closest ally in several areas, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.⁸³ US Secretary of State Ashton Carter was quoted as saying "There is no minister of defence I spend more time with than Jean-Yves", after meeting, once again, French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in January 2016.⁸⁴

A French expert even goes so far as to describe the current Franco-US relationship as France's most important foreign policy change in recent years, pointing to France actively seeking new ways to cooperate with the US. There are several explanations for the present close cooperation and seemingly good relationship, which in many ways had already started under the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy. According to President Hollande the two countries share the same threat assessment and have a different (i.e. greater) awareness than other countries, making them fiercely determined to fight terrorism everywhere.⁸⁵ Defence Minister Le Drian also underlines that there are no divergences in their strategic interests now or in the future.⁸⁶ Others point to a pragmatic approach of both parties. The US acknowledges and appreciates that France is "exporting security" while France values the US' strategic support to operations.⁸⁷ Several analysts moreover believe that France is happy to fill the role of the US' special partner in Europe in military endeavours, with the UK having backed away from its international commitment and Germany still taking a reluctant posture.⁸⁸

At the same time, according to several sources the traditional image of a Gaullist France wanting to keep the US at a distance is not completely gone either in France

⁸³ IISS, *Military Balance 2015*, France, pp. 64-68; Ishaan Tharoor in the *Washington Post*, 15 September, (2014) Nevermind those freedom fries. The French are Europe's new war hawks; Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015); and *Le Monde*, 18 September, (2014). At present France and the U.S are engaged side by side in Iraq and in Syria. French operations in Africa are receiving American support e.g. air refuelling and airlift in Mali. The two countries also have intelligence cooperation with regard to anti-terrorism. See *Diplomat*, 21 January, (2015); *Europe Today*, third edition, pp. 49-50; and Frank Foley in *The Telegraph*, 13 January, (2015) Charlie Hebdo attack: is France's counter-terrorism model still the example to follow?

⁸⁴ Gregory Viscusi in *Bloomberg*, 21 January, (2016).

⁸⁵ *Elysée*, 20 August, (2014); *Elysée*, 24 November, (2015); and *Diplomat*, 30 October, (2014). Laure Mandeville in *Le Figaro*, 17 November, (2015) Lutte antiterroriste : les espions français et américains resserrent leur coopération. For more on Sarkozy's presidency see Anna Sundberg, (2008).

⁸⁶ *Ministère de la Défense*, 6 July, (2015).

⁸⁷ Interviews Paris October 2015. President Obama has labelled France one of the US's closest allies and a solid partner in the fight against terrorism. Nathalie Guibert, 19 September, (2015).

⁸⁸ Interviews Paris October 2015. See also Michael Shurkin, November, (2015).

or in the US. This makes the relationship, even in the current situation, complex.⁸⁹ Politically, there is always a domestic factor and for French politicians it is important not to appear dependent or dominated. The relationship is seen to work most effectively when it comes to military and practical cooperation in the field.⁹⁰ Concerning the situation in Ukraine, France has labelled it a European conflict to be handled mainly by Europe, i.e. the Normandy format. This does not seem to be a source of dispute. Quite the contrary; it goes well in line with the US wanting Europe to take on more responsibility. The US has kept a low profile politically, although not completely disconnected or uninterested. In the wake of Russia's actions in Ukraine it has taken several military initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe, often bilaterally, but also within NATO.⁹¹ French experts stress that the US does play a key role in European security, not least in Eastern Europe, as it has crucial capabilities that in turn lend important credibility. Still, the French long-term vision is one of Europe taking on more of this responsibility.⁹²

The Franco-German relationship is often labelled as France's most important bilateral relationship.⁹³ At present it is described as fruitful and close, after going at low speed during Hollande's and Merkel's first months in power together.⁹⁴ At the same time other sources point to the changed balance between the two countries as a result of Germany growing stronger economically and politically. It is sometimes implied that this would mean unwelcome competition for France. Not surprisingly, this is hard to confirm with French sources. Instead, there is a regret and even frustration that Germany does not contribute enough militarily to French efforts.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ The criticism is e.g. very much alive within the National Front: Emmanuel Galiero in *Le Figaro*, 7 October, (2015) Marine Le Pen accuse Hollande d'être le "vice-chancelier" de Merkel. See also Eléonore de Vulpillières in *Le Figaro*, 1 August, (2015) Renaud Girard: « la France doit cesser d'être le caniche des États-Unis ».

⁹⁰ Interviews Paris October 2015. For an example of the need to consider the national dimension see Guillaume Xavier-Bender (2015) on France's role in the negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

⁹¹ Interview Paris October (2015); and Mark Landler and Helene Cooper, the *New York Times*, 1 February, (2016).

⁹² Interviews Paris October 2015.

⁹³ Josef Janning, April, (2015). For an overview of the Franco-German relationship see Barbara Kunz, *Defending Europe? A stocktaking of French and German visions for European defense*, (2015).

⁹⁴ Solenn de Royer in *Le Figaro*, 8 October, (2015) François et Angela, ou les secrets d'un couple sans passion soudé par épreuves. For more on their difficulties during their first time in power see *Der Spiegel*, 22 October, (2012); and Mathieu von Rohr in *Der Spiegel*, 22 January, (2013).

⁹⁵ Interviews Paris October 2015; EurActiv.com 4 February, (2015) French international influence in decline; ECFR, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2015*, pp. 9-10, 15; and Gunilla Herolf, 25 July, (2015). See also Bruno Tertrais, 16 July, (2013), p. 5.

The Franco-German bilateral defence cooperation is ongoing although different sources have different views on its intensity. When it comes to the military side a French expert claims that the cooperation has diminished (*regressé*) from an already low level. The German non-participation in the intervention in Libya in 2011 was a source of friction between the two countries for a long time. But according to another expert in Paris, the bilateral defence cooperation has deepened and intensified over time. A few years ago, security was more or less off the agenda but since the downing of flight MH17 and the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in the summer of 2014 the subject has become a recurring part of discussions between the two countries. New initiatives, such as the development of drones, are more frequent. In 2015 the French tank builder Nexter and the German KMW (Krauss-Maffei Wegmann) signed an agreement on a merger.⁹⁶ Several sources believe that the handling of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has had a positive impact on the Franco-German relationship in general and especially on the relationship between Hollande and Merkel. An important factor is that Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande share the same perception on how the crisis should be solved.⁹⁷

Regardless of the bilateral defence cooperation it is clear that Germany is still above all an economic and political partner to France rather than a military partner. Germany was for example the obvious choice for the Normandy format. Some French experts however claim that there is a certain change taking place in the German attitude towards military engagements and an increased awareness in Germany that political influence comes with a responsibility. With the German response to the French appeal for assistance in the fight against terrorism after the terrorist attacks in France in November 2015, Germany may be seen to have taken another step in this direction.⁹⁸ At the same time from a French perspective it is not a rupture but a gradual change that is going very slowly and does not apply to all parts of Germany's international engagements. The country is perceived as not more willing to use force but more willing to take part in international operations, primarily in non-executive missions or in civilian missions.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ For more on the merger see e.g. Defense update 15 December, (2015); and Dominique Gallois in *Le Monde*, 28 July, (2015).

⁹⁷ Interviews Paris October 2015. The terror attacks in France and the handling of the Greek crisis are also put forward as situations that have led to a closer relationship. See Josef Janning, April, (2015); Solenn de Royer in *Le Figaro*, 8 October, (2015) François et Angela, ou les secrets d'un couple sans passion soudé par épreuves; and David Revault d'Allonnes and Frédéric Lemaître in *Le Monde*, 12 February, (2015) Merkel et Hollande unis pour jouer les médiateurs.

⁹⁸ Elysée, 25 November, (2015) Déclaration conjointe avec la Chancelière Angela Merkel; and Elysée, 26 November, (2015) Communiqué du président sur les engagements de l'Allemagne en Syrie et Irak.

⁹⁹ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interview Brussels October 2015.

A significant challenge for France and Germany is that their geographical priorities and their geographical challenges differ. In operational terms they also have very different cultures and different political processes when it comes to sending troops and deciding on action. Nuclear issues are a recurring disagreement. To France the nuclear deterrent is key to Europe's defence while Germany has continued to advocate nuclear disarmament. French experts also state that there is *un décalage énorme*, a substantial gap, between French and German military capability in that Germany has not tested its capability in real operational theatres and lacks a full-spectrum capability. In practice France chooses other partners for military operations.¹⁰⁰

For many years it was the UK which played the role of France's special partner in military endeavours. France still emphasises the bilateral cooperation with the UK, describing the country as a priority ally to France.¹⁰¹ It is argued that the bilateral defence cooperation within the framework of the Lancaster House treaties, from 2010, is continuing, with several concrete initiatives, among other things on armament cooperation.¹⁰² It is also emphasised that the two countries share military cultures where operations are concerned and have good interoperability, in a much more developed way than they have with other allies like Germany and Italy to which France is often closer politically.¹⁰³ From a French perspective, however, there has been a clear disappointment over the UK toning down its international engagements and not acting globally in the same way as before. The British decision in 2013 not to intervene in Syria is stressed as a turning point.¹⁰⁴ The fact that after the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 the UK decided to join the coalition against IS was welcomed and the hope is that this is a sign of a revived British international responsibility.¹⁰⁵ However, the upcoming

¹⁰⁰ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interview Brussels October 2015. For more on the different positions of France and Germany see for example Barbara Kunz, *Defending Europe? A stocktaking of French and German visions for European defense*, (2015), p. 68 and pp. 85-86; and Hubert Védrine, 14 November, (2012).

¹⁰¹ Interviews Paris October 2015.

¹⁰² See e.g. Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 4 June, (2015) *Le Royaume-Uni repense sa stratégie de défense*. The Lancaster House treaties consist of two treaties, the first on security and defence cooperation, the second on nuclear issues. For more on the development of this cooperation see Ministry of Defence, 3 November, (2015).

¹⁰³ Interviews Brussels October 2015 and Interviews Paris October 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Solenn de Royer in *Le Figaro*, 4 May, (2015) *Entre Hollande et Cameron, la relation est distanciée*. For more on the UK-France relationship see Benoît Gomis, 11 February, (2014); and Anna Sundberg and Teresa Åhman (2012).

¹⁰⁵ Elysée, 3 December, (2015); Florentin Collomp in *Le Figaro*, 22 November, (2015) *Cameron à l'Elysée pour engager le Royaume-Uni dans la coalition contre Daech*; and Philippe Bernard in *Le Monde*, 3 December, (2015) *Le Royaume-Uni s'engage à son tour contre l'Etat islamique en*

referendum on the UK's EU membership is a cause of concern to France. For France the unity of the EU is key and the official French stance is, not surprisingly, that it wishes the UK to stay an EU member. Regarding the ongoing negotiations in Brussels on the UK's demands for reforms France has underlined the absolute need to safeguard the EU's essential founding principles. It is key to France that the EU can continue its development and "move forward to become stronger" and not be hindered by one country. A Brexit and the call for special regulations are according to Hollande not only about the UK; they are about the Union as such. The risk of a spill over effect, with more countries asking for exceptions, is real if the concessions made are too large.¹⁰⁶

Where the Ukrainian crisis and a possible tandem with the UK in the negotiation process are concerned, from a French point of view this was never an option. The UK would, according to some French experts, have a harder time winning the trust of both parties and therefore would not be able to contribute to the solution. Although there was some disappointment on the part of the UK and Poland at the beginning, according to French sources, they now support the Normandy format to the fullest, since there is no viable alternative.¹⁰⁷

2.3.2 France in EU and NATO – change under way?

As mentioned above, the EU and more specifically then French President Nicolas Sarkozy, as holder of the rotating presidency of the EU, played a major mediating role in the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 and brokered the ceasefire agreement.¹⁰⁸ In the current conflict in Ukraine the EU has had no role in the negotiations with the parties within the Normandy format. On the other hand, French sources stress that the EU does have an active role in several other aspects of the conflict, with French support, e.g. the sanctions, the EU mission and various initiatives by the EU Commission. In a longer-term perspective, the need to develop the EU's Neighbourhood Policy is underlined and the ongoing EU process on this matter is welcomed. A French objective is a holistic approach, where there is no internal split and no division of labour between east and south, with the states in the East

Syrie. Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, David Cameron in Paris 23 November 2015, Press statement following Paris talks.

¹⁰⁶ Diplomatie, 24 August, (2015); Elysée, 25 August (2015); Le Figaro, 9 May, (2015) Référendum sur la sortie de l'UE: Hollande rappelle Cameron à l'ordre; Interviews Paris October 2015; and Elysée, 18 February, (2016).

¹⁰⁷ Interviews Brussels October 2015 and Interviews Paris October 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Tomas Valasek, August (2008); Civil.ge Daily News Online, 21 October, (2008); and Expatica.Fr, 8 August, (2009).

focusing on the eastern neighbourhood and those in the south focusing on the southern neighbourhood.¹⁰⁹

France is one of the EU's founding members and was long seen, together with Germany, as the union's engine and leader. Together with permanent membership of the UN Security Council, the EU is described as one of France's "main foreign policy tools" and a means to exert international influence.¹¹⁰ President Hollande defines EU cooperation as a protection of French values and interests and against international threats and excessive globalisation.¹¹¹

The CSDP was for many years a very high priority for France and highlighted as an important complement to the national capability, and always came before NATO. Prior to the European Council meeting on defence in 2013 France had high ambitions and wanted to see a re-launch of the CSDP. French sources indicate that the CSDP still, even today, is a French vision: as one expert stated "we are still dreaming the dream" of a European operational headquarters (OHQ), a full-scale military and civilian defence without any division of labour between the EU and NATO.¹¹² According to Defence Minister Le Drian EU cooperation is an absolute necessity given today's challenges and the CSDP has a central role to play.¹¹³

However, over the last ten years EU scepticism has grown among the French population in general, and over the past few years the previous constant focus on the CSDP has been toned down in political declarations and within the administration.¹¹⁴ In the same way as France also expresses frustration over the

¹⁰⁹ Interview Brussels October 2015; and *Diplomatie*, 24 August, (2015). For more on the reform of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy and a call for a split see Susi Dennison and Nick Witney, 23 June, (2015).

¹¹⁰ Interviews Paris October 2015; and *Elysée*, 20 August, (2014).

¹¹¹ *Elysée*, 20 August, (2014): "Pour la France, l'Europe doit être une protection: une protection de nos intérêts, de nos droits, de nos valeurs dans le monde, une protection pour nous défendre face aux menaces, mais aussi une protection par rapport aux excès de la mondialisation." For more on France and globalisation see for example Gabriel Goodlife, (2015), pp. 28-29.

¹¹² Interviews Brussels October 2015. In March 2015 France, Germany and Poland presented their common vision for the development of the CSDP and their view on the way forward for the project: *Ministère de la Défense*, 30 March, (2015).

¹¹³ *Ministère de la Défense*, 26 August, (2015); and *Diplomatie*, 24 August, (2015).

¹¹⁴ An example of this was the French No vote in the referendum on the new EU Constitution in 2005. According to several analysts France's position has been weaker since the latest European Parliament elections in 2014, when the Front National, which has had difficulties cooperating with other parties, won 25 per cent of the French votes. See also Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015). A survey in March 2016 on the public attitudes on a possible Brexit showed that 53 per cent of the French surveyed were positive on holding a similar referendum in France on the EU membership, *EurActiv.com*, Majority of French back holding 'Frexit' referendum, 14 March (2016).

lack of commitment from individual countries to international operations and crisis management, it expresses irritation over the fact that the CSDP is not developing at the pace and to the extent which France has long sought. Hubert Védrine, former foreign minister, in his report on the outlook for European defence, concluded in 2012 that “Not a single European country has backed France’s ambitions and her conception of a European Defence, even as these were defined and redefined in increasingly realistic and pragmatic terms”.¹¹⁵

During the past year or so the sceptical voices have been heard much more frequently than before. Several experts argue openly that the EU is “not built for the new security situation or mentally prepared for it” and can at present not provide military capability. The most critical respondents claim that the CSDP will never work and, although the European project as such works, it is no use to ask the EU to become a strategic, defence and security policy actor, “to dress up as a soldier”. In the same vein, the CSDP is described as only useful for the lower spectrum of conflicts, civilian crisis management, and humanitarian relief.¹¹⁶ In the light of the usual French message on the CSDP this is a clear change. It used to be absolutely taboo even to discuss a division of labour between the EU and NATO. Many French experts also highlight the fact that France, in practice, often sidesteps the EU in crisis situations since the EU is perceived as too slow (and France at the same time as so quick). France has inclined to unilateral interventions or what it calls “minilateral cooperation” with a small number of partners.¹¹⁷ France advocates a more even distribution of responsibility between the EU members. In line with this, France is advocating a review of the financing of CSDP operations. At present, the participating countries take on an excessive financial burden.¹¹⁸

Another interesting feature is a perceived shift in the French attitude towards NATO. Since 2009 France has been fully reintegrated into NATO structures (except for the nuclear capability) and the former extremely sensitive issue of France’s place in NATO seems to have lost relevance. This does not mean that NATO is emphasised in political declarations or official documents more frequently than in the past. Some respondents even acknowledge that it still can be difficult to openly discuss NATO without getting into discussions about being “US

¹¹⁵ Hubert Védrine, 14 November, (2012), p. 17.

¹¹⁶ Interviews Paris October 2015.

¹¹⁷ Interviews Paris October 2015; Anna Forsström and Anna Sundberg, (2013); Barbara Kunz, *Defending Europe? A stocktaking of French and German visions for European defense*, (2015), pp. 37-39; and Hubert Védrine, 14 November, (2012). For more on French unilateralism see e.g. Susi Dennison, 11 February, (2015).

¹¹⁸ *Diplomatie*, 30 October, (2014); and *Diplomatie*, 24 August, (2015). On French responsibility within the framework of the EU see e.g. *Diplomatie*, 25 March, (2015) a).

puppets”. But the common view is that the NATO membership is no longer an issue. “The debate is closed”. Statements that only a few years ago would have been very striking and unusual are now heard from several French experts in Paris and in Brussels. “For 90 per cent of the French population it is NATO, not the EU, which guarantees their security.” “NATO membership does not affect our sovereignty at all.”¹¹⁹ The conflict in Ukraine shows, according to several respondents, that “NATO is back in business”. On the other hand, according to French sources, Syria is the proof that NATO cannot simply focus on territorial defence of Europe. The question of NATO’s role as a global player must find its answer.¹²⁰

As stated above France does not want to see a regionalisation or burden sharing, where the allies would divide responsibility for different geographical areas between them. Instead it is emphasised that NATO is all about solidarity, about shared responsibility and taking risks together.¹²¹ In a recent report from the Assemblée nationale on NATO the cohesion of NATO is once again underlined and put forward as a key issue for France in the upcoming NATO meeting in Warsaw this summer. A division into two geographical fronts would risk dividing the allies and hence weaken NATO and its political and military credibility.¹²² Concerning the Ukrainian conflict, NATO reassurance measures, as already mentioned, are seen as crucial. The report from the Assemblée nationale notes that NATO must however balance the risk of pushing the situation with Russia into escalation with the need to deter. NATO, it states, must be part of the solution not adding to the problem.¹²³

Given this new emphasis on NATO it is interesting to note that after the terrorist attacks in November 2015 France did ask the EU for assistance in accordance with the EU’s mutual assistance clause in Article 42.7 in the Lisbon Treaty. This is the first time the article has ever been invoked and every member state quickly expressed its full support for France.¹²⁴ This move will be discussed in more detail below, in section 2.5, but here it is worth mentioning that Hollande explains his

¹¹⁹ Interviews Paris October 2015; and on French submission to the US see for example Le Figaro, 4 September, (2015) Mistral: Le Pen et Mélenchon accusent Hollande de “soumission” aux Etats-Unis; and Eléonore de Vulpillières in Le Figaro, 1 August, (2015) Renaud Girard : « la France doit cesser d’être le caniche des États-Unis ».

¹²⁰ Interviews Brussels October 2015.

¹²¹ Diplomatie, 30 October, (2014); and Diplomatie, 24 August, (2015). On French responsibility within the framework of the EU see e.g. Diplomatie, 25 March, (2015) a).

¹²² Assemblée nationale, 3 February, (2016), p. 84.

¹²³ Assemblée nationale, 3 February, (2016), p. 84.

¹²⁴ Christian Lemenestrel in Le Figaro, 17 November, (2015) Terrorisme: la France obtient le soutien de l’Europe; and Jochen Rehr, 20 November, (2015).

choice by describing it as a means for the EU members to assist France in line with their obligations.¹²⁵

2.4 Defence priorities

2.4.1 Threat perceptions

The objectives and priorities of the French defence and security policy are defined in the White Paper and in the military programming law. Other important inputs on these issues come from the defence budget and various policy speeches made by, in particular, the president who is commander-in-chief and the main actor but also by the prime minister as well as the defence minister and the minister of foreign affairs.

The current White Paper, *Le Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale*, was published in 2013 at the initiative of President Hollande, a year after he was elected.¹²⁶ It contains a comprehensive and thorough overview of the security environment and France's approach to and role in this environment. In the White Paper from 2013, it is established that French territory was not faced with either a direct or an indirect conventional military threat. Among the threats and risks identified are terrorism, cybersecurity and pandemics. The financial crisis, the upheaval in the Arab world and the US's rebalancing to Asia are highlighted as important strategic changes to be considered.¹²⁷ There are only a few references to Russia in the final version of the text. Russia is discussed, among other things, under the heading *Les menaces de la force*. It is noted in the text that Russia is aiming at military and financial resources worthy of a great power and that it is one of France's foreign policy objectives to ensure close cooperation with Russia.¹²⁸

The 2013 White Paper highlights a number of defence strategic priorities and/or functions – protection, deterrence and intervention, but also knowledge,

¹²⁵ Elysée, 25 November, (2015) Déclaration conjointe avec la Chancelière Angela Merkel.

¹²⁶ *Le Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale*, (2013). The document was prepared by a commission of around 30 experts, i.e. the three defence chiefs, researchers and representatives of the gendarmerie and the police.

¹²⁷ *Le Livre blanc*, (2013), pp. 9-12, 27-30. For President Hollande's motives behind a new White Paper see *Lettre de mission du Président de la République au Président de la Commission du Livre blanc*, p. 145 in *Le Livre blanc*, (2013).

¹²⁸ *Le Livre Blanc*, (2013), pp. 36-37. However, during the internal preparatory work on the White Paper several scenarios were not published. Two out of 12 scenarios dealt with Russia more specifically.

anticipation and prevention. In practice, this relates to the protection of France's population against various threats, maintaining the nuclear deterrence and the ability to act internationally.¹²⁹ Strategic autonomy and international legitimacy are described as two fundamental elements of the national defence strategy. This includes for example an independent intelligence capability in order to be able to make informed decisions, but also to act in accordance with international law and in conjunction with others.¹³⁰

In France hitherto there has been no specific timeline for when a new White Paper should be presented but the latest White Paper has the ambition of an audit every five years.¹³¹ A new White Paper can thus be expected in 2018. If there is a shift in the presidency in 2017 the next president can make his or her mark on this policy area and quickly introduce a new White Paper, in the same way as Hollande did. The change in the security situation can of course also serve as a basis for a decision to review the priorities of the White Paper. At present, however, the government maintains that the strategic priorities in the current White Paper are fixed and do not need to be adjusted.¹³²

Every six years, as part of the implementation of the White Paper, a military programming law (Loi de la Programmation Militaire, LPM) is adopted, setting the budgetary and capability framework for defence. Just like the White Paper, the LPM contains an overview of the security situation but the analysis is more concise and based on the assumptions in the White Paper. The latest LPM was adopted by the parliament in December 2013 and applies for the period 2014–2019.¹³³ Experience shows that the LPM is rarely respected over the course of time but is adjusted (i.e. reduced) by the annual defence budget. This time a review of the LPM was scheduled in 2015 in order to ensure the relevance of the objectives, ongoing implementation and the consistency of the text with developments since the White Paper was written.¹³⁴ In the light of the terrorist attacks and the changing security situation this review was brought forward six months, to the summer of

¹²⁹ Le Livre blanc, (2013), pp. 7-8, 133-139. For a short summary of some of the main points in the White Paper see Le Figaro, 29 April, (2013); and Nathalie Guibert in Le Monde, 29 April, (2013).

¹³⁰ Le Livre blanc, (2013), pp. 19-26.

¹³¹ Le Livre blanc, (2013), p. 9. This is the fourth White Paper under the Fifth Republic. The previous white papers were published in 1972, 1994 and 2008.

¹³² Ministère de la Défense, Projet de Loi de Finances 2016, p. 21; and Nathalie Guibert in Le Monde, 27 April, (2015) Budget : la défense fait pression sur l'Elysée.

¹³³ Projet de loi de Programmation militaire 2014/2019 – Dossier thématique; and Journal officiel de la République Française, LOI no 2013-1168 du 18 décembre 2013 relative à la programmation militaire pour les années 2014 à 2019 et portant diverses dispositions concernant la défense et la sécurité nationale, 19 December, (2013).

¹³⁴ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Kunz, *Defending Europe? A stocktaking of French and German visions for European defense*, (2015). Article 6 in the LPM 2014–2019.

2015, in order to enable the armed forces to respond to the threats and stick to its operational commitments.¹³⁵

The revised LPM contains nine main decisions, one of which is an increase in the defence budget which is discussed further in section 2.4.2. below. Other decisions in the revised LPM are about the national security operation Sentinelle and a reform of the reservists. The review of the LPM found that, although the White Paper's approach is still valid in many aspects, many of the conditions have changed. This applies, among other things to Sentinelle, cyber defence, the number of international operations and the need for new equipment.¹³⁶

Some experts claim that the most important factor in this revision was the gesture of carrying it six months early. It is also underlined that it is the terrorist threat which, above all, is the trigger. However, the Ukraine crisis is mentioned in the revision and it is stressed that in addition to the ability to confront the terrorist threat France needs to ensure that the armed forces have the ability to meet the resurgence of threat of force, *la résurgence de "menace de la force"*.¹³⁷ According to French sources Europe is not facing a new Cold War, but Russia's changed behaviour in relation to Ukraine has revived classic great-power politics, *le spectre des menaces de la force*, and the possibility of interstate conflicts in Europe.¹³⁸

Although the tone of the 2013 White Paper was far from optimistic, there has nevertheless been a shift since then. The descriptions of the current threats to France and the rest of the world are many and frequent in political declarations and in other official documents.¹³⁹ Dramatic terms are often used to describe a security situation that has worsened in virtually every respect over the past two years while Europe has not sufficiently adapted to developments. The international security environment is described as threatening with a wide range of tangible threats, on several continents and in various forms, which will not disappear in the near future.¹⁴⁰ According to Defence Minister Le Drian all warning lights are red in regard to the present strategic challenges.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Elysée, 29 April, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, 29 May, (2015).

¹³⁶ Ministère de la Défense, 29 May, (2015).

¹³⁷ Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015).

¹³⁸ Ministère de la Défense, 29 May, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015).

¹³⁹ See e.g. Hollande's sixth press conference where he devotes much attention to international issues and the security situation: Elysée, 7 September, (2015). See also Nicolas Chapuis in *Le Monde*, 7 September, (2015) François Hollande: un discours de rentrée, deux tonalités.

¹⁴⁰ Elysée, 14 January, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 19 February, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015); and *Le Monde*, 22 November, (2015) L'armée n'envisage pas une victoire militaire contre l'EI « à court terme ».

¹⁴¹ Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015).

A common feature of the threats identified is that the division between internal and external security is perceived to have disappeared. According to French sources the international threats strike nationally but cannot be tackled only at a national level. The terrorist attacks in January 2015 against Charlie Hebdo, a French weekly magazine, are cited as evidence of this.¹⁴²

From the French point of view, terrorism is the primary and most tangible threat, both internally and internationally. One aspect of this is the radicalisation of people living in France and the potential threat posed by fighters returning from Iraq and Syria.¹⁴³ A recurring message is that France may have been “the first” to be hit with attacks but that all countries must prepare themselves and join the fight against terrorism.¹⁴⁴ Since the terrorist attacks in January 2015 the question whether France is at war or not has been deliberated. Some weeks after the attacks the newspaper *Le Monde* wrote that France was at war against terrorism, jihadism and radical Islamism. According to Prime Minister Manuel Valls the question itself was at the time irrelevant, but the terrorists through their attacks had answered it in the cruellest way.¹⁴⁵ After the extensive attacks in Paris in November 2015 the message was unambiguous and clear. France is at war.¹⁴⁶

Cybersecurity is also a high priority for France, often in relation to terrorism. The current administration has claimed cybersecurity to be a national priority. Since 2014 a variety of initiatives have been taken within the framework of a national cyber defence pact (*le pacte défense cyber*) to enhance information security,

¹⁴² Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015); Diplomatie, 14 January, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, 29 May, (2015).

¹⁴³ For examples of threat descriptions see Ministère de la Défense, 29 May, (2015); Elysée, 29 April, (2015); Diplomatie, 14 January, (2015); and Elysée, 23 January, (2015).

¹⁴⁴ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015. See also Elysée, 23 January, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015); and Diplomatie, 8 February, (2015).

¹⁴⁵ Gouvernement, 13 January, (2015); Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 5 February, (2015) *L’art militaire de l’antiterrorisme*; and Elysée, 14 January, (2015); and Elysée, 16 January, (2015). See also #Antiterrorisme : Manuel Valls annonce des mesures exceptionnelles, <http://www.gouvernement.fr>, 21 January, (2015) on anti-terror measures.

¹⁴⁶ Elysée, 16 November, (2015) François Hollande : “La France est en guerre. Les actes commis vendredi soir à Paris et près du Stade de France, sont des actes de guerre. Ils ont fait au moins 129 morts et de nombreux blessés. Ils constituent une agression contre notre pays, contre ses valeurs, contre sa jeunesse, contre son mode de vie.”; and Elysée, 14 November, (2015). It is also noteworthy that there is a domestic dimension to this in that it justifies the state of emergency after the attacks. For a critical view see *Le Figaro*, 15 November, (2015) Villepin : « le piège, c’est l’idée que nous sommes en guerre ».

develop offensive cyber capability, support research and increase the numbers of personnel.¹⁴⁷

2.4.2 The defence budget

France together with the UK is one of Europe's major military powers. In the past the country was one of few NATO members to reach the NATO spending target of 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defence. But since the 1990s, when more than 3 per cent was spent on defence, the proportion has declined. In 2014 France spent 2.2 per cent of its GDP on defence and in 2015, according to most analysts, only narrowly reached the 2 per cent target and will miss the mark in 2016.¹⁴⁸

The LPM for 2014–2019 planned for an annual defence budget of 31.38 billion euros for 2014–2016, and then an increase to 32.51 billion euros up to 2019.¹⁴⁹ However, as mentioned above, at the end of April 2015 François Hollande announced that the armed forces would receive additional means to meet their increased national and international commitments resulting from the terrorist threat.¹⁵⁰ While the defence budget for 2015 remains at 31.4 billion euros, 3.8 billion euros in real terms will be added for the remaining four years (an increase of about 3 per cent).¹⁵¹ This is unique. It is the first time an existing LPM has been revised by providing additional funds. The revision is a departure from previous

¹⁴⁷ Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 6 February, (2014); and *Projet de loi de Programmation militaire 2014/2019 – Dossier thématique*. The defence minister's launch of the cyber defence pact in 2014, Ministère de la Défense, 7 February, (2014). See also www.defense.gouv.fr, La Cybérdefence.

¹⁴⁸ Simon de Galbert, 8 September, (2015); *The Economist*, 25 July, (2015) The President's thankless burden; and Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 4 June, (2015) Le Royaume-Uni repense sa stratégie de défense.

¹⁴⁹ Ministère de la Défense, *Projet de Loi de Finances 2015*.

¹⁵⁰ *Elysée*, 29 April, (2015). Notably, in January 2015, shortly after the attack on Charlie Hebdo, President Hollande had already announced that the levels of the LPM and the pace of the cuts would be reviewed. *Elysée*, 14 January, (2015). For more on the LPM see Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015).

¹⁵¹ The increase: 600 million euros in 2016, 700 million in 2017, 1 billion by 2018 and 1.5 billion in 2019: *Elysée*, 29 April, (2015); Ministère de la Défense, 4 June, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, *Projet de Loi de Finances 2016*, as well as Interviews Paris October 2015.

years' repeated reductions in the defence budget that have gone on since 2009.¹⁵² Defence is the second largest item in the budget after education.¹⁵³

Of additional 3.8 billion euros approximately 2.8 billion will go to protection against terrorism on the national territory, within Opération Sentinelle.

The funds will be used for recruitment, infrastructure and implementation. The security forces deployed in France as an emergency measure following the attacks in January 2015 will remain in place until further notice, at a level of 7 000 soldiers, having the capacity to deploy another 3 000 soldiers for a limited time.¹⁵⁴ After the attacks in November, President Hollande announced that the planned cuts of 34 000 personnel would be completely halted until 2019 and recruitment will continue in cyber defence, intelligence and operations.¹⁵⁵

The remainder of the budget increase, about 1 billion euros, will go to defence equipment. Moreover another 500 000 euros will be spent on new equipment and equipment maintenance. The focus on equipment has, according to several sources, been clear since 2013. Following the updated LPM this effort should be further increased, mainly on critical equipment for intelligence and operations.

Initially, in April 2015, it was stressed that France would not deviate from its overall goal of getting a balanced budget and reducing government spending. It would stick to its European commitments within the framework of the EU's

¹⁵² Comparing the budgets in 1980 and 2015 (in nominal terms – without taking into account inflation, etc.), the defence budget has risen from 12.2 billion euros to 31.4. This may look like a significant increase but if a comparison is made in real terms, on the basis of the value of the euro in 2014, the picture changes: in constant 2014 prices, in 1980, the budget was 33.3 billion euros and in 2014 it was 31.4 billion euros. The highest level in the past was reached in 1990 with 39 billion euros. Since then it has fallen by about 20 per cent. Alexandra Pouchard in *Le Monde*, 29 April, (2015) En euros constants, le ministère de la défense a perdu 20% de son budget en 25 ans.

¹⁵³ For an overview of the overall budget for the 2016 see *Chiffres clés du PLF 2016*, CEDEF (2015). The Education Ministry receives 47.9 billion euros for 2016. The overall defence budget for 2016 (LPM 2016) covering research, pensions, the Ministry of Defence, operations, etc. includes 42.53 billion euros, of which defence receives around 32 billion euros (39.84 billion euros if pensions are included).

¹⁵⁴ After the January 2015 attacks, 10 000 soldiers were deployed in France for several weeks. The number then went down to 7 000 soldiers. After the attacks in November 2015 Opération Sentinelle was increased once again by 3 000 soldiers, 7 000 of them in the Paris region and 3 000 in the rest of the country. Ministère de la Défense, Opérations: sentinelle. Poursuite des opérations de renfort, 15 November, (2015).

¹⁵⁵ Interviews Paris October 2015; and *Projet de Loi Actualisation de la Programmation Militaire 2014/2019 – Dossier thématique*. Alexandra Pouchard in *Le Monde*, 29 April (2015), En euros constants, le ministère de la défense a perdu 20% de son budget en 25 ans.

Stability and Growth Pact.¹⁵⁶ After the terrorist attacks in November and the announcement of several reforms enhancing the protection against terrorism this message was however reversed. President Hollande then announced that security is the overall priority and that “the security pact” must outweigh the stability pact.¹⁵⁷

When Hollande in the spring of 2015 announced the increase of the defence budget for the next three years the reaction overall was positive in that there was broad support for an increase. The downside, according to some analysts, of the increase was that it was too small, would not help the ongoing missions and did not tackle the existing capability gaps.¹⁵⁸ This generally positive response to an increase of the financial means for defence may seem understandable in a country recently hit by terrorist attacks. But at the same time the adjustment will be borne by the rest of the state budget. Finance Minister Michel Sapin states that when someone gets more there is less for someone else.¹⁵⁹ The concrete implications for other sectors are still to be seen. With regard to funding the increase of 3.8 billion euros for the years to come a number of analysts believe it to be manageable because it is spread over several years.¹⁶⁰

An obvious problem in previous defence budgets, since the turn of the century, has been that the actual international engagement in operations has been greater than expected. In the budget for 2014, 450 million euros was budgeted for international operations but in reality the costs exceeded 1 billion euros. In the budget for 2016 the level of 450 million is maintained but it is highlighted that if the same situation occurs as did in previous years the clause contained in the LPM about balancing between ministries will apply.¹⁶¹ In France there is a system of financial

¹⁵⁶ Dominique Gallois and Patrick Roger in *Le Monde*, 30 April, (2015) *Le gros de l'effort reporté*; and Elysée, 29 April, (2015). For more information on the Stability and Growth Pact see European Commission, Stability and Growth Pact, http://www.ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/economic_governance/sfp/index_en.htm; David Revault d'Allonnes and Patrick Roger in *Le Monde*, 29 April, (2015) *Une rallonge de 3,8 milliards d'euros*; and Nathalie Guibert in *Le Monde*, 27 April, (2015) *Budget : la défense fait pression sur l'Elysée*.

¹⁵⁷ Elysée, 16 November, (2015) Hollande : “le pacte de sécurité l'emporte sur le pacte de stabilité”. See also *Le Figaro*, 16 November, (2015) Hollande annonce des recrutements massifs dans la sécurité et la justice; and Cécile Ducourtieux in *Le Monde*, 17 November, (2015) Pierre Moscovici : “la France n'est pas seule, l'UE est à ses côtés”.

¹⁵⁸ Interviews Paris October 2015 and Interviews Brussels October 2015. For more on the debate on overstretch and the need for more means see section 2.3 above.

¹⁵⁹ Dominique Gallois and Patrick Roger in *Le Monde*, 30 April, (2015) *Le gros de l'effort reporté*.

¹⁶⁰ Alexandra Pouchard in *Le Monde*, 29 April (2015), *En euros constants, le ministère de la défense a perdu 20% de son budget en 25 ans*.

¹⁶¹ Ministère de la Défense, *Projet de Loi de Finances 2016*, pp. 33-34.

equalisation to defence which means that the government can take resources from other ministries for unforeseen costs of operations (*La solidarité interministérielle*).¹⁶²

In the budget for 2015 the funds for equipment increased from 16.4 billion to 16.7 billion euros in order to continue the modernisation of the armed forces in line with the LPM. For 2016 the increase continues, going up 7 per cent, to a total of 17 billion euros.¹⁶³ Maintenance of equipment in 2016 rose to 3.44 billion euros, including an increase of 7 per cent compared to 2015. In 2016 a number of equipment projects are expected to start, and multiple deliveries will take place.¹⁶⁴

The defence industry is regarded as a strategic resource.¹⁶⁵ There is a strong link to the highest political power and the French government has a significant ownership in the French defence industry. The sale of defence equipment is described by one expert as both means and ends. France wants to sell its equipment for financial reasons but there is an awareness that the sales may contribute to political developments in an area. As an example, it is mentioned that there is a strategic element behind the sale of the Mistral ships to Egypt and a hope that it will contribute to the development of the area, in particular in Libya.¹⁶⁶

France is the world's third largest arms exporter and during Hollande's time in office it has had unusually significant defence industrial successes which in turn are important supplements to the defence budget.¹⁶⁷ After having failed for 15 years to sell the Rafale combat aircraft France achieved three sales in 2015. In addition, contracts have been signed for the sale of FREMM frigates and the Caracal transport helicopter.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Elysée, 20 August, (2014); DW, 29 April, (2015) Hollande: France to boost defence budget in response to extremist attacks; Elysée, 29 April, (2015); Elysée, 23 January, (2015); and Diplomatie, 25 March, (2015) b).

¹⁶³ Ministère de la Défense, *Projet de Loi de Finances 2016*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁶⁴ In 2016 an FREMM frigate, nine Rafale fighter aircraft, 11 helicopters, equipment for drones, strengthened capability for tactical air transport etc. will also be delivered.

¹⁶⁵ Ministère de la Défense, *Projet de Loi de Finances 2016*, p. 45.

¹⁶⁶ Interviews Paris October 2015; and Ishaan Tharoor in the Washington Post, 15 September, (2014) Nevermind those freedom fries. The French are Europe's new war hawks.

¹⁶⁷ Dominique Gallois in Le Monde, 9 February, (2015) L'industrie française de l'armement retrouve des couleurs à l'export; and The Economist, 25 July, (2015) The President's thankless burden. According to French media France moves up to third place among the arms-exporting countries, after the US and the UK, as a result of the contracts signed in 2014: Dominique Gallois in Le Monde, 10 February, (2015) Armement: la France dans le top 3 mondial.

¹⁶⁸ David Revault d'Allonnes in Le Monde, 11 April, (2015) Jean-Yves Le Drian, fidèle du président et VRP de l'armement; and Ministère de la Défense, 21 January, (2016).

Nuclear deterrence is an important component of the French defence doctrine. France, unlike the UK, has retained both airborne and shipborne nuclear weapons. The cost is approximately 11 per cent of the total defence budget.¹⁶⁹

2.5 Trends and analysis

One of the main questions in this study is *whether* and *how* France, as well as the other two European great powers, have adapted to Russia's changed behaviour. When it comes to France in particular, one of the most important conclusions in this regard is that reforms and changes are taking place in France triggered by the deteriorating security situation. France is clearly seeking to adapt to and operate in this new environment. According to the French view, France is at the forefront, more aware and active than others. But even if France is condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine and has been actively working to find a negotiated solution to the Ukrainian conflict, Russia is not France's greatest concern and is not causing the changes. Instead, terrorism is the overriding and most present threat, characterised by interlinked international and national dimensions.

The change where Russia is concerned is about a changed view on Europe's neighbourhood as a less stable and more dangerous region – the return of classic great-power politics. France is also concerned by Russia challenging international law and its constant references to its nuclear arsenal. This seems to emanate more from an understanding of other countries being threatened by Russia than from a concern for France's security. Russia is not perceived as a threat to France or necessarily to NATO per se. This does not mean that France is turning away from its engagement in NATO's reassurance. France is determined to continue its involvement in the region and wants to show loyalty and solidarity, giving proof of NATO defence guarantees. But it will hardly increase its engagement in the region. France's involvement in other theatres limits the room for manoeuvre.

It is also possible that other changes in France are somewhat influenced, and possibly amplified, by Russia's changed behaviour. This goes for example for the increased focus on NATO and on the collective defence guarantees, but also for the weight that is given rhetorically to nuclear weapons. It is furthermore sometimes stated that Russia's actions draw attention to the need for a more traditional defence, more focused on Europe and the national territories. However, this has not been articulated in the military programming law or in the defence budget, at least not yet. France's armed forces are still to a large extent focused on international missions, primarily in Africa and in the Middle East. During the past

¹⁶⁹ Elysée, 19 February, (2015); and IISS Strategic Comments, France's nuclear conservatism, Volume 21, Comment 3, February, (2015).

year the protection of the national territory has been a huge task, especially for the Army. This is not, however, territorial defence in the traditional sense but the patrolling of streets alongside gendarmes and police officers. Another change that may be seen as a reaction to Russia's changed behaviour is the enhancement of the intelligence and cyber defence capabilities. Still, these capabilities are also of great importance for France's anti-terror measures and in the official documents it is mainly this aspect that is highlighted.

Another aspect of France's relations with Russia is the quite flexible view on Russia that is common in France. In the longer run, France is aiming at restored relations with Russia and is balancing the hard talk with an open hand. It is clear that in the actual situation the fight against terrorism and the need to conquer IS are more important for France than Russia's actions in Ukraine. This does not mean that France has changed its view on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. But France takes on a great-power perspective. There is a need to compartmentalise and to cooperate with Russia, as a great power with stakes in the south, and together eliminate the common enemy. There is a need to look beyond disagreements, as has happened many times before, if that is what it takes to make progress in another area. This is also about the perception of Russia as a great power and a partner to France. It is not the Russian actions in Ukraine that have been an obstacle to joint action in Syria. It is the lack of consensus with regard to Assad's future, Russia's unpredictable behaviour in the area and France's questioning of Russia's intentions.

The French armed forces were under pressure even before the terror attacks in November 2015. The international and national commitments come with extensive costs. France is likely to face a long combat against IS on a scale that was inconceivable only a few years ago when Hollande withdrew the last French troops from Afghanistan. In the current situation France would have only limited ability to engage in yet another conflict if the need for international intervention arose somewhere new. The coming increase of the defence budget will not cover all of the rising costs. Neither will a "neglecting" of the commitments within the EU's stability pact. The urgent, compelling need to respond to the threat of terrorism is the major limiting factor. At the same time, as already pointed out, France sees no choice but to act. The option available, to create a little "space" for France, is pleading with others to act and to relieve some of the pressure on France. This message has been repeated with increasing persistence and growing frustration during the past year, culminating after the attacks in November. But only when France has resorted to more formal routes by invoking Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty has the call seemed to have gained wider acceptance.

When it comes to the message conveyed on the EU and NATO it is interesting to note that there has been a certain shift in rhetoric. Over the years the CSDP has always been mentioned before NATO, as a natural adjunct to the national defence. This has been the case in official documents and declarations, as well as in

interviews with experts conducted as part of previous studies. With seemingly relentless energy and enthusiasm French sources have highlighted the need for deeper defence cooperation within the EU regardless of how slow development has been in reality. As already noted in some previous studies, this constant focus on the EU and the CSDP has been toned down for the past couple of years.¹⁷⁰ Many of our interviewees are now even inclining towards a NATO focus. This would have been more or less unthinkable some years ago. The effectiveness of NATO and the validity of collective security and Article 5 are often juxtaposed to a non-functioning CSDP. This message was most obvious in the interviews carried out in Paris and in Brussels last autumn, but it is, though more subtly, also clear from political declarations. There are many official declarations that make no reference to the EU and others where the lack of progress is pointed out, which is something rather new.

Therefore it was seemingly unexpected that France did choose to invoke EU solidarity after the terrorist attacks in November. But on a closer look it came as no surprise. France made a choice that can be interpreted in different ways but does follow some kind of logic.

France had long tried to convince other countries to engage more in the fight against terrorism and to show awareness and solidarity in action. Invoking Article 42.7 is a way to put formal pressure behind these demands and the appeals for assistance which had previously gone more or less unheard. It still remains to be seen what impact this may have on France's relationship with the UK and Germany. Whether it strengthens or further weakens the relations will eventually depend on their respective responses to the French demands. Most likely France will use different standards for the two countries in assessing their efforts and support. France expects more of the UK than it does of Germany. At the same time, France is well aware that their action will come with a price for them both. Concerning Germany there is an understanding of Germany's heritage and the fact that development towards an increased German engagement in military operations is slow. There are certainly hopes in France that the UK is about to resume its traditional great-power role. The question is whether it will be channelled with the US or bilaterally with France. The UK's future role in the EU is another dimension of this issue.

The fact that France did invoke Article 42.7 is a clear indication that the CSDP continues to have higher priority for France than NATO in the longer term. France has toned down the focus on the CSDP not because the French elite has abandoned

¹⁷⁰ Anna Sundberg and Anna Forsström, (2013); and Anna Forsström, Anna Sundberg and Mike Winnerstig, (2013).

the idea and vision of a European defence, but because of other states' lack of interest in the issue. This pragmatic approach has been noticed for some years, for example in relation to the question of a permanent OHQ.¹⁷¹

To France the CSDP is above all a European toolkit. Appealing to the solidarity of EU members is of great symbolic importance to France. But France wants more than just words and symbolic support from the other European states. It is really aiming at activating Europe, not letting member states hide behind the US which is often the case in NATO. The US is already an important ally in the fight against terrorism. Article 42.7, in contrast to NATO's Article 5, also allows France to manage the situation on a bilateral basis, a solution that fits France perfectly. It can keep some of the control but at the same time give the EU a time in the spotlight. It is also interesting that this is in line with the traditional French stress on the CSDP and that it is taking place at the same time as the UK seems to be heading in a different direction with the threat of Brexit looming. In this light, the invoking of the Lisbon Treaty may be seen as a way to give the CSDP new weight, putting security and defence back on the EU agenda. But it also mirrors the French view of the EU's relevance and role as well as the nature of the threat.

France is very careful to point out that terrorism cannot only be met with military action. It is a complex situation that requires a comprehensive approach that the EU could offer. The case of Libya is often highlighted as a warning. The intervention in Libya in 2011 was first perceived as a success which France was proud to have been a part of. Today however this operation is singled out as an incomplete effort and an example of how not to do it.¹⁷² From this perspective the EU is a much more appropriate tool than the military alliance NATO. Given the fact that France after the attacks wanted the broadest international coalition against IS, enlisting NATO would have meant closing the door to potential partners like Russia.¹⁷³ It is also probable that France is seeing a need to frame its initiative within the EU, making it easier to compromise its commitments within the Stability and Growth Pact.

To conclude, for France the principle of "indivisibility" is essential. The threat of terrorism is common to every country and every country needs to join in the effort to defeat this enemy.

¹⁷¹ Anna Sundberg and Anna Forsström, (2013).

¹⁷² Diplomatie, 14 January, (2015). For more on the French view on Libya see Elysée, 16 January, (2015); and Ministère de la Défense, 26 August, (2015).

¹⁷³ Solenn de Royer in Le Figaro, 23 November, (2015) François Hollande veut enrôler les grandes puissances contre Daech.

3 Germany – A Long Farewell to *Ostpolitik*

Johan Eellend

3.1 Introduction

The crisis caused by Russia's intervention in Ukraine has prompted Germany to break with 50 years of *Ostpolitik*, one of its most well-established security policy traditions. At the same time, the euro crisis and the many asylum seekers have forced Germany to assume the lead in Europe's attempts to deal with both of these problems. It is the realisation that all these crises threaten the core of the European project that has caused Angela Merkel's Germany to part with another tradition as old as the Bundesrepublik, namely not to take the lead on contentious issues. These are potentially major changes in the attitude of Germany. They are bound to have lasting and deep repercussions, whether the attempt to lead ends with success or not, but no matter the outcome it will not be possible for Germany to go back to its previous position.

However, these major changes are not solely caused by the crises at hand, but have been long in the making, driven by fundamental factors. This chapter will direct the spotlight on to the long-term change in Germany's relations with Russia and the ongoing change in Germany's policies on the use of force in international relations. These trends, both the accelerating and the braking factors, are connected to deep-seated attitudes in the German body politic and with roots in Germany's post-war self-perception and identity. The chapter takes its point of departure in the traditional principles of German foreign and security policy. Thereafter follow sections on Germany's relationship with Russia and the long-term changes in German security policy, and finally a section on the German armed forces as a tool in German security policies.

3.1.1 The traditional principle of German foreign and security policy

During the Cold War, West German foreign policy depended on a set of interlinked principles which arose because of Germany's role in both world wars. The principles were imposed by the victorious powers in World War II and by the West German public, who had suffered tremendously during the war and wanted to avoid any future war, especially one caused by themselves. With the tension of the Cold War it also became clear that a future world war would most likely be fought on German soil and with Germans on both sides. Therefore, the first principle was that military means and force should be avoided as far as possible in international

relations. Consequently, the second principle stated that diplomacy was the main tool of German foreign policy. The third principle was that West German foreign and security policy should always aim for a multilateral context and multilateral settings. Germany's true commitment to the UN aimed at supporting global stability and the rule of international law. West Germany was embedded in NATO and the NATO structures aimed at tying West Germany's military resources and security policy to a multilateral setting, while its key membership in the EU sought to control its economic power and create peace on the continent through interdependence. In strategic terms, multilateralism was a means to reintegrate West Germany into the international system under the supervision of the US, France and the UK. In the end, it led to West Germany becoming a follower rather than a leader in foreign and security policy.¹⁷⁴

The German approach in foreign and security policy became what the German political scientist Hans Maull has called a "civilian power", referring to a power with international influence by non-military means and a military under strict political control. This in turn led to a political mentality in international matters whereby Germany did not see itself as a great power and did not act in accordance with its great-power potential but considered itself to be just a larger Switzerland – modern, neutral and without international power.¹⁷⁵

The restrictions on Germany's foreign and security policies held it back from developing its own positions or identifying its national interests beyond the area of economics. As Germany's economic power increased the country replaced much of its foreign and security policy with an active trade policy, so that geo-economic aims and interests came to replace geo-strategic aims and policies.¹⁷⁶ With time this resulted in two different lines in German foreign policy. Security policy become an area for multilateral cooperation, while trade was an area for bilateral cooperation.¹⁷⁷

The economic approach strengthened its position in German foreign and security policy after reunification, but changed its character due to the globalisation of the world market. Gradually German ambitions expanded to new markets. According to a recent study on German–Russian economic relations, the German geo-

¹⁷⁴ Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, holocaust and the German national identity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, (1988); and John Kornblum, *Germany: from the Middle to the Center*, 30 June, (2010), <http://www.aicgs.org>.

¹⁷⁵ Hanns Maull (ed.), *Germany's Uncertain Power: Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, (2006); and Hanns Maull, *Germany and the Use of Force: Still a "Civilian Power"?*, *Survival*, 42:2 (2000).

¹⁷⁶ Stephen F. Szabo, *Germany, Russia, and the Rise of Geo-Economics*, (2014), p. 83.

¹⁷⁷ Johan Eellend, *En stillastående förändring: tysk säkerhetspolitik och dess betydelse för Östersjöområdet*, Stockholm, FOI-R--3912--SE, (2014), pp. 24ff.

economic approach is characterised by a definition of national interest in economic terms; a shift from multilateralism to selective multilateralism; a predominant role for business in the shaping of German foreign policy; the elevation of economic interests over human rights, democracy and other non-economic interests; and the use of economic power to impose national preferences on others.¹⁷⁸ This approach has accounted not only for German–Russian relations but also for Germany’s relations with most emerging markets. It has thereby underlined the division between security and the economy in Germany’s foreign policy, and to some extent also between principles and the economy. As will be shown in the following, these principles have broadly remained in place, but have been modified.

3.2 Germany and Russia

3.2.1 Views and relations

Throughout history, Germany has striven for good relations with Russia and, despite the 19th and 20th century wars, conflict has been an exception.¹⁷⁹ Since Putins’ return to the post as president Germany and France have occupied a special place in the Kremlin’s foreign policy, with the aim of building a “strategic triangle”, organising European security on the terms of the European great powers and reducing the importance of the US in European affairs. In these efforts Russia has labelled Germany “Russia’s leading partner in the world”.¹⁸⁰

During the Cold War the West German ambition was to avoid tensions in relations between East and West and to prevent the two Germanys from becoming the scene of a third world war. With the central position of trade relations in German foreign policy, trade became the main tool in Germany’s relationship with the Soviet Union. The idea of the so-called *Ostpolitik*, which was formulated by the Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1969, was to achieve a “change through rapprochement” (*Wandel durch Annäherung*).¹⁸¹

The policies were made possible through Germany’s close integration with the West, which enabled a rapprochement to the East without endangering the

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Szabo, *Germany, Russia, and the Rise of Geo-Economics*, (2014), p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ Andreas Umland, *Post Weimar Russia? There are sad signs*, History News Network, 28 May, (2007), <http://hnn.us/articles/38422.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Marcel van Herpen, *Putin’s Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and the Russian Foreign Policy*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, (2016), p. 180.

¹⁸¹ M. E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, (2001).

European power balance. Through recognising East Germany (the GDR) and building trade relations with Poland and the Soviet Union, the West German intention was to create stability and recognised borders in Europe. For West Germany the policy was also a way of handling the fact that the DDR was held hostage in the east and thereby restrained West Germany's policies towards the east. Germany engaged with the Soviet Union in developing the Soviet energy sector and imported energy from the Soviet Union. This turned out to be a stable relationship and Soviet Union did not abstain from delivering energy to Germany even when the Cold War was at its coldest during the Reagan administration.¹⁸²

It can be added that, while the American perspective on the end of the Cold War was that the US under Ronald Reagan caused an economic collapse in the Soviet Union through the arms race, the German perspective has often been that Germany undermined the Soviet system through trade, dialogue and cultural exchange. Thus Cold War policies remained the core of the German approach towards Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The German aims and expectations were to take advantage of Russia's growing economy, and to push Russian society in a democratic and market liberal direction. It was assumed that Russian society could not be changed through pressure from the outside but only through cultural interaction and economic interdependence, leading to change from within. These ideas were also based on Germany's own experience: the country had been rapidly democratised and economically modernised through aid and economic interaction after World War II.¹⁸³

The main ideas of *Ostpolitik* have remained among leading circles of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and German businesses with economic interests in Russia. These ideas were most certainly also behind the policies of closer economic and political relations with Russia, launched by the chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Vladimir Putin in 2001. Its official purpose was to increase mutual understanding between Germany and Russia, to develop mutual cooperation in all social spheres, and to broaden contacts between the two nations. But it also strove for the establishment of economic relations between German and Russian companies and business interests on different levels, facilitated by close ties between leading politicians and businessmen in both countries.¹⁸⁴ The political

¹⁸² Frank Bösher, Energy diplomacy: West Germany, the Soviet Union and the oil crisis of the 1970s, *Historical Social Research*, 39:4 (2014), pp. 165-185.

¹⁸³ Alexander Rahr, *Russland gibt Gas: Die Rückkehr einer Weltmacht*, Munich: Hanser, (2008), p. 49; and Lars Peter Schmidt and Johan Böls, *Wandel durch Ahnahrung – Utopie oder Wirklichkeit? Russland und Deutschland im 21. Jahrhundert*, KSA, Moscow, 4 November, (2010), http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_21026-1522-1-30.pdf

¹⁸⁴ Klaus Schönhoven, *Der lange Weg zum Frieden*, 19 November, (2013), <http://www.zeit.de/zeit-geschichte/2013/04/willy-brandt-neue-ostpolitik>; and <http://www.petersburger-dialog.de>.

involvement was essential for establishing large German companies on the Russian market, given the corruption and state-controlled nature of the Russian economy. Schröder's belief in Russia and its leader is illustrated by his statement that Putin is a *lupenreiner Demokrat*, a "flawless democrat" 2004, only days before Putin prematurely congratulated president Viktor Yanukovich during the Orange Revolution.¹⁸⁵ Like the Cold War policies, Schröder's Russia policies had a politically idealist and an economic realist approach, where idealism has been used to argue for the economic realism.

Until the Russian annexation of Crimea the economic ties between Germany and Russia had led to more than 6 000 German companies being active in Russia, providing about 260 000 jobs in Russia. Relations were, however, uneven, as Russia only provided about 6 000 jobs in Germany, even if about 30 000 jobs in Germany were dependent on exports to Russia.¹⁸⁶

The Schröder government had also increasingly engaged in bilateral solutions with the Kremlin and thereby bypassed some EU members' intentions to create a common approach towards Russia or to find common solutions on the energy market. The most significant example of this was the Nordstream pipeline under the Baltic Sea, tying Russia to Germany while bypassing the Baltic states and Poland. The pipeline project caused concerns among most countries in the Baltic Sea region and the US, as Germany neglected the security aspects of the pipeline and did not consult its allies on the issue.¹⁸⁷

There were expectations that the relations between Germany and Russia would change when the Christian Democrat Angela Merkel became federal chancellor in 2005. Merkel also showed more willingness to raise concerns with regard to Russia's democratic development and the situation for human rights.¹⁸⁸ Although Germany remained Russia's key partner in the West and Merkel continued

¹⁸⁵ Gerhard Schroeder's Dangerous Liaison, Der Spiegel, 1 December, (2004), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/moscow-mon-amour-gerhard-schroeder-s-dangerous-liaison-a-330461.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Hans Kundnani, Germany as a Geo-economic Power, The Washington Quarterly, Summer, (2011), pp. 31-45; and Stefan Meister, Germany's Russian Policy under Angela Merkel: A balance sheet, The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs, 22:2, (2013), p. 28.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Larsson, Security Implications of the Nord Stream Project. This briefing paper was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388931/EXPO-AFET_NT\(2008\)388931_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388931/EXPO-AFET_NT(2008)388931_EN.pdf).

¹⁸⁸ Reuters, Germany, Russia and a troubled human rights record, 13 August, (2009), <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-russia-and-a-troubled-human-rights-record/a-4562734>; and Reuters, Germany and Russia clash on human rights, build trade, reuters.com, 16 November, (2012), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-germany-idUSBRE8AF0V320121116>.

fostering commercial and economic cooperation with Russia, a close personal relation between the leaders never developed.

Germany hoped for a more open and democratic Russia, and these hopes were tied to Dmitri Medvedev when he became Russia's president in 2008.¹⁸⁹ In the same year the German–Russian relationship was formalised by a “modernisation partnership”. The partnership primarily rested on the bilateral relationship between the two countries, but it did also aim at using Germany's central position in the EU to strengthen Russia's ties with the organisation and ended in an EU–Russian partnership in 2010. The partnership from 2008 is a good example of how Germany has viewed economic relations as an area for bilateralism and has separated economic relations from its otherwise multilateral approach to foreign and security policy. The road to the EU–Russia partnership is moreover an example of a balancing act, whereby Germany has intended to steer away from the Russian intention to build only bilateral relations, and to widen the cooperation.¹⁹⁰

Russia followed up further on the partnership by using Berlin as the political and physical arena for presenting Russia's international agenda. In 2007 Vladimir Putin went beyond economic cooperation and presented his vision for a new European security order, at the Munich Security Conference. This was followed up by Medvedev with a similar speech in Berlin 2008. The Russian ambition was to build a security order based on the interests of the large European powers, and with distinct spheres of influence, but excluding the US. However, while listening politely, Germany deflected any attempt to realise such changes.¹⁹¹

3.2.2 Setbacks in German–Russian relations

A series of economic and political events and setbacks led German policy makers to re-evaluate relations with Russia from about 2007. The changes became clear in 2012 and German analysts and journalists also began to write about “the end of

¹⁸⁹ Luke Harding, Germany and Russia: likely bedfellows, 25 September, (2009), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/sep/25/germany-russia-special-relationship>.

¹⁹⁰ Victor Waldemar Jensen, German—Russian Relations in European and Transatlantic Perspective, NUPI Report, Oslo, 2012, p. 25; and <http://www.swp-berlin.org/de/publikationen/kurz-gesagt/die-deutsch-russische-modernisierungspartnerschaft-skepsis-angebracht.html>.

¹⁹¹ Bobo Lo, Medvedev and the new European security architecture, Centre for European Reform, July, (2009), http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/pbrief_medvedev_july_09-741.pdf.

Ostpolitik” and about relations between the two states cooling.¹⁹² The setbacks and strained relations had evolved over time in a number of areas:

- 1) The rigged presidential and Duma elections in Russia 2006 and 2011 made the lack of political freedom and pluralism obvious to the German political establishment. With this it also became clear that the “change through rapprochement” approach had to a large extent failed. Important symbols of this were the Pussy Riot case, the categorisation of German political foundations as “foreign agents”, and the murders of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya and the accountant Sergei Leonidovich Magnitsky.¹⁹³ These cases made it clear for different parts of the German public and business establishment that Russia was turning away from democracy and the rule of law.
- 2) The Russo-Georgian war in 2008 also changed many German politicians’ understandings of Russia as a reliable partner in international relations. The Russian actions went contrary to the German principles of avoiding the use of force in international relations. Russia’s forced changing of Georgia’s borders also breached international law and challenged Germany’s commitment to international law. Moreover politically the establishment of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as permanent frozen conflicts challenged the German understanding of a need for legal borders and order within and between states.¹⁹⁴
- 3) From about 2007, increased corruption and state meddling in the Russian economy became an obstacle for German investors in Russia. It made it difficult for companies to act on the basis of market conditions and trying to make reliable long-term plans. For the public the stagnation in German–Russian economic contacts was shown through the moderate success of the “German year in Russia” in 2012. Activity was smaller than expected, beginning in full scale only in the middle of the year, and federal President Joachim Gauck abstained from attending the public opening.¹⁹⁵ While Russia understood the agreed “partnerships for modernisation” as merely a transfer of technology from Germany to Russia, Germany was aiming for a modernisation of the whole Russian society, including its

¹⁹² Tuomas Forsberg, From Ostpolitik to “frostpolitik”? Merkel, Putin and German foreign policy towards Russia, *International Affairs*, 92:1 (2016), pp. 30ff.

¹⁹³ Stefan Meister, Germany’s Russia policy under Angela Merkel: a balance sheet, *Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 22:2 (2013), pp. 28–44.

¹⁹⁴ DW, Russia Faces Angry EU in Energy Dispute, 9 January, (2007), <http://www.dw.com/en/russia-faces-angry-eu-in-energy-dispute/a-2304963>.

¹⁹⁵ Schwierige Präsidenten-Beziehung: Gauks Putin-Problem, *Spiegel Online* 2908 (2012).

values and institutions. The Russian unwillingness to adopt comprehensive approaches caused frustration and disappointment in the German administration.¹⁹⁶

- 4) With the stagnation in German–Russian trade it became clear for German investors that the money invested in Russia was not producing the expected returns. At the same time the importance of emerging economies, like China, India and Brazil, increased in German trade and foreign investment. In Europe German trade with Poland rose to the same level as German–Russian trade, and proved more dynamic as it involved the kind of small and medium-sized companies which are the backbone of the German economy.¹⁹⁷
- 5) Germany’s leading role during the economic crises in the EU forced Germany to turn back to a bilateral approach on security as well as economic matters. Germany and Russia were also opposed on issues like the EU’s Eastern Partnership where Germany’s geo-economic aims collided with Russia’s geo-strategic aims and understandings of the partnership as Western expansionism.¹⁹⁸

3.2.3 Countering Russia

The main game changers for Germany’s foreign and security policies and relations with Russia were the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the following war in eastern Ukraine. For the German leadership, the Russian occupation expressed a neglect of international law and a willingness to use force to change borders in Europe. It brought German–Russian relations to a stalemate and highlighted for German policy makers and the public that the German policies of “change through rapprochement” had come to an end.

When Russia occupied Crimea, Germany was one of few global actors which could find some credibility among all the actors. Germany had working relations with both Russia and Ukraine. It had supported a Ukrainian association agreement with the European Union but had earlier rejected NATO membership for Ukraine.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Germany’s leading role in solving Europe’s economic crises had given Germany and Merkel a special position in Europe. Europe’s

¹⁹⁶ Victor Waldemar Jensen, *German–Russian Relations in European and Transatlantic Perspective*, NUPI Report, Oslo, (2013), pp. 25ff.

¹⁹⁷ Stephen Szabo, *Germany, Russia, and the Rise of Geo-Economics*, (2014), p. 77.

¹⁹⁸ Susan Stewart, *Germany’s Relationship with Russia: Business First?* Berlin: SWP, May, (2012), p. 11.

¹⁹⁹ Niklas Granholm, Johannes Malminen and Gudrun Persson (eds) *A Rude Awakening: Ramifications of Russia’s Aggression Towards Ukraine*, Stockholm, FOI-R--3893--SE, (2014).

traditional diplomatic and military powers, the UK and France, were preoccupied with other challenges, which produced higher expectations on Germany to take the leadership in international matters as well. Finally, the US largely left the conflict in European hands.

In contrast to its reactions to the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, when Germany initially wanted to avoid taking a stand, Germany now immediately condemned the Russian occupation of Crimea. Berlin stated that Russia had violated international law and that it could harm the German–Russian partnership as the occupation displayed a lack of shared values between the states. When the occupation continued, Merkel also tried to persuade the Kremlin to cancel the referendum on Crimea, but failed, and the annexation became a fact. As the conflict escalated into an armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, Germany urged Russia to use its authority and contacts with the separatists to create a ceasefire, and to approve an OSCE-led fact-finding mission in eastern Ukraine, but partly failed again.²⁰⁰

From the beginning, Germany ruled out anything but a diplomatic and political solution to the war. This rejection can be explained by both an idealism, based in Germany's foreign policy principles, and a realism on the issue that no one, except Russia, had the power to stop the conflict with military means. Germany also underlined respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and for the European security order. At the same time the German leadership was convinced that Russia and the Putin regime should not to be left as losers in a negotiation. The role of finding a political solution that could satisfy all parties fell heavily on Germany. The Merkel government had not only to negotiate at different stages between Ukraine and Russia, but also to find solutions and diplomatic measures which were acceptable to most EU states. While states in Eastern Europe wanted Europe mainly to back the Ukrainian position and to make clear statements on Russia's actions, some states in Southern Europe, like Greece and Italy, also wanted to consider the economic ties to Russia.

In the absence of steps by Russia to de-escalate, the EU imposed a series of sanctions on Russia. Germany at first hesitated on the effect of such sanctions, and German business interests even stated that the European economies would be harmed by the sanctions as they would lose trade relations and as contracts would go to China instead. The German attitude towards sanctions was probably affected by the downing of the flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in July 2014. The

²⁰⁰ Euronews, Merkel gets Putin to accept "fact-finding" mission to Ukraine, 2 March, (2014), <http://www.euronews.com/2014/03/02/merkel-gets-putin-to-accept-fact-finding-mission-to-ukraine/>.

evidence for the airliner having been shot down, pointing to Russian-backed separatists, and Russia's unwillingness to cooperate on the issue changed German political and public attitudes towards Russia and towards the possibility of stopping the fighting by negotiations alone.²⁰¹ Germany did also cancel all military cooperation and suspended the delivery of an advanced military training system to Russia.

In accordance with its multilateral principles Germany acted together with others – partly in its own capacity as a great power and partly as a representative for the EU. In the beginning Germany acted with France and Poland in the so-called Weimar format. Germany thereby strengthened its position with yet another European great power and member of the UN Security Council, but with no major stakes in the region, and through Poland's strong knowledge of and position in the region. Later on this format was transformed into in the so-called Normandy format with France, Ukraine and Russia. Germany became the driving force in these negotiations and in the talks, which ended in a ceasefire between the Ukrainian government and the Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine in September 2014.²⁰²

Germany pursued a strategy on Russia built on three pillars. First, targeted sanctions in an attempt to change Russia's behaviour by using pressure. Second, diplomacy, in order to change Russia's behaviour through engagement; and, third, economic and institutional support for Ukraine in order to equip it to better function as a sovereign state capable of managing its institutions and defending its borders. The overall goal was to reassert the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as the foundation of the European security order. All pillars were linked to the German pattern of using both a carrot and a stick, as in the negotiations with Greece during the depths of the euro crisis. In this Germany emphasised that the sanctions should be kept until the Minsk agreement had been implemented. At the same time no new sanctions were to be decided on, and no lethal weapons were to be delivered to Ukraine.²⁰³

These attempts were followed by a series of international meetings where it was clearly stated that Germany and Russia disagreed over the causes and of ways to resolve the crisis in Ukraine. At the same time the fact that the leaders met

²⁰¹ The sanctions and the Russian ban on agricultural imports meant that German exports to Russia fell by 18 per cent and a third of the companies active in Russia withheld their investments in Russia.

²⁰² BBC, Ukraine deal with pro-Russian rebels at Minsk talks, BBC News, 19 September, (2014).

²⁰³ Margareta Pagano, Land for gas: Merkel and Putin discussed secret deal could end Ukraine crisis, 17 August, (2014), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/land-for-gas-secret-german-deal-could-end-ukraine-crisis-9638764.html>.

regularly indicates that Putin still regarded Merkel as an important contact in Europe, and that Merkel did not want to give up on trying to reach an agreement.²⁰⁴ It is however clear that Germany during this process shifted its policies towards Russia from being mainly based on economic considerations to being mainly based on political ones.²⁰⁵

German-Russian relations further lost its momentum during the negotiation of the Minsk 2 agreement from February 2015.²⁰⁶ Germany did not consider Russia as a constructive partner during the negotiations. At the same time it still left the door open for Russia. Russia was considered as a too important security actor, in Europe and globally, to be left out. From a German perspective the problem of Western-Russian relations was not entirely a lack of shared principles, but rather a lack of shared interpretations of principles like self-determination. Implementation of the agreement was therefore seen as an axis along which a dialogue with Russia should take place.²⁰⁷ Germany also stated that NATO should stay with its commitments in the Russian–NATO Founding Act, and claimed that the conditions for the German–Russian partnership had not changed but that it could continue in the long run.²⁰⁸ But Merkel also continued to criticise Russia for violating international law and breaking commitments.²⁰⁹ By this the German government signalled that the Russian actions should not be considered as erasing the whole European security architecture, and that German–Russian relations would resume if Russia kept to the agreement. With no signs that Germany was getting through to Russia, Merkel and the German government became more and more frustrated and expressed concerns over the possibility of the partnership continuing.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Natalie Nougayrède, Why Angela Merkel is saying farewell to Ostpolitik, 26 November, (2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/26/angela-merkel-farewell-ostpolitik-putin-threat-europe>; and Merkel toughens up. Frustrated with Putin, Germany and its chancellor may be tiring of Ostpolitik, 19 November, (2014), <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21633788-frustrated-putin-germany-and-its-chancellor-may-be-tiring-ostpolitik-merkel-toughens-up>.

²⁰⁵ Stefan Meister, Politics Trump Economics, 5 February, (2015), <https://zeitschrift-ip.dgap.org/en/ip-journal/topics/politics-trump-economics>.

²⁰⁶ Euronews, Ukraine ceasefire deal agreed at Belarus talks, The Guardian, 12 February, (2015); and Euronews, Breakthrough in Minsk as leaders agree to ceasefire deal on Ukraine, 12 February, (2015).

²⁰⁷ Interviews Berlin November 2015 and Interviews Stockholm February 2016.

²⁰⁸ German Defense Minister: “Russia Has Destroyed a Massive Amount of Trust”, 11 June, (2014), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/interview-with-german-defense-minister-on-russia-and-global-conflicts-a-974569.html>.

²⁰⁹ Dancing with the bear: Merkel seeks a hardline on Putin, Spiegel Online, 24 March, (2014), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/merkel-and-europe-search-for-an-adequate-response-to-putin-a-960378.html>.

²¹⁰ Natalie Nougayrède, Why Angela Merkel is saying farewell to Ostpolitik, 26 November, (2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/26/angela-merkel-farewell-ostpolitik-putin>

German–Russian political relations have rested on the idea that Germany and Russia had a reciprocal understanding of each other. German decision makers believe in changing Russia through rapprochement, while Russian decision makers were convinced that Germany would only follow the lines of geo-economics, and would therefore not stand behind its allies. Both sides have proved to be wrong.

3.2.4 Germany and NATO's reassurance

After Russia's annexation of Crimea, and as a response to the fears that it sent through major parts of Eastern Europe, Germany showed immediate political support for its eastern neighbours. Chancellor Merkel, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen separately visited the Baltic capitals with messages of support.²¹¹ In accordance with its NATO obligations and the NATO Readiness Action Plan decided on at NATO's summit in Wales in 2014, Germany became active in securing NATO's eastern flank. It has taken an active part in reinforcing the Air Policing mission over the Baltic states, despite having previously announced that it would not take part in these missions until the Air Force had finished its introduction of Typhoon fighters. Moreover, Germany has stepped up its presence at the upgraded Multinational Corps North East in Szczecin, a headquarters within NATO's command structure. However, Germany has rejected the idea of giving specific territorial responsibility to the headquarters, as it could be interpreted as being aimed at Russia.²¹²

Germany is playing a significant role in strengthening the NATO Response Force (NRF) and in developing its rapid reaction force the VJTF, in accordance with the Readiness Action Plan. Germany has been the framework nation for the VJTF during its building up in 2015 and will take up the position again in 2019. It has a presence at the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) which were installed in the Baltic states, Poland and the eastern Balkans to improve the deployment of the

threat-europe; and The Economist, Merkel toughens up. Frustrated with Putin, Germany and its chancellor may be tiring of Ostpolitik, 19 November, (2014), <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21633788-frustrated-putin-germany-and-its-chancellor-may-be-tiring-ostpolitik-merkel-toughens-up>.

²¹¹ Außenminister im Baltikum: Steinmeier auf Beruhigungs-Tour, 11 March (2014), <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise-steinmeier-beruhigt-die-baltischen-staaten-a-958051.html>; and Reuters 14 April, (2014), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-germany-idUSKBN0N516520150414>.

²¹² Interview Berlin December 2013; and Reuters, Rising Russian tensions put lonely NATO base in Poland on map, 12 September, (2014), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-outpost-idUSKBN0H711W20140912>.

VJTF and NRF.²¹³ Germany has also taken part in Article 4 and 5 exercises in Europe, and has continued to develop its military cooperation with Poland. As an example, German and Polish land forces exercised under each other's command in Poland during the summer of 2015.²¹⁴ Germany has also taken part in several exercises in the Baltic states, among them an exercise with tanks and about 400 men in Latvia. It has, however, clearly stated that these have been exercises and not forward deployments of troops.²¹⁵ Germany has further decided on improving its weak capabilities in territorial defence by maintaining a number of tanks that were to be decommissioned, and forming a reservist tank battalion in southern Germany.²¹⁶

It is clear that Germany is showing an increasing interest for security matters in the Baltic Sea region, partly as a reaction to the tense situation in the area, partly as it realises that a crisis in the region will fall on its shoulders, together with Poland. The interest has been shown both through an increased political and diplomatic presence and through participation in military exercises. This change has been noted by the NATO countries in the region as well as by the non-allied countries. A general impression from several interviews is however that Germany has not clearly understood its role in the region, and that the countries in the region have no clear understanding of what they can expect from Germany.²¹⁷

These uncertainties will most likely be clarified in the near future. Experts in the Baltic states, who previously stated that their countries had avoided involving Germany in NATO processes, now state that Germany is a constructive partner in the internal work. This is also true for the non-allied countries in the region, which have found Germany to be a constructive partner in their contacts with NATO.²¹⁸ However, there are still concerns in the Baltic states. It is recognised that Germany draws a line between upholding the integrity of the Baltic states through Air Policing, and what are called real or permanent security reassurances through

²¹³ Reuters, Rising Russian tensions put lonely NATO base in Poland on map, 12 September, (2014), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-outpost-idUSKBN0H711W20140912>.

²¹⁴ International Business Times, German tanks enter Poland in major Nato exercise, 14 June, (2015), <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/german-tanks-enter-poland-major-nato-exercise-1506049>.

²¹⁵ Baltic Times, German, Danish troops arrive for training, 26 August, (2015), <http://www.lsm.lv/en/article/societ/society/german-danish-troops-arrive-for-training.a142974/>; and NATO Silver Arrow 2015 exercises to take place in Latvia, 31 August, (2015), http://www.baltictimes.com/nato_silver_arrow_2015_exercises_to_take_place_in_latvia/.

²¹⁶ DW, German tank battalion to be activated amid Russia crisis, 27 February, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/german-tank-battalion-to-be-activated-amid-russia-crisis/a-18284219>.

²¹⁷ Interviews Tallinn, Berlin and Stockholm December 2013; Tallinn, Vilnius, Stockholm, December 2015.

²¹⁸ Interviews Tallinn, Vilnius, Riga and Stockholm December 2015–January 2016.

rotating or permanent forces in the countries. Germany has, for example, been clear that German armed forces in the countries have been there on exercises, not as a reassurance. The concern in the Baltic states is not whether Germany would show up in the event of a full-scale war, but whether it would react fast enough in the event of a “hybrid attack” with an unclear situation and under massive propaganda from the enemy side. Germany’s objection to a permanent stationing of troops in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe is based in its interpretation of the 1997 NATO Russia Founding Act. In that act, NATO committed itself not to station substantial permanent troops east of the German border.²¹⁹ Germany did find support for this interpretation from other states at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, which most probably is one of the reasons why NATO chose to set up the VJTF instead of permanently stationing troops in vulnerable regions.

The German actions can be understood in different ways. On the one hand Germany has stood up to its obligations to NATO and has shown its allies in NATO that Germany stands behind them in terms of security. This is an important message in itself, as it dispels concern among some states. On the other hand, Germany has taken the lead position in areas where the risk of having to take real action is very low, and if action has to be taken it would most probably be in a large-scale conflict where Germany would have to act or decide alone. By taking a leading role in the VJTF Germany secures influence over NATO’s actions in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea area and eases the tensions between NATO and Russia as a presence of German-led forces would most arguably be less provocative in the eyes of Russia than the presence of US forces.

3.2.5 The future of German–Russian relations

The Russian annexation of Crimea and support for the so-called rebels in eastern Ukraine was not the sole game changer in German–Russian relations. Rather, as has been shown, it was a catalyst which combined already ongoing economic and political processes. Until Russia’s occupation of Crimea, the key concerns for Germany were primarily Russia’s poor human rights record and lack of rule of law in economic affairs. However, with Germany’s involvement in the Ukraine crisis, international order rather than economic interests came to shape Germany’s policies on Russia. Russia, previously viewed as a German partner, is now generally seen as an aggressive and unpredictable troublemaker.²²⁰

²¹⁹ DW, No permanent NATO troop presence in Eastern Europe, Merkel says, 3 September, (2014), <http://www.dw.com/en/no-permanent-nato-troop-presence-in-eastern-europe-merkel-says/a-17897288>.

²²⁰ Interview Berlin November 2015.

In the Ukraine crisis Germany's policies on Russia have followed the lines of Germany's traditional foreign and security policies, emphasising multilateral diplomacy and "no military solutions", and with sanctions and political isolation as the main tools. Or, as one expert expressed it, "German policies have shown that they can use a whole spectrum of tools and that there is a way between the extremes of just talking and just shooting".²²¹ The German military reassurance has also been designed to provoke Russia as little as possible. Germany has not, as previously, separated security and the economy, but used the economy as a tool to reach a security goal. Germany has not given in on Russia but has, despite setbacks, kept the door open for negotiations and future cooperation. During its chairmanship of the OSCE Germany has also looked for such an arena to initiate discussions with Russia.

As an example the two countries reached an "academic cooperation accord" in March 2016 and also continue to emphasize cultural ties. But at the same time German officials claimed that Russia's aim an information war on Germany with the two-fold aim: To exaggerate the problems the migrant crisis is causing Germany and to push Germany to relax its backing of European sanctions on Russia over Moscow's interference in Ukraine.

It is hard to assess how German–Russian relations will develop in the future. The German public and political parties are not in sync in their views on Russia. Moreover, the political movements contesting the German government's position on migration are also movements that contest the change in German security policy and the harder stands on Russia. In general, the social democratic SPD has striven for close economic and open political relations with Russia. With this has followed a tendency to tone down criticism of Russia's human rights record and the lack of rule of law. The main argument behind this has been that security concerns should not overshadow economic relations. Moreover, the so-called *Russlandsverstehers* in the SPD have stressed the importance of understanding Russia's needs and perspectives. This perspective has gradually lost its influence among the German public and politics since the Russian occupation of Crimea and during the negotiations over eastern Ukraine. But the presence of the perspective can be seen in the government's stands on the Nord Stream II project. The project has support among energy firms and in the SPD and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has chosen to support the project to not cause a conflict in the government, with the argument that the project has no relevance for security. Currently the debate has been overshadowed by the situation in Syria and the refugee crisis. It is also clear that leading persons in the SPD have lost faith in Russia's current leadership.²²²

²²¹ Interview Berlin November 2015.

²²² Interview Stockholm February 2016.

The need to understand Russia is instead expressed by the socialist party Die Linke and the populist Alternative für Deutschland. Much of their sympathy for Russia is based on their seeing Russia as a positive counterweight against the influence of the US and globalisation. The precise stand of Alternative für Deutschland on Russia and in security policy is however not fully clear as the party lacks a prepared programme. Its success in the opinion polls and in the regional elections in March 2016 is also much linked to its stand on the refugee question and does not have to be a lasting trend.²²³

The conservative CDU and its Bavarian sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU) have been more critical of Russia's human rights record and lack of democracy. With the Russo–Georgian war and the Russian occupation of Crimea the CDU has also become critical of Russia's international behaviour and disregard for international law. Key industry and business groups with links to the party were among those who were critical of the economic sanctions on Russia at the beginning of the crisis, as they feared that they would lose profits and market shares in Russia. With time, however, Russia's behaviour has also been considered harmful for long-term trade relations with Russia, and these industry and business groups have adopted the government's standpoints.²²⁴ The German Green Party, Die Grüne, has joined the CDU in its criticism of the Russian human rights record. But it has to be remembered that the positions also cross the party lines and are dependent on economic and regional interests.²²⁵

The different standpoints on Russia have influenced the work of the CDU/SPD government. The German Foreign Ministry, which is led by the SPD and is considered to have a more Russia-friendly approach, has lost some of its influence over the policies on Russia to the CDU-led Chancellor's Office. The aim has been to present a coherent policy, but the policies have been criticised for losing some of the long-term perspective, as the Chancellor's Office is focused on the day-to-day issues. During the last year the standpoints of the CDU and SPD also seem to have merged. Many of the people who formulated the German policies on Russia under Schröder, among them the foreign minister Steinmeier, are labelled as

²²³ DW, Survey: Support for Chancellor Merkel and CDU drops, 03, Mars, (2016)

<http://www.dw.com/en/survey-support-for-chancellor-merkel-and-cdu-drops/a-19161090>.

²²⁴ Reuters, German industry lobby supports tougher sanctions on Russia, 28 July, (2014), <http://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-sanctions-germany-idUSL6N0Q311D20140728>; and Ukraine-Konflikt: Industrie unterstützt mögliche Sanktionen gegen Russland, 14 June, (2014), <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/ukraine-konflikt-bdi-unterstuetzt-moegliche-sanktionen-a-975157.html>.

²²⁵ Tuomas Forsberg, From Ostpolitik to “frostpolitik”? Merkel, Putin and German foreign policy towards Russia, *International Affairs*, 92:1 (2016), pp. 30ff.

“enttäuscht”, disappointed with Russia, and support the new policies.²²⁶ The more conciliatory statements made by for example the SPD leader Siegmund Gabriel can be understood as mirroring a standpoint among the German public, but are not expressed in concrete politics.²²⁷ Similar efforts have been made by CSU leader Horst Seehofer. He travelled to Moscow in February 2016 with the official purpose of improving trade relations.²²⁸ Even his efforts have been interpreted first and foremost as an attempt to challenge Merkel rather than to change policy. At the same time, it is clear that the German public support for and understanding of Russia’s perspectives are slowly decreasing, making policy on Russia a less likely arena for domestic competition.

A government led by the CDU, after the 2017 elections, would most likely continue the central elements on Germany’s and the EU’s current policies on Russia. This will include continued support for Ukraine, and a lifting of the sanctions against Russia only after the Minsk agreement has been implemented. Today the most popular candidate to replace Merkel is the defence minister, von der Leyen, who often takes a firm line towards Russia.²²⁹ A government led by the SPD would most probably need to distance itself from the previous government in some aspects, but would not challenge the general direction.²³⁰

Even if German trade relations with Russia improve, the corruption in and state control over Russia’s economy will remain and cause serious obstacles. The longer the sanctions last, the less will German investments in Russia be an incentive to revive the relations, as the values of the investments will slowly decrease. Therefore, it is not likely that trade relations will go back to the level where they were before the Russian occupation of Crimea. A return to more open political

²²⁶ Interviews Berlin December 2013 and November 2015.

²²⁷ Germany Tests the Waters With Russia, 29 October, (2015), <https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/germany-tests-waters-russia>; and DW, German Vice Chancellor calls for better collaboration with Russia over Ukraine and Syria, 28 October, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/german-vice-chancellor-calls-for-better-collaboration-with-russia-over-ukraine-and-syria/a-18813508>. This has also been received hopefully by Russia. See As Merkel Crumbles Berlin Turns To Moscow: North Stream 2 Agreement and visit of German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel to Moscow signals a coming Russian German rapprochement, Russia Insider, 31 October, (2015), <http://russia-insider.com/en/politics/merkel-crumbles-berlin-opens-talks-moscow/ri10853>.

²²⁸ Starker Unmut über Seehofers Putin-Besuch, 31 January, (2016), Zeit Online, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-01/grosse-koalition-russland-wladimir-putin-horst-seehofer>.

²²⁹ Considering Germany Without Merkel, Stratfor, 12 November, (2015), <https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/considering-germany-without-merkel>.

²³⁰ Interview Stockholm February 2016.

relations, without involving Germany's allies, would also risk undermining the trust in the security policy which Germany has built up during recent years.

Even if Germany improves its trade relations with Russia, this will not automatically imply an improvement of its political relations. Germany's Cold War history, as well as relations with emerging markets, shows a strong tendency to compartmentalise its foreign and security policies and not to entangle economic and political interests.

3.3 Germany in the world

Germany does not have a national security strategy and the federal government has rejected the idea of establishing one. Statements on German security and defence policy can be found in a number of documents. Most important is the White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr. The last paper was published in 2006 and took its inspiration from the experience of the mission in Afghanistan. It was drafted before the Russo-Georgian war and is therefore outdated.²³¹

Besides the more strategically-oriented White Paper, the Defence Policy Guidelines of 2011 presents concrete implications for the country's defence and describe German security interests and objectives from a "whole-of-government" approach. The guidelines define the most important tasks for the Bundeswehr as collective defence within NATO and the EU, homeland security and protection of critical infrastructure, and global security cooperation in a multilateral context.²³² In reality global security has been the dominating task, setting the agenda for defence and policy development.

The White Paper and Defence Policy Guidelines make clear that there are no territorial threats to Germany and hence do not identify any specific nations threatening Germany or its interests. In much they mirror the strategic understanding which developed in the Western world after the attacks on the US of 11 September 2001, and in which the threat to the Western world and its values comes from the outside.²³³

The main challenges to the global order are not considered to be specific states but failed states and frozen conflicts providing a safe haven for piracy, terrorism and

²³¹ Federal Ministry of Defence, White Paper 2006: on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr, (2006).

²³² German Ministry of Defence, Defence Policy Guidelines: Safeguarding National Interests – Assuming International Responsibility – Shaping Security Together, Berlin (2011).

²³³ Federal Ministry of Defence, White Paper 2006: on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr, (2006).

extremism, hindering international trade, and threatening Western values. Germany's strength is identified as its economic power. But the globally oriented economy is also viewed as a potential vulnerability given the role of economic factors beyond Germany's possible influence. The challenges for Germany are keeping the sea lines of communication open, as shipping account for over 90 per cent of Germany's foreign trade by volume and 60 per cent by value, and Germany has a pressing demand for raw materials and energy. Studies ordered by the Bundeswehr in 2010 on these issues also paint a dark future and outline several cases where a disruption could lead to a total collapse of the German or global economy. The suggested policy implication is that Germany should be more pragmatic towards energy-producing countries, among them Russia, in its foreign policy.²³⁴ These recommendations should not be understood as new, but as an expression of German geo-economic thinking. It seems, however, that the pragmatism has come to an end.

The White Paper will be updated during 2016. The new version is expected to consider issues like the changing security environment after the Russian' annexation of Crimea and NATO's Strategic Concept from 2010. Most likely it will also give some references to the German use of force in the international system. The White Paper is among other things prepared with a set of workshops with experts.²³⁵

Two other reviews, *New Powers, New Responsibility* from 2013 and *Crisis – Order – Europe* from 2015 give some hints on the forthcoming White Paper.

New Powers, New Responsibility is a semi-official study supervised by Germany's leading think tank on international affairs, the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP), and the German-based branch of the think tank the German Marshall Fund of the United States in 2013.²³⁶ It sketches a future where German

²³⁴ Philip Andrews-Speed et al., *The Global Resource Nexus: the Struggle for Land, Energy, Food, Water and Minerals*, Washington, DC: The Transatlantic Academy, May, (2012), chapter 3; Stefan Schulz, *Peak Oil and the German Government: Military Study Warns of a Potential Drastic Oil Crisis*, Spiegel online, 1 September, (2010); Bundeswehr Transformation Centre, Future Analysis Branch, Armed Forces, security, Sub-Study 1: Peak Oil Security policy implications of scarce resources (Strausberg, Germany: Bundeswehr Transformation Centre, Future Analysis Branch, Nov 2010); and Anna Kwiatkowska-Drozdz, *The Natural Resources Deficit: The implications for German Politics*, OSW, (2011).

²³⁵ DW, Germany kick-starts work on a new White Paper, 18 February, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-kick-starts-work-on-a-new-white-paper/a-18264702>; and German foreign policy.com, 25 June, (2015), <http://www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/fulltext/58857/print>.

²³⁶ SWP, *Neue Macht Neue Verantwortung: Elemente einer deutschen Ausser- und Sicherheitspolitik für eine Welt im Umbruch*, SWP and German Marshall Fund of the United States, (2013).

economic power has to be followed by an active foreign and a security policy with a global reach, which creates stability and development along with others. Taking responsibility, Germany should not be afraid of using force if needed, but its main foreign policy tools are to be found in the diplomatic and economic area. Undemocratic but important regimes are to be influenced by trade and interdependence, but Germany also has to be pragmatic in order to reach its goals.

It is significant that the trendsetting presentations by the foreign minister Steinmeier, the defence minister von der Leyen and German President Joachim Gauck at the Munich Security Conference in 2014 much reflected the recommendations in the report. These presentations stressed the moral obligation of Germany to take action in international affairs and to provide security for others on a regional and global scale.²³⁷

Crisis – Order – Europe is a report ordered by the German Foreign Ministry and it was presented to the Bundestag and the German public in February 2015. It has been produced through a review process, including discussions with foreign and domestic experts, public debates in Germany, panel discussions, workshops, simulations and talks with Foreign Office staff. In the report the challenges facing Germany in the foreseeable time are crisis prevention, crisis management and post-crisis support; shaping the elements of a new global order; and embedding German foreign policy even more firmly in Europe. This should be achieved in a multilateral context, and through earlier and more decisive action by Germany. The latter should be achieved through reforms of the Foreign Office.²³⁸ The report does not present Germany as an international leader but as a country, as expressed by the foreign minister Steinmeier at the launching of the review, that is regarded by others “to be the leading power in Europe”.²³⁹ Finally the report reaffirmed the basic principles of the German foreign and security policy which evolved during the Cold War, but strove to adapt them to new conditions.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Munich Security Conference 2014, <https://www.securityconference.de/en/activities/munich-security-conference/msc-2014/>.

²³⁸ Auswaertiges Amt, Review 2014: Crisis – Order – Europe, Berlin, (2015), http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/AAmt/Review2014/Schlussfolgerungen_node.html.

²³⁹ Federal Foreign Office, Speech by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the closing event of “Review 2014 – A Fresh Look at German Foreign Policy”, 25 February, (2015), http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150225-BM_Review_Abschlussveranstaltung.html?nn=699270.

²⁴⁰ Auswaertiges Amt, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/AAmt/Review2014/Schlussfolgerungen_node.html; and Auswaertiges Amt, Review 2014: Crisis – Order – Europe, Berlin, 2015.

3.3.1 Germany, the EU and NATO

The principles guiding German foreign and security policy have made the country a committed member of the UN, the EU and NATO. During the Cold War NATO controlled Germany's military power, and the EU came to control its growing economic power, through tying Germany's economy to its allies. Together with France, Germany has been one of the prime architects behind the EU, and a promoter of an even stronger and more integrated union. During the Cold War NATO and the US became Germany's prime security providers.

In Germany NATO is considered as first and foremost a tool for providing hard security and it is Germany's ambition that it will remain so. Germany has therefore opposed attempts within NATO to broaden the alliance's Article 5 to include cyber or energy threats. The main argument has been that NATO lacks instruments to measure and counter this kind of threat in a proportional way.

From a German perspective the main difference between NATO- and EU-led operations abroad is that European foreign and security cooperation offers distinct opportunities to involve civilian aspects and methods in the operations. As long as the CSDP is not fully developed Germany has not prioritised this cooperation. It has also been committed to the CSDP first and foremost because it has been an important project for France, its prime European ally and partner in building the EU. Germany has not, however, been interested in building a European institution for security and defence issues which would alter the American involvement or weaken the American presence in Europe. France's return to NATO's command structures in 2009 also reduced the importance of the CSDP for Germany.

Instead the current German government has presented the CSDP as a method to advance European integration and also include non-NATO members in the security cooperation. People in the German foreign and defence ministries who were interviewed for this study also considered the CSDP as a project which has reached the end of the line as its relationship to NATO is not set and the role of the UK seems unclear. Moreover its possible future role has decreased as most members of the EU are also members of the alliance. Germany is also one of the countries which stand behind the Danish line in NATO in strengthening the alliance's cooperation with partners. This does to some degree alter some of the roles that it has seen for the CSDP.

France and Germany have extensive military exchange on different levels, and are working together on issues such as training of paratroopers, helicopter crews, and, probably the best known, the Franco-German brigade. This unit has also been a model for other German cooperative efforts, such as that with the Netherlands and Poland.

How Germany will look upon the CSDP in the future is hard to assess. According to people interviewed for this study the German administration was taken by surprise by the French decision to use the EU structures for counterterrorism after

the Paris attacks in 2015. The decision tested the EU and the solidarity of its member states, among them Germany, which responded quickly.²⁴¹ In terms of policy the French decision to invoke article 42.7 must have fitted in with the German understandings of how security policy should be handled as the EU provides a much broader toolbox, with civilian components, to resolve a complex security threat. Making the EU the prime actor will also make it easier to cooperate with Russia and local actors, as well as linking the international and domestic issues within Europe, such as the high number of refugees entering the EU.

Angela Merkel's decision to open the German borders for refugees during the autumn of 2015 can clearly be understood as being in line with the idea of Germany's moral obligations and intentions to be a good example and take the lead on a hard issue for the EU. The later decision to restrict the number of refugees coming to Germany can instead be understood as a decision made on the terms of German interests and domestic policy.

As Germany sees it, the transatlantic link between the US and Europe plays a vital role for NATO and for peace in Europe. The reserved relations between Germany and the US under the Schröder government have clearly been improved so that Germany from time to time is considered as the US's most important partner in Europe in almost every issue except hard security. Even the interception scandal in 2013, in which US intelligence was accused of tapping, among many others', Angela Merkel's cell phone, did not cause any lasting split between the two countries. On the contrary, German media reported on increased cooperation between the intelligence services of the two countries.

According to Germany changes are going to be made to the European Neighbourhood Policy, where the focus should be changed from promoting democracy to creating stability. Special funds for "supporting refugees, combating crisis and security and stability programmes" are envisioned. Germany will have to be prepared for involvement in more, and more dangerous, military missions abroad. Furthermore, democracy and the rule of law will fade further into the background. Instead, stability will take precedence even if it means supporting dictatorships.²⁴² The CSDP and NATO have been central for Germany's possibilities to gain experience in crisis management within a multilateral framework. The country has also become a more assertive player in the EU due to the Eurozone crisis, less willing to pick up the bill without demanding cohesiveness.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Interviews Berlin December 2013 and Interviews Berlin November 2015.

²⁴² <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/refugee-crisis-leads-to-new-focus-of-german-foreign-policy-a-1062116.html>.

²⁴³ S. Bulmer and W. E. Paterson, Germany and the European Union: From "Tamed Power" to Normalized Power? *International Affairs*, 86:5 (2011), pp. 1051ff.

3.4 Defence priorities

3.4.1 German foreign policy and the use of force

In accordance with the principles that guided German foreign and security policy during the Cold War, German armed forces did not take part in any international missions. With its allies strained in international operations during the 1990s, Germany faced demands that it pay something back for the security that the US and its allies had provided during the Cold War.

The turning point for Germany came with the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s. It was considered that the conflicts threatened Germany's security and that it was a German obligation to take action in preventing genocide in its neighbourhood. After finding approval in the German Constitutional Court, the Bundesverfassungsgericht, in 1994, the Bundeswehr took part in the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia from 1995 and in the multilateral context of NATO in the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo from 1999.²⁴⁴

After the 11 September attacks Germany chose to intervene in Afghanistan because of what it described as an obligation towards NATO and the US. Germany provided one of the largest contingents to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan and took responsibility for the mission's northern sector. The German government was criticised internationally for limiting the Bundeswehr's exposure to the worst fighting by the deployment to the calmer northern Afghanistan. But the operation was more durable than other missions in the country.²⁴⁵

Germany did not take part in the second Iraq War, as it argued that the possibilities for diplomatic solutions had not been exhausted. In 2011 Germany – then a member of the UN Security Council – abstained on Council Resolution 1973 on enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya. Doing so it sided with two of its most important trading partners, China and Russia, and did not follow most of its NATO allies. The decision was criticised internationally and domestically.

²⁴⁴ Hanns Maull, Germany in the Yugoslav Crisis, *Survival*, 37:4 (1996), p. ADD PAGE NUMBER; and Volker Rittberger, *German Foreign Policy since Unification: Theories and case studies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, (2001).

²⁴⁵ DW, Germany decides to keep troops in Afghanistan until further notice, 16 October, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-decides-to-keep-troops-in-afghanistan-until-further-notice/a-18787889>; and Patrick Keller, German Hard Power: Is There a There There?, *National Security Outlook*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, no. 4, October, (2013), p. 4.

The German standpoint has been explained by a lack of a long-term perspective and lack of experience in handling security issues among the German political establishment.²⁴⁶ Experts interviewed for this study have also discussed the lack of experience among German decision makers in handling the link between domestic and international politics. One expert's description is that the government has not been able to explain to the German voters "that there is no such thing as a free lunch, in security relations" and that politicians hide behind public opinion instead of taking the lead. In the same way the media have been inexperienced in explaining the realities of, and handling setbacks in, the German missions.²⁴⁷ This has made the political costs of setbacks in international operations high. It seems, however, that the German government since then has followed the principle of taking part, at least symbolically, in operations initiated by its European allies. The German public is still divided concerning the use of force in international relations: 49 per cent of respondents support it, and 46 per cent believe it is wrong.²⁴⁸

In order to provide security in conflict areas, without sending troops, the second Merkel government introduced an Enable and Enhance initiative. The purpose, among other things, was to export German weapons to local actors in order for them to carry out missions by themselves. With time it became clear that arms exports did not work as the sole tool in security policy, and that arms exports cause long-term commitments and cause the exporter to be involved in the conflict.²⁴⁹

New German military missions are in the works, either carried out or being planned, for example the training of Peshmerga in Iraq, which also includes supplying 1 800 tonnes of weapons, as well as the training mission in Afghanistan. Germany is also increasing its presence in Mali with 400 soldiers, which was decided on in 2015. The Defence Ministry is even considering a mission to the failed state of Libya together with France.²⁵⁰ After France's appeal to the EU for

²⁴⁶ Security Council passes resolution authorizing military intervention in Libya, 17 March, (2011), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/03/17/security-council-passes-resolution-authorizing-military-intervention-in-libya/>.

²⁴⁷ Interview Berlin November 2015.

²⁴⁸ Germany's engagement in the resolution of the Syrian conflict, OSW Commentary, 25 January, (2016), <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2016-01-25/germanys-engagement-resolution-syrian-conflict>.

²⁴⁹ German Weapons for the World: How the Merkel Doctrine Is Changing Berlin Policy, Spiegel International Online, 3 December, (2012), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-weapons-exports-on-the-rise-as-merkel-doctrine-takes-hold-a-870596.html>.

²⁵⁰ Germany's Disarmed Forces: Ramshackle Military at Odds with Global Aspirations, Spiegel International Online, 30 September, (2014), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ramshackle-army-at-odds-with-berlin-s-global-aspirations-a-994607.html>.

help after the Paris attacks in late 2015 the Bundestag decided on a German military support mission against IS. The mission is to include a maximum of 1 200 soldiers, six Tornado reconnaissance aircrafts, a refuelling aircraft, and a German frigate for air defence.²⁵¹ Germany's decision to take part in the operation in Syria is of great political significance. It is proof of the country's solidarity with France and the UK. The ongoing destabilisation of the EU's southern neighbourhood and the problems it is causing through refugees flows, illegal immigrants and terrorism have strengthened Germany's engagement in the Middle East. This may affect NATO's eastern and northern flanks since part of Germany's already overstretched resources and funds may be redirected to the south.

3.4.2 A new role for the Bundeswehr?

Germany's changing patterns in the use of its armed forces display a trend towards an increasing will to take responsibility beyond diplomacy, and also show Germany's ambivalence on this issue.

The primacy Germany gives to diplomacy, as well as the requirement in the federal constitution that the government finds support from the Bundestag for international operations, has caused many allies to have concerns about Germany's reliability as a partner in hard security. However, the parliament's foreign policy committee has so far not denied any request to use German armed forces abroad. Moreover the German government consciously acted fast in response to the French request for assistance after the 2015 Paris attacks.²⁵²

The regulations have been confirmed by the German Constitutional Court on a number of occasions. In 2014, the Bundestag initiated the Ruhe Commission to review the existing legal framework and make recommendations on a strengthened German ability to participate in multilateral cooperation. The commission did come up with a number of proposals aimed at increasing transparency on international missions, creating clear and specific rules for staff headquarters, creating a clear legal definition of military operations, and flexible mandates from the government in order to make it easier to react to changed situations during an operation. The commission finally recommend a possible reform of the constitutional framework and role of the Bundestag in deciding on deployments.²⁵³ To a great extent the results of the commission follow the lines of the Crisis –

²⁵¹ DW, German Bundeswehr to deploy surveillance Tornado jets to Syria, 3 December, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/german-bundeswehr-to-deploy-surveillance-tornado-jets-to-syria/a-18892981>.

²⁵² France Is at War... With Germany, 17 November, (2015), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/17/france-is-at-war-with-germany-isis-europe/>.

²⁵³ Barbara Kunz, Deploying the Bundeswehr: more transparency, more flexibility, but Parliament's consent remains key: The Ruhe Commission's final Report, *Actuelles de l'Irfi*, June 2015.

Order – Europe review from 2015. The results of the Rühle Commission and the following discussion indicate that a change might be on the way, but that it will not be too dramatic.

Germany's political and economic position have given rise to expectations from other states that Germany should act on the same scale and with the same methods as France and the UK. However, Germany has a considerably different past and has had different interests, which has restricted it from doing so. First and foremost, Germany was restricted from using force during the whole of the Cold War and has been struggling with its historic legacy from both world wars. It has, further, not been a prominent colonial power and has therefore not felt any overseas responsibility, as France and the UK have. Consequently, Germany has not considered itself to be a great power or as having any international obligations apart from its multilateral commitments. German policy makers have also had a different understanding of how effective the use of force is in conflict prevention. Research on German security policy, using an institutional or cultural perspective, has therefore often labelled German policy as lacking a security culture equivalent to those of the other major states of Europe.²⁵⁴

The cases which have caused concern, like Libya in 2011, have occurred when there was a low level of military threat in Europe and prompt reactions were not needed. In the event of an armed conflict in Europe today Germany would unconditionally follow its commitments to NATO in the same way as it would have done during the Cold War. The alliance is the cornerstone of German hard security, and its military structures have been embedded in NATO structures since the 1950s.

The UK and France have several times chosen to cooperate on practical defence matters and capabilities without inviting Germany.²⁵⁵ In addition, smaller states as well, like the Baltic states, have expressed doubts on Germany's abilities to act fast and provide reassurance. That said, it seems that Germany's increasing role in NATO after the Russian annexation of Crimea has led to some changes in this respect. The actual presence of exercising German forces has been viewed in the Baltic states as a proof of German reassurance, at least as a follow-up nation. It also stands clear that Germany cannot turn back from this position without losing all its credibility among its allies and in international relations.

²⁵⁴ Hanns Maull (ed.), *Germany's Uncertain Power – Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, (2006); and Volker Rittberger, *German Foreign Policy since Unification: Theories and case studies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, (2001).

²⁵⁵ Lisa Aronsson and Patrick Keller, *British-German Defence Co-operation in NATO: Finding Common Ground on European Security*, RUSI, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Occasional Paper, London, Berlin, (2012).

3.4.3 The defence budget

Since unification in 1990, Germany has steadily reduced its defence spending both in absolute terms and in relation to GDP. This is a development that Germany has in common with most European states, but it goes further than the reductions in France and the UK. Its new international position and the more tense security situation in Europe have halted the decline and Germany is looking for a slight increase. In 2015 Germany decided to increase its defence expenditure by a total of 1.5 per cent over the coming five years, which means an increase of 1.2 billion euros a year, a total budget of 34.2 billion euros in 2016 and an increase to 35 billion euros in 2019.²⁵⁶ In January 2016 the German government announced that it wanted to spend 130 billion euros on defence equipment up to 2030, which would increase overall defence spending by 3–4 billion euros annually over the next 15 years. It is, however, still an open question to what extent these ambitions will be met and with what priorities.

3.4.4 Remodelling the Bundeswehr

Since the end of the Cold War the German defence forces have been remodelled to meet the new security demands. The prime aim of the reforms which have been carried out since 2000 have been to create sustainability through keeping the economy in balance and to remodel the armed forces, the Bundeswehr, into an active tool for the country's foreign policy. It was generally thought that the future security threats to the Western world would come from outside and be outside the Western World. The main military tasks became international missions.

The numbers of troops and platforms were considerably cut and the command structure slimmed. In 2011, conscription was replaced by an all-volunteer force. The future units of the army were to be lighter, more interoperable and more quickly deployable than previously. The aim for the Army is to deploy highly mobile units, with a high level of protection for the soldiers. The German Navy was reduced and re-equipped to keep sea lanes open and support Germany's global economic interests. The Air Force was reduced and given the task of supporting the Navy and Army in their duties. The ambition for 2015 was that the Bundeswehr should have 170 000 full-time and 15 000 part-time soldiers and officers, making it one of Europe's largest standing forces. In May 2016 a plan was also announced to expand the force numbers by 14 300 while civilian employees would increase by 4 400. However, the ministry expected to fill only 7000 of the new military

²⁵⁶ Reuters, Germany to boost mid-term defence spending, 17 March, (2015), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-defence-budget-idUSKBN0MD1T420150317#idvQOvDIsOH2bMiZ.97>.

positions. The aim is to be able to carry out two international land operations and one maritime operation at the same time. This ambition requires 10 000 soldiers on constant readiness.²⁵⁷

The core of the Army is to be made up of five mechanised brigades, one airborne brigade and one mountain brigade, organised in three divisions. Germany is also participating in a brigade-size, joint German-French unit. A joint Dutch-German airmobile unit, consisting of parts of the existing German airborne brigade and a Dutch battalion, has also been set up. The Netherlands has also decided to put its mechanized brigade under German command together with German tank battalions.

For 2020 the aim for the Navy is 11 frigates, 11 smaller ships, six submarines and 10 units for mine warfare. The new class of F-125 frigates is designed to act independently on the oceans. The Navy has changed its main station from the Baltic Sea to the North Sea, but has preserved its capacity to operate in the Baltic Sea. Much of the littoral operations capabilities are being developed together with Poland, while the high sea capabilities are being developed with the Netherlands.²⁵⁸

For the Air Force, 140 Eurofighters and the maintaining of 85 Tornados for ground and sea strike are planned. This means that Germany will preserve some capacity in launching the tactical nuclear weapons, which the US has stored in Germany, from the air. For transport missions 60 smaller planes and 40 larger A400Ms are planned.²⁵⁹

The military reforms have prioritised the maintenance of many capabilities before endurance. The causes seem to have been two – to let German forces provide high-tech capabilities for allied armies, and that the armed forces should maintain their role as a platform for exports by the German arms industry. Critics have claimed that the restructuring of the armed forces was not done in accordance with any specific scenario in mind and that maintaining capabilities has been placed above

²⁵⁷ Johan Eellend, En stillastående förändring: tysk säkerhetspolitik och dess betydelse för Östersjöområdet, Stockholm, FOI-R--3912--SE, (2014), p. 44; Lars Hoffmann, Germany To Increase Military Size in Wake of Russian Threat, Defense News, 12 May, 2016

²⁵⁸ Thomas Papenroth, Die Zukunft der Deutschen Marine: Herausforderungen für die maritime Komponenten der Bundeswehr, SWP-Studie, Berlin, (2004); and Christian Peters, Mehrzweckkampfschiff 180 – Das zukünftige Schweizer Armeemesser- der Deutschen Marine, MarineForum 2011:10.

²⁵⁹ Ressortbericht zum Stand der Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr, <http://www.bmdv.de>; and Ralph Thier, Reconsidering the Relevancy of Air Power – German Air Force Development, ISPSW Strategy Series, no. 26 (2011).

the pressure from allies to go for a more expeditionary and interoperable armed force.²⁶⁰

The need to increase the readiness and training of German troops after the Russian annexation of Crimea revealed a number of shortcomings in equipment and training. In September 2014 it became known that almost the entire fleet of German marine helicopters had to be grounded. Only seven out of 43 were fit to fly due to a lack of spare parts. Moreover 42 out of 109 Typhoons and 38 out of 89 Tornados were not operational. Seventy out of 180 Boxer fighting vehicles were also out of order. German Transall aircraft intended to be a part of the Ebola airlift were stranded on the Canary Islands. Finally, key personnel were overstretched, mainly due to high numbers of deployments in Afghanistan. A report published in October 2014 on Bundeswehr procurement, supervised by the consultancy firm KPMG, highlighted a general need to review the state of the military hardware and urged Germany to reform its military procurement system. It stated that defence equipment is generally delivered too late, is more expensive than planned and is not working properly. The agencies handling procurement were judged as not professional, and the defence minister's involvement as too political.²⁶¹ Among other things, the report identified possible problems in nine key projects which could result in costs of 57 billion euros.²⁶²

After the 2014 report was presented measures were taken to address the problems, but their impact seem to have been limited so far. In January 2015 the German parliamentary ombudsman reported that the military was not fit for purpose. The personnel were overstretched and equipment outdated or malfunctioning. Only 38 of Germany's Typhoons were operational, as well as 29 out of 89 Tornado fighter bombers. Simultaneously the media also reported on problems with the German equipment sent to Syria and the equipment used by the German Army on NATO exercises in Europe.²⁶³ One reason given was the mismanagement and lack of

²⁶⁰ Patrick Keller, German Hard Power: Is There a There There?, National Security Outlook, American Enterprise for Public Policy Research, 2013:4, p. 4; Henrik Heidenkamp, Assessing the Reform of German Defence Acquisition, RUSI Defence Systems, Summer, (2013), <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/10/22/uk-nato-spending-idUKBRE99L0WO20131022>; <http://www.natowatch.org/node/1239>; and Ralph D. Thiele, On the Reorientation of the Bundeswehr – Meeting the Challenges Ahead, ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and Security, April, (2012).

²⁶¹ Der Spiegel, 30 September (2014), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ramshackle-army-at-odds-with-berlin-s-global-aspirations-a-994607.html>.

²⁶² Umfassende Bestandsaufnahme und Risikoanalyse zentraler Rüstungsprojekte, KPMG, P3 Group and Taylor Wessing, (2014).

²⁶³ DW, Ombudsman Bartels calls for better equipment, funding for Bundeswehr, 21 May, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/ombudsman-bartels-calls-for-better-equipment-funding-for-bundeswehr/a->

functioning procurement systems used by the Bundeswehr. The average time from decision to a working system in the armed forces was considered to be between 15 and 20 years. As a part of the ongoing reforms it had also been decided in 2011 only to provide 70 per cent of the equipment required for some branches. Concerns were also raised by experts that the increase decided in the defence budget would not be effectively used because of the poor management of defence procurement and lack of cooperation with allies on keeping life-cycle costs down.²⁶⁴

Based on the operations which Germany has carried out during recent years the following capabilities can be identified:

- Organise and lead multinational international operations with units up to brigade size.
- Take part in joint operations with land, naval and air units, like the operation in Syria or Operation Atalanta.
- Support international missions or territorial defence with high-tech units, such as long-range air defence.

Currently all capabilities are limited by the lack of equipment and personnel. Germany also lacks the ability to fight a high-intensity war in Europe. According to the German Forces Association at least 5 000–10 000 more soldiers are needed. Germany has one of Europe's largest and most advanced arms industries. This makes it possible to recover some capabilities if procurement is rationally managed, but there is still a lack of infrastructure within the armed forces to host soldiers and maintain equipment, which must be dealt with.

3.5 Trends and analysis

Since the end of the Cold War German foreign and security policy has been slowly changing. The restrictions which were put on German security policy as a result of Germany's role in World War II have slowly begun to lose influence. Germany's growing economic power and political influence, especially in the EU, have also caused external as well as internal actors to demand that Germany should be not a consumer of security but a provider. Moreover Germany's dependence on the globalised economy has made global order a German concern. This has caused Germany to play a more active role in international affairs, but also to look for new ways of doing so.

18466049; and BBC, Syria conflict: Half of German Tornado jets "not airworthy", 2 December, (2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34983396>.

²⁶⁴ Umfassende Bestandsaufnahme und Risikoanalyse zentraler Rüstungsprojekte, KPMG, P3 Group and Taylor Wessing, (2014).

Germany has long been Russia's key partner in Europe. The two countries have developed economic relations in energy and trade, and Germany has become Russia's largest direct investor. This has caused Germany often to be labelled as Russia's window to the EU. An underlying aim with Germany's relations has been to facilitate democracy and the rule of law in Russia through creating a multitude of contacts and promoting economic interdependence between the societies. However, these hopes have not been fulfilled.

From 2007 German–Russian relations began to lose momentum. The German government and business interests became more and more concerned about the rule of law and the worsening climate for business in Russia. Germany also redirected some of its economic interests to other developing economies. This uncovered a set of misunderstandings in German-Russian relations, where the elites in both countries thought they shared a reciprocal understanding. One symbol of this is the German-Russian partnership for modernisation, initiated in 2008. While the Russian interpretation of modernisation was a transfer of German technology to Russia, the German understanding was that such a modernisation was only possible with a technical and political modernisation of the whole of Russian society.

The Russian occupation of Crimea in February 2014 also showed Germany that Russia was willing to use force and to break international law in order to achieve its foreign and domestic political goals. Through intervening in Ukraine in order to prevent Ukraine from obtaining closer relations with the EU, the Russian actions also challenged the German and the EU core strategy of creating peace and democracy through economic interdependence. It is also likely that Russia expected Germany to prioritise economic relations above international security and soon return to business as usual, as it did after the Russo–Georgian war in 2008.

Germany's working relations with Russia made it the natural representative for Europe in resolving the crisis. This position was confirmed by Germany's role in managing the European financial crises and by the fact that France and the UK were preoccupied with internal issues. Germany took the lead in accordance with its principle of resolving international issues in a multinational setting. During the peace process Germany always strove to keep the door open for Russia and not force Russia into a corner. At the same time it strove to keep the EU united in its approach. During the crisis it became clear for Germany that Russia's aims were targeted not only at Ukraine but also at the unity of the EU – and thus at Germany's prime political project. Russia neglecting to help implement the Minsk 2 agreement has strained German-Russian relations even more.

The war in Ukraine also caused Germany to take part in improving the security of its NATO allies in Eastern Europe. However, Germany's resources have been limited and strained and it has been careful about not provoking Russia. Germany has argued for maintaining the NATO-Russian Founding Act and has therefore not

supported a permanent positioning of forces in Eastern Europe. German forces have therefore been in Eastern Europe for exercises and the German focus has been on developing NATO's rapid reaction forces.

It is not likely that Germany will improve its political relations with Russia in the foreseeable future. The strained relations between the two states are the result of long-term processes. Germany will also not be willing to call off the EU sanctions on Russia before the Minsk agreement is implemented. However, there are signs of a German willingness to improve economic contacts with Russia, not least since a number of German companies have made large investments in Russia and are expecting to see them pay off. Improved economic relations will therefore cause a compartmentalisation of German policies whereby economic issues and security are viewed separately. This was the German approach to eastern Europe during the Cold War and has continued to be so in its trade relations with undemocratic regimes. It does not, however, mean that Germany will go back to putting a geo-economic approach before a geo-strategic one in its relations with Russia.

German policies show a trend towards an increasing will to use force in providing international security. The trend has not been without setbacks and has caused other states concerns about Germany's reliability in hard security. Major deviations from the trend are not to be expected in the future as they would jeopardise Germany's position and other actors' confidence in Germany for a long time. Germany's recent decision to take part in the operation in Syria is proof of this and of the country's solidarity with France and the UK. The ongoing destabilisation of the EU's southern neighbourhood and the problems it is causing through refugee flows, illegal immigrants and terrorism have strengthened Germany's engagement in the Middle East. This may affect NATO's eastern and northern flanks since part of Germany's already overstretched resources and funds may be redirected to the south. Germany will also stand behind its NATO allies in the event of a real crisis, probably not as a lead nation but as a follow-up nation.

4 The UK

Niklas H. Roszbach

4.1 Introduction

With its NATO and EU-membership the UK has found a role, but it is not entirely comfortable with it. The half-century-old comment that “Britain has lost an Empire and not yet found a role” eventually became a cliché. The UK is not the Great Britain of Empire, but has become a highly successful economy able to field armed forces with a global reach. In fact, the present government’s view of the UK as a “global power” is said to be a recent legacy, from the Labour government of the 1990s.²⁶⁵ The UK is not confined to a regional great-power role within the European continent. Yet it is not a superpower like the US. What contributes to the UK’s standing as a great power, apart from the size of its economy and its armed forces, is that it has nuclear weapons and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. What makes the UK uncomfortable with its present role is not any of the above factors but its membership in the EU – and the credo of European integration of “ever closer union”.

In many ways the main challenges for the UK as a great power are domestic, such as the risk of the UK leaving the EU after a referendum to be held in June 2016 – a so-called Brexit. Another potential problem for the UK continuing in a great-power role is that the makers of foreign policy may find themselves out of touch with a public that is less willing to favour overseas missions.²⁶⁶

Compared to France and Germany the British government has trodden carefully since 2013 when the parliament voted against an intervention in Syria. The Minsk negotiations with Russia about Ukraine were led by France and Germany, which added to questions being raised about the UK’s willingness to take a leading role internationally.

In addition to that, doubts about Britain’s future military capability increased in the spring of 2015. The Liberal-Conservative coalition government was slow to commit the country to the level of defence spending it had urged on all NATO members less than a year earlier, at the NATO summit in Wales in 2014. The new Conservative government, elected in May 2015, has promised to ensure that the

²⁶⁵ Interview London 13 October 2015. For the appeal of Empire for Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, see Bernard Porter, *Empire and Superempire – Britain, America and the World*, Yale University Press, (2006), pp. 144-145.

²⁶⁶ On the foreign policy elite and the public, Interview London 13 October 2015.

UK's defence spending obligations are fulfilled, which is a matter of both external and internal signalling about the UK safeguarding its great-power role.

4.2 The UK and Russia

4.2.1 A chastened view of Russia

The UK is very concerned about Russia – something which is a fairly novel development – following Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the war in Ukraine.²⁶⁷ Until recently Russia was perceived as a mixture of opportunities and challenges.²⁶⁸ In 2008, despite the Russo-Georgian war and the murder of Alexandr Litvinenko (a regime critic killed in London – with Russia suspected of involvement), the UK still wanted to try and bring Russia into the West. The year after the Russo-Georgian war it was business as usual in UK-Russia relations. When the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government came to power in 2010 there was a focus on prosperity, including an attempt to attract Russian business. But relations with Russia proved difficult to handle.²⁶⁹ Even so in 2011 Prime Minister David Cameron still seemed prepared to soft-pedal difficult issues in favour of increasing the economic cooperation between the UK and Russia. He professed that “[s]hared prosperity is one of the best ways to ensure shared security” and that in regard to Russia there was no need to choose between trade and politics.²⁷⁰

Over the last few years the relationship has become increasingly problematic, especially given the developments regarding Ukraine. Even before the events in Ukraine there were a whole host of problems that could have soured relations more than they did even earlier than 2014. Amongst these were the Litvinenko murder case with links to Russia and disagreements over how to handle the deteriorating situation in Syria.²⁷¹

The key difference in 2014, compared to 2008, was that in 2008 the UK acted as if the Russo-Georgian war had not happened. But after 2014 there was no going

²⁶⁷ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 24 March, (2015), p. 3.

²⁶⁸ Interview London 13 October 2015.

²⁶⁹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁷⁰ David Cameron, Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, London, 14 November, (2011), in the New Statesman, full transcript.

²⁷¹ See Ben Smith, UK relations with Russia, Research Briefing, Parliament, 24 October (2012), <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06449/SN06449.pdf>.

back to business as usual.²⁷² Russia's behaviour after the downing of the flight MH17 contributed to this.²⁷³ By 2015 everything had changed. The UK and its EU partners have woken up to Russia's behaviour and realised that the attempt to bring Russia into Europe has failed.²⁷⁴ The British government has realised that it cannot trust what Russia says.²⁷⁵

The British prime minister no longer believes that economic relations can overcome the issues between the West and Russia. Cameron has not changed his view of international relations but he has changed his tune about Russia. He is not prepared to engage in "understanding rather than condemnation".²⁷⁶ He takes a tough stance, arguing that "there might be some short term relief in terms of relieving sanctions, but the longer term loss to Europe of saying it is okay to re-draw boundaries by force, that it's okay to give up rules of the international road, that would be disastrous for Europe".²⁷⁷ One British observer argues that the UK sees Russia as a revisionist country in the 1930s mode.²⁷⁸ Currently, the UK is preparing to deal with the same Russian regime for another ten years, according to interviews in London.²⁷⁹

Russia has challenged the European security order which is a very developed part of the wider rule-based international order. The UK values this order, probably in part because it is the edifice that allows for the economic globalisation that has benefited the UK.²⁸⁰ Acceptance of what Russia is doing would be deeply problematic for the US-led international order, which Cameron believes promotes the possibilities of free trade and investment to the benefit of the UK.

In the two leading defence planning documents – the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), both from 2010 – Russia is portrayed as a fellow partner. Reality has now shown it to be more of an adversary.²⁸¹ Russia has made the world more insecure for the UK.²⁸² Russia has not by itself changed the UK's outlook,²⁸³ but is now clearly more of a priority in

²⁷² Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁷³ Interview London 13 October 2015.

²⁷⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁷⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁷⁶ David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

²⁷⁷ David Cameron, Q & A after Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

²⁷⁸ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁷⁹ Interview London 13 October 2015 and Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁸⁰ Interview London 13 October 2015.

²⁸¹ Interview London 13 October 2015. The SDSR and the NSS are discussed in more detail below.

²⁸² Interview London 13 October 2015.

²⁸³ Interview London 13 October 2015.

British foreign policy and the government in general.²⁸⁴ Yet some observers argue that the UK sees Russia as distraction. Most likely the UK will remain in favour of sanctions and refuse to recognise the annexation of Crimea.²⁸⁵ Others are more explicit and say that the UK takes Russia seriously, but falls in line behind the US.²⁸⁶ The US, however, appears perhaps slightly less concerned about Russia than other British allies in Europe; accordingly this might increase the British interest in playing a part elsewhere, for example in the Persian Gulf.

While the UK has realised that the efforts to involve Russia in globalisation economically and politically have failed, the government does not see the developments in Europe as a new Cold War. Some experts believe that Russia is not a threat to the UK since the country can defend itself, although there is some concern about Russian attempts at intrusions into British airspace.²⁸⁷

Like many others, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond has stated that “[w]e’re in familiar territory for anyone over the age of about 50, with Russia’s aggressive behaviour a stark reminder that it has the potential to pose the single greatest threat to [the UK’s] security”.²⁸⁸ However, he wants to avoid describing the rising tension between Europe and Russia as a “Cold War”. Instead he claims that Russia is seeking “strategic competition” with Europe and that the result will be a “difficult, prickly relationship”.²⁸⁹

According to one expert the annexation of Crimea does not mean that the West is doomed to a new Cold War and that a Cold War is very much higher up on the escalation ladder. That expert also claims that the West can spend its way through the present situation more easily than Russia can.²⁹⁰ Some experts talk about there being a “cool war”, i.e. a slight chill, but at the same time argue that Russia remains a competitor, not an adversary.²⁹¹

The British view is that the UK still has to engage with Russia, but it is a fine line. Disengagement would be counterproductive, since it could lead to Russian

²⁸⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁸⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁸⁶ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁸⁷ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁸⁸ Nicholas Winning, U.K. Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond Warns Russia Is Potential Big Threat to Security, the Wall Street Journal, 10 March, (2010), <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-foreign-secretary-philip-hammond-warns-russia-is-potential-big-threat-to-security-1425997164>.

²⁸⁹ David Feeney and agencies, Putin risks further sanctions on Russia over Ukraine, says Philip Hammond, The Guardian, 8 March, (2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/08/putin-russia-risks-further-eu-sanctions-ukraine-says-philip-hammond>.

²⁹⁰ Interview London 15 October 2015.

²⁹¹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

isolationism.²⁹² Nevertheless, it remains to be seen to what extent the superpower the US, the great powers like France, the UK and Russia, and regional powers like Turkey and Saudi Arabia can work together in trying to manage the IS threat and settle, if not resolve, the conflict in Syria.

Russia's behaviour is a threat to European security, but at the same time the West needs to cooperate with Russia on such things as the Iran negotiations.²⁹³ The UK will work with Russia in diplomacy where possible. Perhaps the way in which the UK as part of the West works with Russia over the situation in Syria will be indicative of how far it is possible to work with Russia despite the tension in Eastern Europe. In any event the UK expects the Russian regime to remain the same in a ten-year perspective, and that is what the UK is preparing for.²⁹⁴

4.2.2 The UK, Sweden's neighbourhood and Ukraine

According to the British prime minister, it is clear that "there is no military solution to the conflict [in Ukraine]".²⁹⁵ Cameron argues that the UK has a leading role in bringing together the EU and the US in a "tough and united" sanctions response to Russia's actions in Ukraine.²⁹⁶ The UK also wants to promote the democratic and economic development of Ukraine.²⁹⁷ Yet to one British observer it seems as if Putin has produced another frozen conflict, which will continue forever.²⁹⁸ Cameron has pointed to Europe being in for the long haul in regard to its reactions to Russia.²⁹⁹

There are a number of British concerns about NATO, according to an official parliamentary assessment. It mentions the founding criteria of NATO. Arguably two of them are once again highly relevant: the aim to prevent militarism of the nationalist kind in Europe, where Russia fits the bill, and the aim of "encouraging European political integration", which fits less well with British ambitions. The assessment argues that the "events in Crimea and Ukraine represent a 'game

²⁹² Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁹³ Interview London 13 October 2015.

²⁹⁴ Interview London 13 October 2015.

²⁹⁵ David Cameron, Q & A after Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

²⁹⁶ David Cameron, Q & A after Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

²⁹⁷ David Cameron and Barack Obama, We won't let the voice of freedom be muzzled, *The Times*, 15 January, (2015).

²⁹⁸ Interview London 14 October 2015.

²⁹⁹ David Cameron, Q & A after Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

changer' for UK defence" in terms of both strategic priorities and what military capacity the UK will come to need. It also argues that the British military will have "to focus on the defence of Europe against Russia and against asymmetric forms of warfare".³⁰⁰ In this case as in others the enquiries of the British parliament are less global in outlook than the prime minister.

The UK has not only called for other NATO members to increase their defence spending but has also endorsed the alliance helping Ukraine. The UK is helping Ukraine by providing training for troops, teaching them skills in for example medicine and tactical intelligence.³⁰¹

Many other Eastern European countries, which already are NATO members, want to be reassured. In 2014 the prime minister underlined that the collective security of NATO was intact and that the organisation would be united against "any threat".³⁰² However, Cameron is also keen to claim that the UK sets an example.

The UK's plans for the Baltic are a reassurance measure and a sign of solidarity, but there is both a northern and a southern threat to Europe.³⁰³ A primary NATO effort, often associated with the situation in the Baltic, is the VJTF. It is claimed to be aimed at swiftly countering challenges from Russia or the Middle East and North Africa. The reference to areas outside Europe might be a British attempt to dilute the eastern focus of the force.³⁰⁴ The UK believes it has a stricter interpretation of its commitment to the VJTF, if it should be called on, than France, which argues that it might use troops assigned to the VJTF elsewhere.³⁰⁵

The establishment of the VJTF and all it entails has gone a long way towards reassuring allies according to an official British analysis. However, one expert has

³⁰⁰ Toward the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two-NATO, Third Report of Session 2014-15, 31 July, (2015), p. 7.

³⁰¹ Ministry of Defence, Defence Secretary announces further training for Ukraine, 11 and 12 August, (2015), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-announces-further-training-for-ukraine>.

³⁰² David Cameron, NATO Summit 2014: PM end of summit press conference, gov.uk, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/NATO-summit-2014-pm-end-of-summit-press-conference>. See also, NATO, Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, 4 September, (2014), http://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOOhq/news_112695.htm.

³⁰³ Interview London 15 October 2015.

³⁰⁴ George Allison, UK Increases Contribution to New NATO Task Force, UK Defence Journal, 12 June, (2015), <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/uk-increases-contribution-to-new-NATO-task-force/>. Robert J. Hendriks, Response Forces Galore – A guided tour, Policy Brief, Clingendael, November, (2014). Hendriks argues that the VJTF is only intended for Eastern Europe, unlike the UK sources which say it has more uses. However, the British claim could be designed to smooth the path for the VJTF politically.

³⁰⁵ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, p. 15

dismissed the VJTF as a “paper tiger”.³⁰⁶ In any case the VJTF is not a priority for Cameron, according to another expert.³⁰⁷ Even so the UK has taken a leading role in the VJTF. It is said to be contributing 1 000 troops in 2016 and will be the lead nation the following year, 2017, with 3 000 troops. In 2018 Poland is scheduled to take the lead and the UK will then again contribute 1 000 men. In fact, the UK will participate in every VJTF until 2023. However, some practical issues such as transport and protection still need to be ironed out.³⁰⁸

Regarding the Baltic the UK intended to have 3 500 personnel in exercises in Eastern Europe between the NATO summit in September 2014 and the end of 2015.³⁰⁹ The UK is already contributing to air policing for the Baltic NATO members, which is not a very taxing task for the Royal Air Force (RAF).³¹⁰ In addition the UK will contribute a company of about 100 soldiers to the Baltic states and Poland with the explicit purpose of providing reassurance. The effort builds on the US-German Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACET) initiative, and involves training and helping with exercises in the region.³¹¹ The UK claims that it will take part in this initiative and establish a significant military presence alongside Germany and the US in Eastern Europe. The Ministry of Defence says that the UK will become the lead nation of this German-American initiative.³¹² This of course fits with the UK trying to make the German relationship in defence much more important.

Given the somewhat imprecise location of the contingent it is clear that some specifics still need to be pinned down. These include whether the 100 soldiers will be deployed together with US troops and whether there is to be rotation with a company constantly present. That could potentially give the company a tripwire function, implying an additional guarantee of British military aid in the event of a military conflict.³¹³

One expert says that the additional rotating of troops to the Baltic is designed primarily so that the UK has something to say at a NATO meeting and it is just

³⁰⁶ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁰⁷ Interview London 15 October 2015.

³⁰⁸ Interview London 15 October 2015.

³⁰⁹ Louisa Brooke-Holland and Claire Mills, NATO Wales Summit 2014: outcomes, House of Commons Library, 12 September, (2014).

³¹⁰ Interview London 15 October 2015.

³¹¹ Ministry of Defence, Defence Secretary announces more support in Baltics and Ukraine, 8 October, (2015).

³¹² Ministry of Defence, Defence Secretary welcomes deeper security relationship with Germany, 25 January, (2016).

³¹³ Interview London 15 October 2015.

enough for the UK to keep playing a role.³¹⁴ Another specialist finds it unclear how the Baltic countries can be reassured by so few troops and says that sending the company is actually about a domestic message that shows that the UK is doing something.³¹⁵

One explanation for sending so few troops to the Baltic area could perhaps have been that the UK wanted to be able to take on a key role in the Gulf rather than in the Baltic states. However, it is important not to believe that all that is relevant for Eastern Europe's defence takes place there. According to British media, 1 600 British troops will participate in the 2016 Exercise Shamal Storm in Jordan. This may have far less to do with preparing for dealing with the situation in Syria than with preparing for large-scale armoured warfare in Eastern Europe, according to some media speculation. The exercise is supposedly about training to deploy up to 30 000 troops to any place around the globe.³¹⁶ And that of course includes Ukraine, and the Baltic states. Despite official denials that such is the case, the exercise could also be a signal to Russia.³¹⁷

Like the Army, the Royal Navy is also ramping up its commitment to the Baltic as a direct result of Russia's behaviour, and will have ships there during 2016, involving 400 personnel. This is part of an effort to deter Russian actions against Poland and the Baltic states. This effort is nearly a doubling of Britain's naval contribution to NATO. It will also bolster NATO, since the deployment is part of NATO's aim to have warships at sea – NATO's Standing Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1). This is the first time since 2010 that the UK has made this kind of contribution and is said to be in keeping with the new SDSR. As Defence Secretary Michael Fallon has said, "Increasing our NATO deployments sends a strong message to our enemies that we are ready to respond to any threat, and defend our allies".³¹⁸ Notably, this points to Russia as a potential enemy.

Even if the government would have liked to act more outside Europe, for example in the Gulf, other pressing needs often disrupt foreign policy schemes. A commitment to European security is of course especially important in view of the

³¹⁴ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³¹⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³¹⁶ Ben Farmer, 1,600 British troops head to Jordan for war game, *The Telegraph*, 7 February, (2016). <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/12143515/1600-British-troops-head-to-Jordan-for-war-game.html>.

³¹⁷ Tom Batchelor, War games on Syria's doorstep: British Army embarks on largest military drill since 2001, *The Express*, 8 February, (2016), <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/642214/Exercise-Shamal-Storm-British-Army-sends-1600-troops-Jordan-desert-military-drill>.

³¹⁸ Ministry of Defence, UK to step up NATO maritime commitment, 10 February, (2016), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-step-up-nato-maritime-commitment>; and Catherine Philip, *The Times*, 10 February, (2016).

potential threat of Russia to NATO allies, but perhaps also due to the British efforts to increase understanding in Europe of the British view on European integration. Perhaps others will be more willing to listen to British views on the EU if they are reassured by a firm British stand on security within NATO.

The British commitment to the VJTF and the naval deployment are part of an effort to deter Russian action against the NATO allies in the Baltic. What is challenging for the UK and NATO as a whole in regard to Russia is the realisation that the alliance needs to be able to handle both conventional and unconventional threats from Russia, such as asymmetric threats – or “ambiguous warfare”³¹⁹ – also known as “sub-conventional” or hybrid warfare³²⁰ – to handle a low-intensity conflict or aggression that falls below the level of armed conflict.

An official British investigation points to many areas where NATO has to adapt. It points to the risks of asymmetric or “ambiguous” warfare; actions that “slip below NATO’s threshold” are of special concern. This is related to the need to be able to handle cyber-attacks, which highlights the need to look at how both Article 4 and Article 5 of the NATO treaty are to be interpreted – for example, if Article 5 can be invoked in the case of an attack that is not “armed”, since the treaty specifically argues that the article is concerned with an “armed attack”.³²¹ One British expert underlined that although there is a much higher risk of war that risk is still very low,³²² but this concerned the situation in the Baltic and relations between the West and Russia before relations between Russia and the UK’s NATO ally Turkey worsened in late 2015.

There has been a lot of speculation among experts in London about how the UK will act if there is a conflict in the Baltic. As one expert points out, the clearer the scenario the quicker NATO’s response will be. Russian low-intensity warfare could be met with a credible response by deploying a US Army division. If Russia were to behave in Estonia as it did in Ukraine then Article 5 would apply. However, Germany would be critical of the alliance taking action, according to one expert, since it brings a lot of other countries with it. If Germany hesitates the US might hesitate, he argues. Events in the Baltic could unfold quickly.³²³ One

³¹⁹ Toward the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two-NATO, Third Report of Session 2014-15, 31 July, (2015), pp. 3-4.

³²⁰ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³²¹ Toward the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two-NATO, Third Report of Session 2014-15, 31 July, (2015), pp. 4-5 and 33-34. It should be noted that the UK study has been informed by sources in the Baltic and that there is risk of a feedback loop from regional analysis such as the Swedish Defence Research Agency’s own analysis and others that contain an understanding already well known to the Swedish Defence Research Agency.

³²² Interview London 15 October 2015.

³²³ Interview London 15 October 2015.

analyst discussing possible conflict scenarios in the Baltic believes that in the event of Russia beginning an armed conflict the UK will step back, focus on the Norwegian Sea and submarine warfare instead and let the UK's Baltic effort slide.³²⁴

Presumably the UK would follow the US lead if events unfolded in a worse way in the Baltic. Perhaps, given the American desire for the Europeans to take on more of a responsibility for their own security, the UK would be expected to help resolve the situation in the Baltic. However, it is also possible that the US would in some ways repay the UK for its support in recent major missions in the Middle East. Accordingly, the US might instead ask the UK to help in maintaining security in the Gulf. The latter eventuality would associate the UK with the world outside Europe, which in many ways is where the UK increasingly seems to think it belongs.

4.3 The UK in the world

4.3.1 Britain's national interest

Britain's interests will be influenced by the EU referendum, but, the UK wants to remain a global player of economic and military importance. The UK is a European great power but it is not only a regional power. The country's global outlook has been an essential feature of its strategic thinking, which is reflected both in strategic documents and in the position of the government. In order to understand the British view of security on the European continent it is important to acknowledge the logic linking the UK's view of its national interest and security to its troubled relationship with the EU. A British exit from the EU – a Brexit – following a referendum on the UK's membership in the EU would have a significant impact on the UK's defence.

The UK regards itself as a great power. Also, it does not conflate its great-power role with being a European power. It sees itself as a country with a global reach.³²⁵ Some of the talk about the UK as a “world” or “global” power is a Blairite legacy from previous Labour governments to the present government.³²⁶ In any case

³²⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³²⁵ NSS, (2010), p. 21; and Foreword in SDSR, (2010), p. 3.

³²⁶ Interview London 13 October 2015. For the appeal of Empire for Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, see Bernard Porter, *Empire and Superempire – Britain, America and the World*, Yale University Press, (2006), pp. 144-145.

Cameron's view is that the UK is a global power, which is capable of acting outside Europe.³²⁷

It is important to follow what David Cameron says about Europe and British foreign policy, for two reasons. The first is that since 2015 he has been the prime minister of a one-party government, but he was also the prime minister in the previous coalition government. Under Cameron since 2010 the UK has seen two foreign secretaries and three ministers of defence.

The second reason that makes Cameron such a central figure is that he has either taken the lead or been prominent in international media with regard to several of the UK's key relationships, notably with EU. However, some observers argue that Cameron is about tactics, and engages in a lot of reacting. According to critics the number one threat for Cameron is what is on the front page of the newspapers.³²⁸

The UK's national interest according to the British analysis is a tough adaptation to economic globalisation after the financial crisis. The government often refers to the national interest but its definition is not entirely clear. The government lifts "security, prosperity and freedom" as key concerns. The UK wants to "project power and... use [its] unique network of alliances and relationships", with the EU and NATO, but especially with the US. The UK desires to make a strategic impact as it acts overseas with its allies.³²⁹ However, it wants to use all the instruments it has at its disposal, not only military means. In fact the British view has been that "a strong economy is a vital foundation for national security. Without national economic security [the UK] will not be able to maintain and project our influence".³³⁰ Prime minister Cameron echoes these views.³³¹

Cameron's critique of the EU has actually chimed with his belief in so-called "soft power" or liberal values, of the free trade kind. He professes that "[s]hared prosperity is one of the best ways to ensure shared security". In 2011, before the Russian annexation of Crimea, he did not believe that increased trade with countries like Russia or China necessitated a compromise with Western values.³³² He has repeatedly stated both his trade-oriented beliefs and his commitment to Britain's military standing. In his view there is no contradiction; instead, "[e]conomic weakness at home translates into political weakness abroad".³³³

³²⁷ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³²⁸ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³²⁹ NSS, (2010), p. 4.

³³⁰ NSS, (2010), pp. 4 and 10.

³³¹ David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

³³² David Cameron, Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, London, 14 November, (2011), in the New Statesman, Full transcript.

³³³ David Cameron, Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, London, 15 November, (2010), gov.uk.

The UK's possession of nuclear arms gives NATO more options, according to one expert. The alliance would otherwise have to rely on the US and France for its nuclear shield. NATO's nuclear weapons are now in fact said to be back in operational planning and exercises. One expert says it is important to talk convincingly about when to use them as escalation tools, in part because Russia is said to comprehend talk about nuclear arms.³³⁴

At the moment there is little government engagement with the strategic nuclear capability, Trident, and the value of having a deterrent.³³⁵ Critics even argue that Cameron does not understand the deterrent.³³⁶ One expert believes that there is a need for a link regarding how the deterrent fits with European security, and wonders if there ought to be a connection – if distant – between the VJTF and the deterrent. One idea would be to have the prime minister make a speech on the topic.³³⁷ Another expert believes the opposite and thinks it is dangerous to engage in rhetoric about the deterrent.³³⁸

The British nuclear arms will remain for another 20-30 years, according to one specialist.³³⁹ There is, however, a need to update the deterrent – the submarines which launch the missiles and some other technological aspects as well.³⁴⁰ The Anglo-French Lancaster House treaties do not offer an alternative route to a continued deterrent. The nuclear part of that deal is about quality, testing and modelling. And a lot of it is trilateral, involving the US.³⁴¹ The French, however, unlike the British, have kept a sub-strategic nuclear deterrent.³⁴²

The Gulf is a British interest. It can be connected to the British posture of internationalisation. While the UK will demonstrate that NATO is robust it will also reinforce its presence in the Gulf, according to one expert.³⁴³ One perspective

³³⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³³⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³³⁶ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³³⁷ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³³⁸ Interview London 15 October 2015. The risk of a weakened deterrent meaning a weaker NATO gives pause for thought for the NATO/Europe-oriented Scottish National Party (SNP). There is a risk of Scotland not being a NATO member if it forces closure of the Trident base. Re-basing Trident could take 10 years. Scotland does not want to risk local jobs. See Interview 6 London 14 October 2015.

³³⁹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁴⁰ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁴¹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁴² Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁴³ Interview London 14 October 2015.

is of course that there is no choice between Europe and the Gulf regarding defence efforts,³⁴⁴ and that some of the problems for Europe emanate from the Gulf.³⁴⁵

The Gulf seems to offer a place where the UK can perhaps employ its new maritime capability, of two aircraft carriers, and where it hopes to increase its influence. The UK interest in the Gulf is sometimes seen as at least a partial return to what was once known as “east of Suez”. Before the British withdrawal from the region in 1968 the UK had a significant presence in the Gulf. But some experts make the case that the UK has been back often in the last 40 years.³⁴⁶

The UK now has plans for a continuous presence in the form of a new naval base in Bahrain.³⁴⁷ This might in part be an effort not to be upstaged by the French, who have already established a new base in the Gulf.³⁴⁸ Such Anglo-French logic dictates that what France has the UK must have too. The building of the Gulf facilities is said to be financed by Bahrain. Yet the new base will most likely not have the capacity to receive the new British aircraft carriers, which will have to use the American base in the region.³⁴⁹

There are several strategic reasons apart from security and defence relations for having a presence in the Gulf. It is possible to conjure up strategic reasons for being in the Gulf that have less to do with power politics than with economics. The Gulf is a region of high growth, and as such it is important for the British economy.³⁵⁰ However, some experts fail to see the strategic logic of being in the Gulf.³⁵¹ Others argue that the Gulf is of strategic importance,³⁵² which is not to say that it is strategic for the UK to be there. The Conservatives, however, believe that the UK has neglected its allies in the Gulf and want to reconstruct relations blocked by the Liberal Democrat-Tory coalition government.³⁵³

Some argue that the US wants the UK in the Gulf because of shared objectives and perhaps also as a means of burden sharing on security.³⁵⁴ Some believe that the driver is for the UK to be a strategic partner of the US, where the UK plays an

³⁴⁴ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁴⁵ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁴⁶ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁴⁷ Britain in the Middle East, We’re back, *The Economist*, 13 December, (2014).

³⁴⁸ In regard to the French base see Angelique Chrisafis, France opens military base in UAE despite Iranian concerns, *The Guardian*, 26 May, (2009), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/26/france-military-base-uae>.

³⁴⁹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁵⁰ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁵¹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁵² Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁵³ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁵⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

important role in the Gulf when the US's priorities are elsewhere. This would offer a rationale for the carrier programme.³⁵⁵ But it also raises the question whether the UK will think that its role in the Gulf is as important as its commitment to European security. In any case the UK's role in the Gulf is a personal ambition of Cameron, according to some observers.³⁵⁶

4.3.2 The UK in the EU and NATO

Europe has not been central to British strategic thinking for many years.³⁵⁷ Although the UK is a leading NATO member it has a long and often troubled relationship with Europe. "Europe", in British politics, is often shorthand for European integration, unlike for example the American "Europe" tag, which often means a Europe of both the EU and the European NATO members. The UK was a latecomer to the European Economic Community, the EEC, which later became the EU. It was twice denied entry before it became a member in 1973. After entry it became known as an "awkward partner", often taking a slightly different position on European integration than the other Western European members.³⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the UK is an important member of the EU because of the size of its economy and the importance of its financial sector, centred around London.

Cameron says his "aim is to secure Britain's place in a reformed European Union". According to him the EU is not now a source of economic growth, and that is what needs to be changed.³⁵⁹ This has been his message since he spoke about the UK and its EU membership in 2013. The EU, according to him, has been about peace, but now it should "secure prosperity".³⁶⁰ He argues that he wants a "flexible" EU built by "free member states" around the single market which he contrasts with the European Treaty pledge of an "ever closer union".³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁵⁶ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁵⁷ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, p. 5.

³⁵⁸ Andrew Gamble, *Between Europe and America – the Future of British Politics*, (2013), pp. 115-118.

³⁵⁹ David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

³⁶⁰ David Cameron, EU Speech in full, *The Telegraph*, 23 January, (2013).

³⁶¹ David Cameron, EU Speech in full, *The Telegraph*, 23 January, (2013). He acknowledges that actual changes to the Lisbon Treaty will not be possible until after a British referendum. In fact, the UK may have to rely on the promises of the other member states that they will ratify treaty changes after the UK has gone to the polls. Nicholas Watt and Ian Traynor, Cameron set to go to referendum without EU ratifying treaty changes, *The Guardian*, 26 June, (2015). It is noteworthy that "Ever closer union" is actually in the 1957 Treaty of Rome as well as in the Maastricht Treaty.

Others would argue that the referendum is about keeping the Tory party together, by shifting the rift between its anti- and moderately pro-European members on to the public. This is very much what the Labour government did in 1975, when it held a referendum on the recent membership in the EEC. After “renegotiations”, which were not substantial, Britain stayed in.³⁶² The problem for Cameron is that he wants more out of Europe than the UK sought in 1975, at the same time as the rest of the EU is perhaps much less willing than it was in 1975 to help pave the way for continued British membership. In 1975 the UK did not push for treaty change. Furthermore, in the 1970s the UK looked to France and Germany as successful economic models and that is, most likely, no longer the case.

There is an optimistic narrative which is popular in the UK, which primarily revolves around the British economy. Estimates made by a large consultancy firm indicate that by 2050 the British economy will be bigger than that of Germany.³⁶³ This finding has resonated with a great many people in the UK. Given a Brexit one option according to some would be to remake the rump of the UK into a London city state similar to Singapore, but this is perhaps only a pipe-dream.³⁶⁴

Of all the countries that the British government has to convince in order to get the necessary reform to vote on in the British referendum, none is more important than Germany. Under Chancellor Angela Merkel Germany has dealt with the refugee problem, the euro crisis, including the continued problems with Greece, and Russian aggression.³⁶⁵ Brexit offers another unpalatable problem for Chancellor Merkel.³⁶⁶ Accordingly, as with other challenges, she is likely to work towards European unity and to support European integration, and that means keeping the UK in the EU. In view of Germany’s importance the UK has upgraded Germany to a “tier one” defence partner alongside France and the US. The UK and Germany

³⁶² Gamble, (2003), p. 118. See also Open Europe, Renegotiation and referendum: history repeating?, 31 July, (2014), <http://openeuropeblog.blogspot.se/2014/07/renegotiation-and-referendum-history.html>.

³⁶³ Gil Carson, UK to fall out of the world’s top 10 largest economies by 2050, 10 February, (2015), http://pwc.blogs.com/press_room/2015/02/uk-to-fall-out-of-the-worlds-top-10-largest-economies-by-2050.html. It is not so much that the UK will preserve its place among the top ten economies globally, but that it will have a younger population and enjoy much stronger economic growth than the other leading economies in Europe.

³⁶⁴ Interview 14 October 2015.

³⁶⁵ James Forsyth, Merkel’s crisis is Cameron’s opportunity, *The Spectator*, 27 June, (2015), <http://www.spectator.co.uk/columnists/politics/9566572/merkels-crisis-is-camerons-opportunity/>.

³⁶⁶ Nicholas Watt and Kate Connolly, Merkel suggests a deal can be reached over Cameron’s EU demands, *The Guardian*, 29 May, (2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/29/angela-merkel-hints-revising-lisbon-treaty-accommodate-david-cameron-demands>.

have also taken some tentative steps to deepen their security relationship.³⁶⁷ How this will develop depends both on the need to work together on security in Europe, especially in the Baltic, and on how the two countries handle UK-European relations, especially in regard to the EU and the risk of a Brexit.

The prime minister argues that the UK has never abandoned Europe when its security has been endangered. Nevertheless, he does underline that the values that “unite” them require the European states to “stand up for them...together”.³⁶⁸ Much of this is directed at Europe’s problems with Russia, and his reasoning is similar to that which goes on in NATO.³⁶⁹ But like the rest of NATO the UK appreciates that Europe also has a problem on its southern flank concerning the situation in the Middle East and North Africa.³⁷⁰

The prime minister’s multilateralism is heavily dependent on the US. His attitude harks back not to British cooperation with European states or even NATO but to the US-UK relationship. Together with US President Barack Obama Cameron emphasises a global outlook and joint efforts to deal with threats to European security and the threat of global terrorism. For both of them Russia is only one of many challenges, and economic growth continues to take centre stage in Cameron’s world view.³⁷¹ However, Obama has candidly claimed to be disappointed at European efforts to settle Libya after the intervention in 2011, and especially Cameron’s lack of attention. He has also not held back from seeing the special relationship as a quid pro quo for the UK keeping its defence spending at 2 per cent of GDP in accordance with NATO’s goals.³⁷²

It sometimes seems as if the British view is that it is up to the UK and the US to ensure that NATO is able to handle a conventional threat to ‘defend the European order’.³⁷³ At least some of the key British considerations seem to be closely tied to how it sees its relationship with the US. One finding claims that US president Barack Obama’s understanding of the relationship is that it is about an “at-sea deterrent, special forces and the relationship with GCHQ [the Government

³⁶⁷ Ministry of Defence, Defence Secretary welcomes deeper security relationship with Germany, 25 January, (2016), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-welcomes-deeper-security-relationship-with-germany>.

³⁶⁸ David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

³⁶⁹ Commentary, Q & A, The need for a comprehensive Transatlantic Security Strategy? Conference The Atlantic Council, Svenska Atlantkommittén and Teknik och Säkerhetsforum, 2 June, (2015).

³⁷⁰ David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

³⁷¹ David Cameron and Barack Obama, We won’t let the voice of freedom be muzzled, The Times, 15 January, (2015).

³⁷² Jeffrey Goldberg, The Obama doctrine, The Atlantic, April, (2016).

³⁷³ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), Summary, pp. 3-4.

Communications Headquarters]”, meaning intelligence.³⁷⁴ This is in accordance with how the British prime minister views it. He sees the relationship as ‘crucial’ and based on ‘cooperation on defence, counter-terrorism and intelligence’.³⁷⁵ One expert concurs that the US is a constant theme in defence related matters for the top of government, but believes that Cameron actually is not obsessed by the US.³⁷⁶

It was probably necessary for the new Tory government to keep defence funding at 2 per cent of GDP – NATO’s target – in order to preserve a close US-UK British relationship. It might also have been important in order to keep the US involved in Europe.³⁷⁷ Although, the latter view might exaggerate the importance of British decisions to American policy. In case of a Brexit it is possible that the US would find it easier to engage more with France and Germany with regard to issues that pertain to NATO and the EU’s CSDP.³⁷⁸ An evolution that London would find difficult, unless perhaps it believes that it can work closely with the US elsewhere.

However, one observer believes that the UK is drifting away from the US and that what is – perhaps wrongly – perceived as American ingratitude for the UK’s efforts during the last decade and a half. More specifically the critique is that the UK was President George W. Bush’s poodle. Before the no-vote over Syria in 2013 the UK was supposedly assigned the label ‘closest ally’. Now that has been used by the US’ Secretary of State John Kerry about France. Meanwhile the UK has been demoted to ‘oldest ally’.³⁷⁹ Perhaps, the Anglo-American special relationship is merely cyclical as some commentators suggest,³⁸⁰ but a UK that leaves the EU would also weaken its relationship with the U.S. However, the US is vital for one key component of the UK’s claim that it is a great power – the British nuclear deterrent. Yet, the relationship is never transactional; there is no metric or indicator on the influence the UK has on the US³⁸¹

³⁷⁴ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), p. 21.

³⁷⁵ David Cameron, Speech at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet, London, 15 November, (2010), gov.uk.

³⁷⁶ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁷⁷ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), Summary, p. 4.

³⁷⁸ Jolyon Howorth, CSDP without the UK: bad for Europe but worse for Britain, European Geostrategy, 18 January, (2015).

³⁷⁹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁸⁰ F. Stephen Larrabee, A Not-So-Special Relationship?, the RAND blog, 11 September, (2013).

³⁸¹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

Whatever outlook the UK has, a European or a more global, multilateral efforts are central to the country's attempts to meet the new threats.³⁸² It is taking the lead as a framework nation in the new Joint Expeditionary Force, the JEF. A new British approach from 2012, which also fits with NATO's Framework Nations Concept from 2014.³⁸³ The JEF should not be confused with the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, CJEF, established in 2010 in which the UK and France work together.³⁸⁴ The JEF is a sort of pool of forces. Other countries have chosen to participate in the pool, either to build up their own capacities or to seek reassurance. Those that have signed on are Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia but also Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands. However, it is a British instrument, and it can for example be used to provide troops for a separate force that needs to be deployed, like NATO's VJTF.³⁸⁵ The JEF is not supposed to depend on the contributions of partners.³⁸⁶

In order to handle the new threats in Europe the UK will probably maintain its leading role within NATO. But the idea that the UK would be doing more in NATO because of the referendum on the EU as a means of currying favours with those allies which are members in both organisations is probably not correct. Even so NATO is a cornerstone for the UK.³⁸⁷ That the UK keeps defence spending at NATO's recommended level is likely to help the UK preserve its position in the organisation.

The prime minister does not see a solely European role for NATO. For example Cameron sees a role for NATO in the Middle East. However, from Cameron's perspective NATO is in need of reform. He underlines that he wants the spending of the alliance members to result in forces that can be deployed.³⁸⁸ In fact, his view

³⁸² Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), Summary, pp. 3-4.

³⁸³ Speech by General Sir David Richards, Chief of the Defence Staff, 17 December, 2012, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chief-of-the-defence-staff-general-sir-david-richards-speech-to-the-royal-united-services-institute-rusi-17-december-2012>; and the Wales Summit Declaration, 5 September, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

³⁸⁴ UK-France Defence Co-operation Treaty announced, 2 November, (2010), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-france-defence-co-operation-treaty-announced--2>.

³⁸⁵ Interview London 2015.

³⁸⁶ Ministry of Defence and Michael Fallon, International partners sign Joint Expeditionary Force agreement, 5 September, (2014), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/international-partners-sign-joint-expeditionary-force-agreement>.

³⁸⁷ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁸⁸ David Cameron, NATO Summit 2014: PM end of summit press conference, gov.uk, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/NATO-summit-2014-pm-end-of-summit-press-conference>.

of NATO as ‘an alliance based on self-interest’³⁸⁹, echoes his view of what the EU should be, which is not an ‘ever closer union’.

4.3.3 A Brexit would mean far less priority to defence

The British referendum on membership of the European Union in the summer of 2016 will only be the latest instalment in the UK’s troubled relationship with European integration. Some of it might have to do with British issues of identity, as shown by Cameron claiming that the UK will have a “special status” within the EU after finalising the negotiations with the EU in early 2016.³⁹⁰ The character of the new British “special” relationship with the continent is in stark contrast to the Anglo-American relationship, which is far less contractual in nature.

It is possible that the UK will compensate for its reluctance to engage in the “ever closer union” of European integration, which is anathema to many in the country, by developing its defence relations with the key players in Europe, France and Germany. It may even try to do so after a No vote. It is worth recalling that the Anglo-French defence agreement in St Malo in 1998 came only a few months after the then new government under Tony Blair had developed criteria which effectively blocked the way to participation in the European Monetary Union.³⁹¹

If the UK left the EU it would face a number of international challenges, none of which is likely to make defence a top priority. The political turbulence following a Brexit could easily make many of the considerations in the most recent strategic documents irrelevant. A Brexit could reopen the question of Scottish independence as Scotland will not want to be brought out of the EU by England.³⁹² Accordingly, the union between England and Scotland of 1707 might shatter.

We should perhaps no longer discuss British defence but the wherewithal of the remaining English defence (which would include Wales and Northern Ireland). Following Scottish independence there would be practical defence problems, such

³⁸⁹ David Cameron and Barack Obama, Strengthening the NATO alliance: article by David Cameron and Barack Obama, NATO Summit Wales 2014, 4 September, (2014).

³⁹⁰ BBC, EU deal gives UK special status, says David Cameron, 20 February, (2016), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35616768>.

³⁹¹ For dates see BBC, UK Politics: Anglo-French military pact, 4 December, (1998), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/227598.stm; and BBC, Special report: Five economic tests, 26 December, (2000), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world_at_one/programme_highlights/1081948.stm.

³⁹² James Cripps, Brexit will lead to clamour for Scottish independence, says Sturgeon, EurActiv, 2 June, (2015), <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/uk-europe/brexit-will-lead-clamour-scottish-independence-says-sturgeon-315060>.

as finding a base outside Scotland for the nuclear deterrent.³⁹³ However, if the Scottish National Party, the SNP, is against the British deterrent, removing Trident's base from Scotland would risk weakening NATO. This would give the SNP pause since Scotland does not want to take the risk of not attaining NATO membership by forcing a closure of the home of Trident, Faslane in Scotland. Also, Scotland does not want to risk local jobs related to the base. Re-basing Trident might take up to 10 years and it would be easier to grant England (and what remains of the UK) local sovereignty in the event of a Scottish secession.³⁹⁴

To a great extent the coming referendum will be about the future of the British economy. A debate is going on about the impact of a Brexit on the UK's GDP. Many think tanks foresee a fall in GDP following a Brexit and lower growth means less financing for defence.³⁹⁵ Most likely a Brexit would mean less money for the armed forces for the foreseeable future.

Brexit may partly be a symptom of isolationist tendencies and a sign of the UK turning inwards. The British parliament's No to an intervention in Syria in 2013 was the result of an internal Tory rebellion by an isolationist group who are against both the EU and NATO, according to one observer. Previously leading Conservative critics of the EU remained Atlanticists, i.e. in favour of working with the US and NATO.³⁹⁶ Some observers claim that the UK wants to remain engaged geopolitically with others and be useful.³⁹⁷

For the US the EU as a whole is an important partner.³⁹⁸ The UK, from a military perspective, does not regard the EU as a weighty military actor, but sees the CSDP as a "complement to NATO".³⁹⁹ The US wants the UK to remain in the EU and most likely also argues that leaving the EU could be damaging to the UK's relations with NATO.⁴⁰⁰ The US strategic community is said to be worried by the risk of a Brexit since it sees the EU as a multiplier. Consequently, a Brexit would

³⁹³ Vanessa Barford, Scottish independence: Where might Trident go?, BBC, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28009977>.

³⁹⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁹⁵ BBC, UK and the EU: Better off out or in?, 22 May, (2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32793642>.

³⁹⁶ Interview London 13 October 2015.

³⁹⁷ Interview London 14 October 2015.

³⁹⁸ David Blair, US publicly voices concerns over Britain leaving the EU, 9 January, (2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/9791484/US-publicly-voices-concerns-over-Britain-leaving-EU.html>.

³⁹⁹ Anna Forsström, Anna Sundberg and Mike Winnerstig, Europas säkerhet och försvar i en ny tid, Stockholm, FOI, March, (2013), pp. 34-35.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview London 13 October 2015.

have an impact on European defence.⁴⁰¹ Most likely the US prefers to have a like-minded partner in the EU which takes a similar view on military matters to that of the US and can help smooth the relationship between the EU and NATO.

Leaving the EU would also have an impact on several of the UK's key defence relationships. The CSDP would have to deal with Britain leaving, but that policy already faces other problems.⁴⁰² However, some speculate that the UK might continue to be involved in the CSDP, but with far less influence.⁴⁰³ A Brexit might also cause problems for the Anglo-French defence cooperation, which has deepened recently following the Lancaster House treaties between France and the UK of 2010. Such reasoning is based on France having a greater interest in working together with EU members.⁴⁰⁴ Still others believe that France and the UK share strategic assumptions and that the French will be even keener on involving the UK in cooperation if there is a Brexit.⁴⁰⁵

4.4 Defence priorities

Major costs are creeping up on the British defence budget. This increases the need for strategic guidance in strategic documents or political choices about the direction of the British armed forces. The UK's defence planning is based on the government's National Security Strategy, the NSS, and the Strategic Defence and Security Review, the SDSR. The NSS discusses the strategic issues and points to goals, the "ends". The SDSR is about the "ways and means". It deals with resources and how to achieve the aims set by the NSS.⁴⁰⁶ In 2015 the two were presented together as one document, referred to here only as the 2015 SDSR.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰¹ Interview London 2015.

⁴⁰² Niklas H. Rossbach and Anna Sundberg, Towards a not so great Britain? Consequences of a Brexit, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, FOI, (2015). One view is that the CSDP without the UK could consolidate and deepen its cooperation: see Philip Worré, The consequences of a British exit from the EU and CSDP: An analytical timeline, isis-europe – NATO watch, January, (2013). But there are other views: Marcin Terlikowski, No One Left Behind: European Defence and Brexit, RUSI Journal, 158:4, August, (2013).

⁴⁰³ See for example Jolyon Howorth, CSDP without the UK: bad for Europe but worse for Britain, European Geostrategy, 18 January, (2015), <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2015/01/csdp-without-uk-bad-europe-even-worse-britain/>.

⁴⁰⁴ Niklas H. Rossbach and Anna Sundberg, Towards a not so great Britain? Consequences of a Brexit, the Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm, FOI, (2015) and Jolyon Howorth, CSDP without the UK: bad for Europe but worse for Britain, European Geostrategy, 18 January, (2015).

⁴⁰⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁰⁶ UK Government, Fact Sheet 1: Our Approach to the National Security Strategy.

⁴⁰⁷ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015. A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, 23 November, (2015).

Apart from these two security-oriented documents the UK's future defence is also likely to be influenced by the Treasury's 2015 Spending Review, which covers much more than defence and gives priority to the National Health Service and British national security.⁴⁰⁸

The SDSR is the first in five years.⁴⁰⁹ The only previous SDSR of its kind was published in 2010 and the one before that was in 1998.⁴¹⁰ The effort to generate and implement a new British strategic outlook has been made more challenging by the rise of new and unexpected threats, such as Russia's behaviour and the problems in the Middle East, which create a very different international security situation from what the armed forces had been preparing for since the previous NSS and SDSR.⁴¹¹

According to the SDSR of 2015 the UK is to have "global reach and influence". It argues that the UK is in a unique position, for historical reasons, to engage in the world in a whole host of ways. Its influence spans from defence capabilities to communication skills. In fact, the UK's goal is to become "the leading soft power nation".⁴¹²

The SDSR does not dwell on a Brexit scenario. However, it does argue that all the UK's "alliances and partnerships are more important than ever".⁴¹³ The UK is clearly not aiming to become a power in Europe only, either militarily or in any other political sense. Another way of interpreting that statement is that the UK is trying to keep all options open.

⁴⁰⁸ HM Treasury, A Country that lives within its means – Spending Review 2015, the UK Government, July (2015). Andrew Chuter, Fallon: Expect UK Defense Review Late 2015, Defense News, 8 June, (2015), <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/policy/2015/06/08/uk-fallon-strategic-defense-and-security-review-2015/28691491/>.

⁴⁰⁹ The 2015 SDSR: a primer, 19 June, (2015), <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7235>.

⁴¹⁰ The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy – Defence Committee, 4 Strategic Defence and Security Review, the UK Parliament, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/761/76107.htm>.

⁴¹¹ In regard to the realisation that the previous NSS and SDSR, including force concepts, are outdated, see Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015).

⁴¹² HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, November, (2015), pp. 9 and 47, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf.

⁴¹³ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, November, (2015), p. 50.

In regard to military matters the SDSR is no less international. It says that the UK will make its “defence policy and plans international by design”.⁴¹⁴ “[I]nternational by design” is not an instinctive rallying cry. It remains to be seen how the UK will make the “international by design” a clear-cut message, which its defence establishment understands how to interpret and use. There are a number of international challenges where the UK can engage and give the approach meaning if it is not too preoccupied by the referendum on its EU membership.

The reasoning in 2010 was that the international situation, according to many specialists, was moving towards increased stability.⁴¹⁵ The NSS of 2010 saw little risk of a conventional threat against either the UK or “another NATO or EU member”. The defence posture was expeditionary. The SDSR directed UK defence towards interventions and stability operations. Its Future Force 2020 concept meant that the UK should be able to deploy only one force for an “enduring stabilisation operation”.⁴¹⁶

The Joint Force 2025 presented in the 2015 SDSR will build on the Future Force 2020, but with its 50 000 troops it will be 20 000 soldiers stronger than the Future Force. The Joint Force is intended to be used for a large or several smaller missions, alone or with allies. All three services will be involved in it. The Special Forces will also contribute to the new force, which will have space and cyber capabilities. The force is intended to be able to deploy rapidly and be able to handle a broad range of adversaries, including ones like IS.⁴¹⁷

The 2010 SDSR was cut-driven.⁴¹⁸ Then the times were not seen as bad enough for defence not to do its bit for the economic recovery. However, defence was not cut as much as other areas, according to one expert.⁴¹⁹ The root cause of much of the critique aimed at the 2010 SDSR seems to depend on one’s view of strategy.

In order to understand the debates around the strategic documents it is important to note that the 2010 and 2015 SDSRs were centrally controlled by the Cabinet Office – the department supporting 10 Downing Street and the ministers in the

⁴¹⁴ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, November, (2015), p. 49.

⁴¹⁵ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴¹⁶ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, pp. 11-12.

⁴¹⁷ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, November, (2015), pp. 29-30.

⁴¹⁸ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴¹⁹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

cabinet – and that the documents reflect the prime minister’s views, according to at least one expert.⁴²⁰ Cameron also has a foreword in the 2015 SDSR.⁴²¹

Instead of levelling criticism at Cameron many critics appear to prefer to argue that the strategic documents lacked proper strategic thinking. However, the explanation might be that Cameron has different ideas from many senior strategists. One expert says that Cameron has been reluctant to engage with senior specialists who he feels might preach to him. Furthermore, the expert argues, these strategists were behind the British military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴²² These were not seen as successes, as another expert underlines. A more powerful critique of Cameron’s supposed inability to engage in strategy was his inability in 2013 to explain to parliament what would be the outcome after the then proposed British military strike against Syria.⁴²³

In any case Cameron is not a Blair-like speaker and does not use the word “strategic”, but he has strong opinions. And not using the expression “strategic” is not the same as not having a strategic understanding or vision, says one expert.⁴²⁴ The following delves deeper into Cameron’s outlook.

The prime minister has been keen on investing in a military capacity that is geared to dealing with terrorism which is also linked to extremism within British society.⁴²⁵ There is not only a difference between Cameron and those strategists who are more focused on traditional defence. There is also a difference in perspective between the UK and the rest of Europe, according to one expert. This was at least one view that was held by some before the terror attacks in Paris in 2015. The view was that the focus in the UK was much more on IS whereas the focus in the rest of Europe was much more on Russia, although much of Europe is also looking at the problems on the southern flank. The UK’s strategic outlook points to Russia as the state-level threat and IS and the spread of extremism as the non-state-level threat.⁴²⁶

Some argue that there is not a huge difference between the NSS and SDSR of 2015 and those of five years ago. Russia has not by itself changed the UK’s outlook on international affairs.⁴²⁷ But the latest SDSR does state that the development of

⁴²⁰ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴²¹ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, November, (2015).

⁴²² Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴²³ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴²⁴ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴²⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴²⁶ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴²⁷ Interview London 13 October 2015.

Russia as a “more aggressive, authoritarian and nationalist, increasingly defining itself in opposition to the West”, has occurred since the 2010 SDSR.⁴²⁸

One expert argues that in 2010 the UK expected a more uncertain world – in sharp contrast to other experts – but that we only now know in what way it has become more uncertain.⁴²⁹ Now the nature of the new threats has emerged in the Middle East and in Europe. It is important to note that the government most likely has a broader concept of security than many in the defence establishment. The previous NSS and SDSR were in the defence tradition but the recent ones have gone beyond that and are about much more about the need for a “rules-based order”, the need to respond to crises and a need for national resilience. The new strategic documents are also driven by the emergence of new technology and terrorism.⁴³⁰

The SDSR makes many references to the international dimension. Cameron and the foreign policy elite are internationalist. However, some argue that they are out of touch with the British public. Yet foreign policy is perhaps less of a sensitive issue for Cameron than it was for his predecessors. Despite the No vote over an intervention in Syria in 2013, there was no challenge to his leadership.⁴³¹ He was also re-elected.

This does not mean that the international perspective has been thought through, but it can be interpreted as meaning that the UK is prepared to enter into new relationships. Some say that there is an opportunity, as the UK is open to new ideas, and that the UK could possibly be prepared to do more, for example with countries in Northern Europe. Any initiative from the north after the publication of the 2015 SDSR is likely to be welcome, according to one expert.⁴³²

4.4.1 Threat perceptions

It is clear that Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and the turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa as well, are leading to an adaptation of the UK’s strategic thinking and perhaps also its strategic posture. As it happens, the rise of what the UK regards as “new threats” coincides relatively neatly with the 2015 SDSR.⁴³³

⁴²⁸ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, November, (2015), pp. 29-30.

⁴²⁹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴³⁰ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴³¹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴³² Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴³³ See Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015).

However, there is no fundamental shift in how the government sees the world or the UK's role in it.

The reason is twofold. First, Cameron adheres to his logic, where the economy underpins defence and security. In 2015 he reiterated that “if our economies in Europe are not strong, then there won’t be money to spend on defence or on addressing problems in failed states”.⁴³⁴ In the preface to the 2015 SDSR, which includes the 2015 NSS, Cameron joins economic and military security: “Our national security depends on our economic security, and vice versa. So the first step in our National Security Strategy is to ensure our economy is, and remains, strong.”⁴³⁵

Second, although not everyone is convinced that the UK should remain a global power, Cameron remains convinced that it has a role outside Europe as well. The parliamentary committee on national security argued in 2015 that “in the long term, the UK and its allies are in relative decline on the global stage”, and that the national strategy must fit its means to its ends. The committee also raised the question of whether the British strategy should be “global or regional”.⁴³⁶ The prime minister rejects such a choice. He does not believe that you “can either have a European strategy or a global strategy”.⁴³⁷

The main threats British defence has to prepare for or deal with concern Russia, IS and a whole host of problems in Africa, such as the situation in Libya and Nigeria.⁴³⁸ Threats might also emanate from Afghanistan, Somalia, North Korea and the South China Sea. The risk of interstate conflict is also higher than it was in 2010.⁴³⁹ The UK also recognises other problems such as instability in Pakistan,⁴⁴⁰ and a risk of a conflict between India and Pakistan.⁴⁴¹ For Cameron

⁴³⁴ David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

⁴³⁵ HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, Foreword by the Prime Minister, November, (2015), p. 5.

⁴³⁶ Towards the Strategic Defence and Security Review: Part Three, Twelfth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 25 March, (2015), pp. 4-5.

⁴³⁷ David Cameron, Q & A after Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

⁴³⁸ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), Summary, p. 3. See also Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴³⁹ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁰ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), Summary, p. 3. See also Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴⁴¹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

the problems in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have “one thing in common: a failure of governance in other countries”.⁴⁴²

The British view is that there are two kinds of threats. On the one hand there are the traditional state-made threats, including the risk of “state-state conflict”; on the other there are those that stem from problems such as terrorism as well as “pseudo states” and failing states. Complicating matters is the need to be able to deal with the new threats both with conventional means and in new ways with “new capabilities”, which means warfare of the kind known in the UK as “next generation”, “asymmetric” or “ambiguous”, often associated with so-called hybrid warfare – a term or understanding of events which became prominent after the way Russian soldiers infiltrated Crimea before the annexation and the way it has behaved in Ukraine since.⁴⁴³

The two main security threats are the Russian threat and IS.⁴⁴⁴ Cameron is much more focused on the latter, partly because it reaches back to domestic extremism.⁴⁴⁵ His priorities are that the Jihadi terrorism is a kind of existential threat to the UK since it involves the country’s national identity – that there are people growing up in the UK who want to see it destroyed and who are obsessed by IS. For Cameron Putin is a lesser threat than IS.⁴⁴⁶ While Russia is not thought of as a threat to the UK per se,⁴⁴⁷ it might be a threat to its allies. Even so, the threat perception is different for those countries that, like the UK and the Baltic states, have experienced Russian intrusions into or attempts at violating their airspace, and those European states that have not, says one expert.⁴⁴⁸

The terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 are likely to strengthen the UK’s resolve that terrorism is the primary threat. After visiting Paris in the wake of the attacks Cameron employed forceful language regarding the necessity to combat IS in all areas, including military and diplomatic. He has agreed to let France use a UK base on Cyprus and he supports the international efforts opposing IS.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴² David Cameron, Speech, PM at 2015 Global Security Forum, Bratislava, 19 June, (2015).

⁴⁴³ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, 17 March, (2015), Summary, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴⁴⁹ BBC, David Cameron: World uniting to fight “evil threat” of IS, 23 November, (2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34897288>.

4.4.2 The defence budget

The UK is one of the world's ten largest economies, and larger than the Russian economy.⁴⁵⁰ In fact, given the rubel exchange rate, the Russian defence budget may be comparable to the British defence budget, according to one expert.⁴⁵¹ The British Ministry of Defence states that the UK's defence spending for 2013/2014 was 34.6 billion GBP.⁴⁵² However, the specific figure depends on how it is measured. The estimates of *The Military Balance* published annually by the International Institute for Security Studies (IISS) put the British defence budget in 2015 at 36.4 billion GBP (56.2 billion USD). Using a NATO definition it would perhaps be slightly higher.⁴⁵³ Even so defence is one of the top four areas of government spending.⁴⁵⁴

The UK is one of the few NATO members that reach the alliance's spending target, that members should spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence. Since the end of the Cold War the UK has spent more than 2 per cent of its GDP on defence. However, on the whole the percentage has fallen steadily. In 2015 it teetered on the brink of the target, and until mid-2015 it was uncertain whether the government would give continued priority to the target.⁴⁵⁵ At NATO's summit meeting in Wales in 2014 Prime Minister David Cameron associated himself with the 2 per cent goal by proposing that NATO members should reverse the trend of declining defence budgets.⁴⁵⁶ According to some experts the statement was only regarded as a PR commitment.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁰ Report for Selected Countries and Subjects, World Economic Outlook Database, IMF, April (2015). (However not in PPP for 2014 according to the World Bank.)

⁴⁵¹ Interview London 15 October 2015. Russia's defence budget was about 70 billion USD in 2014 according to IISS, *The Military Balance* 2015, p. 184.

⁴⁵² Annual Statistical Series 1 Finance Bulletin 1.03 Departmental Resources 2014 Edition, Ministry of Defence, 18 December, (2014), pp. 1 and 10.

⁴⁵³ IISS *The Military Balance*, (2016). It should be noted that the Military Balance makes two sets of budgetary figures. Apart from the one above there is one according to the NATO standard. The difference is relatively small.

⁴⁵⁴ Annual Statistical Series 1 Finance Bulletin 1.03 Departmental Resources 2014 Edition, Ministry of Defence, 18 December, (2014), pp. 1 and 10. As the fourth largest expenditure head it should be noted that defence spending was 49.9 billion GBP of a total of 664.1 billion GBP in government expenditure, but that figure includes pensions and other items the Treasury included in its accounting.

⁴⁵⁵ IISS, *The Military Balance* 2015, p. 147. Given the figures of the IISS for 2013, using the NATO definition, the UK spent 38.6 billion GBP on defence out of a GDP of 1.61 trillion, placing UK defence spending at roughly 2.4 per cent of GDP, which was well above the NATO requirement.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview 10 London 15 October 2015; and David Cameron, NATO Summit 2014: PM end of summit press conference, gov.uk, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/NATO-summit-2014-pm-end-of-summit-press-conference>.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview London 13 October 2015.

After the summit, in early 2015, there turned out to be a lack of British commitment to the target.⁴⁵⁸ There was, and remains, a debate in the UK about whether this level of spending is sustainable.⁴⁵⁹ The main reason why the target was not expected to be met in the coming years was that the government's overriding aim was to bring down the budget deficit,⁴⁶⁰ and that the 2 per cent target appeared secondary to that financial aim. In 2014 one leading British defence analyst even warned that British defence spending was heading towards 1.5–1.7 per cent of GDP by 2020/2021.⁴⁶¹

The 2 per cent target is about international politics. It sends an important signal to both friends and foes. It shows that the UK takes on responsibilities and wants to maintain a leading role within the NATO alliance. Russia's actions contributed to making the target explicit,⁴⁶² but it was another great power, the US, which brought pressure to bear on every level when the UK government was dithering.⁴⁶³ In fact, the British pledge, which eventually came in 2015, to stay with the target and increase the defence budget by 0.5 per cent above inflation for the remainder of the parliament elected in 2015, was the result of the US leaning on the UK, according to several specialists.⁴⁶⁴ If the UK had fallen short of the 2 per cent target it would have damaged "the UK's credibility as a military ally" and Russia might have interpreted it as a sign of NATO's internal weakness, according to a British analysis.⁴⁶⁵ US President Obama has also highlighted such risks.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁵⁸ Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴⁵⁹ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, p. 20; and Nicholas Watt, George Osborne pledges to meet NATO target on defence spending, *The Guardian*, 8 July, (2015). One commentator believes that the UK will reach the target of 2 per cent of GDP for 2015, but that 2016 will be critical. For a critical analysis see Malcolm Chalmers, *The Financial Context for the 2015 SDSR, The End of UK Exceptionalism?* Briefing Paper SDSR 2015: Hard Choices Ahead, RUSI, September, (2014).

⁴⁶⁰ IISS, *The Military Balance 2015*, pp. 70-71. In a sense the ambition of spending 2 per cent is a moving target. It is the result of factors beyond the reach of the defence budget, such as economic growth, which could reduce the need for cuts.

⁴⁶¹ Malcolm Chalmers, *The Financial Context for the 2015 SDSR, The End of UK Exceptionalism?*, BRIEFING PAPER, SDSR 2015: Hard Choices Ahead, RUSI, September, (2014).

⁴⁶² Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴⁶³ Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015 and Interview London 13 October 2015. See also Ministry of Defence, *Strategic Defence and Security Review: £178 billion of equipment spending*, 23 November, (2015), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strategic-defence-and-security-review-178bn-of-equipment-spending>.

⁴⁶⁵ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, pp. 16, 18 and 21. Note that the document relies in part on reporting by the *Telegraph* newspaper so the argument risks confirming itself.

⁴⁶⁶ Peter Dominiczak, David Cameron tells Barack Obama: I cannot guarantee spending 2pc of GDP on military, *The Telegraph*, 7 June, (2015),

Apart from the American pressure there are other domestic reasons for staying at 2 per cent. With a referendum on the EU looming the new government, which is now made up solely by the Conservative Party, is likely to be careful about alienating the party's backbenchers in the parliament, many of whom have been concerned about the country's defence. The pledge was a bone thrown to the euro-sceptic right wing within Prime Minister David Cameron's own party. It is important to keep the right wing on board as far as possible in view of the coming referendum on Britain's EU membership.⁴⁶⁷ The government is probably also keen not to risk the UK's leading position in NATO at the same time as the country's membership in the EU is referred to a referendum.

Eventually, instead of ensuring that the target is met year by year, the new Conservative government that came into office in May 2015 promised – after the election and forming a one-party government – to meet the target for every year until the end of the decade, in 2020.⁴⁶⁸ In fact, for the rest of the parliament elected in 2015 the defence budget will increase by 0.5 per cent above inflation yearly.⁴⁶⁹ By fulfilling the target Cameron can again call upon other NATO members to meet it, much as he did at the Wales summit in 2014.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the problem with politics is that a pledge is only a promise.

There are indications that the target is attainable only by reinterpreting some spending so that it fits with what NATO takes into account as defence spending. In fact Britain's way of meeting the 2 per cent target will probably involve changes to the accounting. Defence expenditure might include security intelligence spending and other items such as civilian pensions, peacekeeping and war

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11657909/David-Cameron-tells-Barack-Obama-I-cannot-guarantee-spending-2pc-of-GDP-on-military.html>; and Ben Farmer, Obama to Cameron: maintain UK defence spending or weaken NATO, 10 February, (2015), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/11403519/Obama-to-Cameron-maintain-UK-defence-spending-or-weaken-NATO.html>.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴⁶⁸ Summer Budget 2015: key announcements, July, (2015), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/summer-budget-2015-key-announcements>. See also Nicholas Watt, George Osborne pledges to meet NATO target on defence spending, *The Guardian*, 8 July, (2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/08/george-osborne-pledge-NATO-target-defence-spending>. Funding will also be increased or ensured for anti-terrorism and intelligence and agencies.

⁴⁶⁹ Ministry of Defence, Strategic Defence and Security Review: £178 billion of equipment spending, 23 November, (2015), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strategic-defence-and-security-review-178bn-of-equipment-spending>.

⁴⁷⁰ Re-thinking defence to meet new threats, Tenth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Defence Committee, p. 19.

pensions.⁴⁷¹ Accordingly, the definition of defence spending becomes broader; some observers even call this cheating.⁴⁷²

In the 2015 Spending Review national security and health are the top priorities and most protected from cuts.⁴⁷³ As a concept national security is more inclusive than defence. If defence items can also be labelled national security assets defence spending is likely to be safer from future cuts. However, given that the UK's GDP is rising, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne might be tempted to try and slam the brakes on defence spending.⁴⁷⁴

The defence budget is used for a full-spectrum force and a nuclear deterrent. The biggest single cost is personnel, civilian and military. That constitutes about 30 per cent of what is spent on defence. 40 per cent of spending goes to maintenance and acquisition of equipment.⁴⁷⁵ The cost of the nuclear deterrent known as Trident, a system of missiles based on submarines, is about 5-6 per cent of the defence budget according to estimates.⁴⁷⁶

The government is not bolstering a traditional defence budget only as means of political signalling. One expert argues that the prime minister has given generously to the Ministry of Defence in return for good options, for example on what to do in case of a London bombing by terrorists.⁴⁷⁷

Instead of cuts the UK is going to spend 178 billion GBP on equipment over the next decade. This the government says is 12 billion GBP more than previously planned.⁴⁷⁸ Although the 2 per cent allows the three services to have what they want there is also more money for the security efforts which Prime Minister Cameron wishes to see. He has also come out in favour of NATO members investing 20 per cent of their defence budgets in the modernisation of their equipment.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷¹ Interview London 15 October 2015. For example it is noticeably difficult to get detailed information out of the Pentagon.

⁴⁷² Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴⁷³ HM Treasury, A country that lives within its means – Spending Review 2015, July, (2015), Foreword, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁷⁵ Sam Jones, UK defence spending set for tough decisions, the Financial Times, 6 October, (2014); and Annual Statistical Series 1 Finance Bulletin 1.03 Departmental Resources 2014 Edition, Ministry of Defence, 18 December, (2014), pp. 12 and 13.

⁴⁷⁶ What is the cost of running Trident?, Full Fact, https://fullfact.org/factchecks/cost_trident_nuclear_deterrent-28864.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴⁷⁸ Ministry of Defence, Strategic Defence and Security Review: £178 billion of equipment spending, 23 November, (2015).

⁴⁷⁹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

One of the major issues that have cropped up in the last five years is Russia and the maritime context. The UK needs a new maritime surveillance aircraft, having scrapped the plans for a new one in previous reductions. One expert especially points to the need to be able to defend the Trident capability. In the coming years it is likely that the equipment programme will also result in the Royal Navy getting more funding relative to what the Army receives. Russia's attempted air intrusions are also said to be taking a lot of the RAF's capability. This could become a problem if the RAF needs to handle other significant tasks at the same time.⁴⁸⁰

Some specialists argue that there is a need to invest in countering Russia with high-end military capability since Russia builds for the full spectrum of capabilities. For example, Russia's capability at electronic warfare needs to be matched. The British Special Forces capability is also required for handling both IS and potentially Russia.⁴⁸¹ However, the likely winners in the coming years, in terms of equipment funding, are capabilities such as ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance), which is a kind of fusing of intelligence using for example surveillance from drones. Other services get just enough funding.⁴⁸²

One expert argues that in fact the Conservative campaign promises freeze 70 per cent of the budget.⁴⁸³ However, in regard to equipment there might in fact be more flexibility than meets the eye, especially over the long haul. A lot is pencilled in, but that does not mean that the contracts have been signed.⁴⁸⁴

The Conservative Party promised before the election to keep the planned increase for equipment acquisition and the planned size of the armed forces, not to reduce the Army further, and to renew the nuclear deterrent. These promises were known as the "triple lock" promise. The government also intended to put both planned new aircraft carriers into service.⁴⁸⁵ Presumably the Conservative Party believed that it would once again be part of a coalition government and would be able to negotiate away some of its costly promises. If the government has to renege on some of its election promises it may at least be less difficult to deal with internal British disappointment than with the grievances directed towards the UK from other countries if the UK fails to meet NATO's 2 per cent target.

In order to strengthen the UK's position in the defence field the government is prepared to work bilaterally with France in defence matters, including the defence

⁴⁸⁰ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁸¹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁸² Interview London 13 October 2015.

⁴⁸³ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview London 15 October 2015.

⁴⁸⁵ UK defence review: a test of strategic ambitions, Volume 21, Comment 16 – June 2015, IISS, (2015). The budget for equipment acquisition is to increase by 1 per cent in real terms.

industry. By signing treaties at Lancaster House, under the first Cameron government in 2010, the UK and France deepened their defence cooperation in a number of areas. However, France may have seen it as a stepping stone to increased cooperation within the EU, whereas the UK may have seen it as a means to thwart unwanted integration regarding European defence.⁴⁸⁶ A European defence posture would be toxic to the UK, according to one expert.⁴⁸⁷

High-level meetings in 2014 confirmed the Anglo-French cooperation in regard to the defence industry. They will work together in the procurement and support of military equipment, but also to produce specific capabilities. British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond stated in July 2014 that together the two countries were “committed to delivering effective military capabilities underpinned by cutting-edge technology, developed by strong and capable defence industries”.⁴⁸⁸

Since then the UK has elected a new government – again under Cameron – and is facing a referendum on Britain’s membership of the EU, which will have an impact on Anglo-French relations. One observer even dismisses the ongoing efforts as just talk.⁴⁸⁹ But another expert argues that the French will be even keener on involving the UK in cooperation if it leaves the EU, in part because, it is said, that France and the UK share strategic assumptions.⁴⁹⁰

The equipment priorities are clear, which is to fulfil the prime minister’s wish for much more focus on new technologies rather than on the more traditional capabilities that the services desires. What the government sees as the proper strategic outlook is shown by its strategic documents.

4.5 Trends and analysis

The UK intends to continue its great-power role in the wider world, but there are significant pitfalls, both in the short term and in the long term. The most immediate risk endangering this is the possibility of a so-called Brexit, with the UK

⁴⁸⁶ Benoît Gomis, The European implications of Franco-British defence cooperation, on European Geostrategy, 11 February, (2015), <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/02/european-implications-franco-british-defence-cooperation/>.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁸⁸ Ministry of Defence, The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP and Defence Equipment and Support, UK and France strengthen defence co-operation, News story, 15 July, (2014), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-france-strengthen-defence-co-operation>. See also Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, Ministry of Defence, The Rt Hon David Cameron MP and The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, UK and France agree closer defence co-operation, News story, 31 January, (2014), <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-france-agree-closer-defence-co-operation>.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview London 14 October 2015.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview London 14 October 2015.

withdrawing its membership in the EU. This would most likely lead to Scotland ending its union with England, as Scotland would try to remain an EU member. A Brexit could also have a significant impact on the British economy. This would mean less financing for defence, making it more difficult for the remaining parts of the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to live up to a great-power role with significant British involvement overseas.

The UK is committed to a growing defence budget in a growing economy. It emphasises that it stands by NATO's goal of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence. This means that there is enough funding both to appease those who want to see the more traditional elements of defence, represented by the three armed services, safeguarded, and for the priorities of the prime minister. The latter are spending on fighting terrorism, such as cyber and intelligence capabilities.

There will also be a new Joint Forces 2025 that builds on the previous Future Force of 2020. The new force remains expeditionary but is intended to be able to deploy quickly and possibly further. It is also intended to incorporate cyber and space capabilities, as well as a contribution from the Special Forces apart from that from elements from the three services. The force is intended to handle either a large mission or many smaller missions occurring at the same time.

National security would remain a British priority. The British effort to live up to spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence has made it possible to avoid a fight about resources between the traditional services and new capabilities, but also between the services. However, the government wants the increased funding to result in real alternative options that can be used in a crisis. If the UK were to leave the EU, the focus on fighting extremism, at home and abroad, would remain a top priority, but at the expense of other more traditional tasks. This does not mean that the UK would abandon NATO. In fact, a UK outside the EU might try to compensate for a diminished role in European affairs by strengthening its leading role in NATO. Even without a Brexit the UK might try and compensate for its lack of commitment to "ever closer union" by increased defence relations, such as developing bilateral relations with France and Germany. The government cannot risk the UK's role in NATO at the same time as it holds a referendum on the UK's EU membership, but worsening relations with NATO might inadvertently be a consequence of a Brexit.

The UK wants reform of NATO – meaning primarily that others also reach the 2 per cent of GDP spending target, and that the resulting forces can actually be used. For the UK NATO is not seen as having an exclusively European focus. However, any change to this focus could turn out to be difficult following a Brexit. European states would be less prepared to rely on the UK. If the UK leaves the EU it leaves one dimension of the European security architecture. It is likely that many states would find it less probable that the UK could be relied upon to the same extent as before in the other central part of that architecture – NATO.

Many in the UK are influenced by forecasts that claim that it will be Europe's leading economy in a few decades' time. However, while the UK is one of the world's largest economies, parts of Asia may come to outgrow the West in terms of economic growth. This might push Western countries further down the scales of economic and eventually political influence. Another problem for the internationally oriented British government and large parts of its political elite is that the British public might be far less interested in overseas missions in the future.

In the long term it might become evident that there is a simmering strategic tension in Britain's outlook and it is not the obvious one. In its strategic documents the UK points to the primary state and non-state threats – Russia and terrorism respectively. These are perhaps not the competitors for resources to the extent that might be expected, even if the traditional services are sometimes pitted against the capabilities needed to fight IS. On the whole, however, the primary threat for the UK, in the view of the British government and especially Prime Minister Cameron, is terrorism.

Russia has emerged as a problem in the last five years. Since 2015 the UK has clearly recognised it as problem. It sees that Russia is a threat to allies in Europe. However, the UK also believes that the international community has to work with Russia on a whole host of issues, where Syria might be indicative of how well this goes. Nevertheless, the UK wants Russia to be held accountable for its illegal annexation of Crimea. For the UK that action is a problem not only for Europe but also for the rules-based international order that underpins the international system, which the UK wants to preserve, since it allows for the growth and development of the British economy.

The regime in Russia is expected to remain the same, and hence a problem, for at least another ten years. Most likely the UK will refuse to recognise the annexation of Crimea and remain in favour of sanctions. However, the choices of the US will weigh heavily on how the UK chooses to handle Russia.

Russia does not constitute a Cold War threat along the lines of the 1980s. It may in some ways be a more serious problem than that, for example due to what is sometimes referred to as hybrid or ambiguous warfare, and in the sense that it might challenge NATO, below the threshold of Article 5. This kind of challenge requires some capabilities – for deterrence – that can conceivably also be used in fighting terrorism overseas, such as Special Forces, cyber capability and other high-tech tools, such as drones.

One strategic dilemma that the UK might face in the years to come is about geography. Not being held back by the Liberal Democrats, the all-Conservative government is much more likely to pursue its Gulf strategy again. With its new base in the Gulf the UK will be back “east of Suez” continuously for the first time since the 1960s – in the traditional sense of having a presence there and not only

conducting missions. A British shift away from the Atlantic towards the direction of rising Asia should not be exaggerated. But the significant investment in two aircraft carriers implies ambitions beyond Europe.

The tension already exists in British politics of whether the UK should be a great power confined to Europe or if it should try and be a key player both in Europe and beyond. Prime Minister David Cameron is adamant that it should be both. Under his leadership the link between economic and military security is very clear. The UK needs the first in order to have the latter is his message. This can lead to an eagerness to over-sell the security benefits of so-called “soft power” efforts, such that trade makes the world a safer place. Cameron still believes in soft power and continued economic globalisation, but he has changed his view of what it is possible to achieve with Russia. In any case for the UK Russia is only one problem of many, despite Russian flights close to British airspace.

A developed but ailing part of the security order is the European security architecture. The UK is realistic about Russia. It is at best a nuisance and at worst a threat to allies – but not to the UK’s territory. The UK makes efforts at reassuring allies in Eastern Europe. However, the effect of rotating a company of 100 soldiers to the Baltic or even the British participation in NATO’s new VJTF should not be overstated. The presence of the Royal Navy has also made a contribution to NATO’s naval presence in the Baltic, in line with the efforts to deter Russia. For Cameron it is likely the case that NATO is about self-interest, which is probably similar to his view of what the EU should be – and that is not an “ever closer union”.

The UK is likely to be prepared to follow the US in shifting its focus eastwards, to the Asia-Pacific. Some experts even believe that the UK would like to be able to fill a key role in the Gulf if the US is preoccupied elsewhere. However, it is perhaps more likely that the US wants the UK to focus on defence issues regarding Europe. The US is not likely to rely on any other state to manage security in the Gulf.

The US might prove very important, but not decisive, for the UK’s future focus. The UK relies on the US for much of what underpins its great-power role. It needs the US in order to update its nuclear deterrent, Trident. The UK also needs the US to put fighters on its new aircraft carriers. And ultimately a British role as a great power beyond the shores of Europe would be very difficult without working together politically and militarily with the US. If the US view of the risk of a Brexit is any guide, the US clearly sees that the UK has a great-power role to fill in Europe. And the US has a lot of leverage. For example, it made efforts on many levels to convince the UK to continue spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence. However, Cameron and US President Barack Obama share a global outlook where Russia is but one of many issues.

If the UK lives up to all the defence agreements with France, the British government – whether it is inside the EU or not – will have to continue to be

involved with efforts linked to French efforts at coordinating European security. The UK's view of Russia has altered in the wake of the annexation of Crimea, the war in Ukraine and the downing in July 2014 of flight MH17. Unlike after the Russo-Georgian war there is no effort to get back to business as usual. Russia has proved a spoiler of the international rule-based order that the UK wants to preserve. However, the UK, like other great powers, will see Russia both as a problem and as a country it is necessary to engage with on international diplomatic issues, such as the Iran negotiations. The UK is also preparing to live with a Russia that remains equally problematic for the next ten years.

In terms of the UK's immediate future Germany is of key importance, especially if the UK continues as an EU member. However, the last time the UK held a referendum on its EU membership, in 1975, shortly after joining, the country was looking up to the German and French economies. The British demands were not great. This time the UK wants to break with the idea of "ever closer union" enshrined in the processes of European integration. And the UK no longer looks up to Germany and France. In fact, unlike in the 1970s, the UK is now optimistic about its economic future. This means that the direction of the UK and its great-power ambitions might prove surprising to many, whether it stays in the EU or not.

The British government sees a strong link between its economic security and other parts of national security that involve defence efforts. The UK also has an international outlook, and is not focusing mainly on Europe. In part this is due to the developments of terrorism linked to the war in Syria. It is also linked to the British "pivot to the Gulf". However, the UK also has a strong commitment to a rules-based order and that includes, but is not limited to, the European security architecture.

5 Conclusions

This study has analysed whether and how France, the UK and Germany have reacted and remodelled their respective security and defence policies to the current security threats, especially Russia's challenge to the European security order. As the study looks at what changes – if any – the three have made to their policies it will be possible to interpret whether their security and defence priorities are converging or diverging from each other, and thereby see how they influence European security.

Questions analysed are:

- How have France, Germany and the UK judged and countered Russia's challenge to the European security order and other current security challenges?
- What are their basic understandings of their own role in international security and their role in relation to multilateral security organisations, such as the EU and NATO?
- What are their defence priorities, and have they been influenced by their judgements on Russia's challenge to the European security order or other current security threats?
- What do the reactions and choices of the three European great powers say about the future of European security, especially relations with Russia and Nordic security?

The study shows that today, none of the three European great powers views Russia as a direct and existential threat to its territory or national security. Still, the understanding among the three is that Russia has undermined the European security order and that its position has changed from being a partner to becoming an internationally unreliable actor and troublemaker. Also, they acknowledge the fact that Russia can be a threat to allies and neighbours, foremost in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea areas. In this they have recognised the fears which have been expressed by the Baltic states and Poland for years. A conflict in Europe over political and territorial integrity once again has become a possibility. Russia's actions can also cause overlapping security concerns through its international activities. In this sense the Russian involvement in Syria has caused concerns for the Western involvement in the region and the resolving of the refugee situation. The present situation, as the great powers see it, is not likely to pass either quickly or easily. On the contrary Europe is in for a long time of tension. Compared with the situation after the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, the changes in Russian behaviour and its effect on international security have been judged as substantial, and the way back to good relations as paved with more obstacles than possibilities.

Accordingly, Russia is much more of a priority in their respective foreign policies than it has been since the end of the Cold War.

Besides the threats caused by Russia, domestic and international terrorism is considered by France and the UK to be the primary threat today. For France this threat has “materialised” on several occasions in recent years and the handling of this challenge overshadows almost every aspect of the nation’s foreign and security policy. It is also the main cause of French interests and actions being directed towards Europe’s southern borders. The UK has not been directly affected by international terrorism in the same way as France, but keeps the issue high on the agenda, as a result of its international engagement. Terrorism is considered as being a threat in Germany, but plays a less prominent role in the German security debate as the country has not been subject to any direct attacks, and as domestic threats are generally discussed separately from international threats. Germany’s quest for a broad approach to security issues, its engagement in the Middle East and its role in the current refugee situation may change this.

The European great powers also share a number of problems which can cause serious turbulence for European unity and European security, even if they hold slightly different positions regarding those issues. Among them are the current refugee situation caused by the wars and misery in the Middle East and Africa, which threatens the loyalty among European states, and has increased the support for political parties with an anti-migration and anti-EU agenda. Together with a Brexit this development can undermine the EU.

The game changer for the European great powers’ relations with Russia was the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea. They all agree that they will not get militarily involved in the conflict in Ukraine but will provide political support to the government and support Ukrainian society. Instead, they underline the need for an ongoing political and diplomatic dialogue coupled with sanctions. All three are playing an active role in the handling of the situation. France and Germany have taken a key role in the diplomatic efforts and the negotiations with the parties in the war in eastern Ukraine, building on their traditional good relations with each other and with Russia. The UK has sought other ways to demonstrate its view of Russia’s aggression, for example, bringing together the EU and the US sanctions response to Russia, and is helping Ukraine by providing training for its troops. France, the UK and Germany were all behind the targeted economic sanctions against Russia, and supported the halting of Russia’s participation in several international forums, such as the G8.

The sanctions have reduced the forums for contacts between Russia and most of the Western states. All three countries do, however, agree that keeping up working

contacts with Russia is essential, while Germany especially is working to find such contacts and keep them alive.

Russia's actions has forced the great powers to act on behalf of allies, first and foremost in NATO. France, the UK and Germany are all committed to NATO's military reassurance of the alliance's Baltic, Eastern and Southern European member states and contribute to air surveillance and air policing for the Baltic alliance members, although their capabilities and political priorities in providing reassurance have been different.

The initial presence of the three in the Baltic Sea region has been through the increased air policing mission in the region, and through taking part in bilateral and multilateral exercises. The UK is planning a long-term commitment in the Baltic states, including limited land forces on a rotation basis and an almost permanently stationed naval force. A permanent stationing of troops outside Germany is considered unrealistic in Berlin, while participation in rotating multinational contingents can be a possibility. Germany's leading position in the NRF and the VJTF can be understood as a way of giving assurance to countries in Eastern Europe through avoiding coming into conflict with the NATO-Russian Founding Act and thereby without challenging Russia with permanently stationed troops or the presence of the US. It is also a way of showing the US that Europe takes a greater responsibility for its own security; a repeated demand from the US. Besides air policing and an increased presence in NATO's command structure, France has toned down its commitment due to other engagements.

The great-power roles of France, the UK and Germany rest on different prerequisites and are also differently perceived by their security elites and populations. The roles are not static and changes seem to be under way. These changes, however, are not being brought on by Russia. With Germany's strengthening political position in the EU and its international military ambitions, it has taken on new positions within diplomacy and military matters, traditionally French and British great power domains. This can leave Europe with three more equal great powers in the future, or with a new setting of powers if a Brexit weakens the UK's position.

The great-power identity is as alive as ever in France in the form of a wide sense of responsibility for international security. The UK regards itself as a great power and does not conflate its great-power role with being a European power, but sees itself as a country with global reach. Germany has partly been forced, and partly chosen, to take up a position as one of Europe's leading states. This position is closely tied to its economic position and its position in the EU, relative to other member states. However, responsibility for international security is not a part of Germany's identity and international operations do not always find the same kind

of support in German public opinion as in French or British. France and the UK are still the only nuclear powers in Western Europe, and the only ones with a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. For the moment France has the broadest nuclear arsenal, while the UK is reconsidering and developing its programme.

The three European great powers' bilateral or trilateral relations are not at the top of their agendas. They are part of other constellations in the EU and NATO, and consider their relations to the US as particularly important. Globalisation has made the Asian markets important for the economies. The Franco-German relationship is still often labelled in France and Germany as their respective most important bilateral relationships in political endeavours. It has been strengthened further by the handling of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. However, like many smaller nations in Europe, France and the UK do not trust Germany's military capabilities and therefore prefer to cooperate on these issues without Germany. The relationship between France and the UK has, however, not at all the same intensity and closeness as it did a few years ago when the Lancaster House treaties were on everyone's lips in both London and Paris. Should the UK leave the EU its relations with the other two would change in many ways. Germany and France would have to focus on bringing new energy to the European project. The Anglo-French defence relationship would be tested. But most likely the UK, even outside the EU, would continue to be a preferred partner for France in security issues. On the other hand, a Brexit would further weaken the CSDP.

A slow change in the German attitude towards military engagements and an increased awareness of the need to take responsibility is perceptible. After France's appeal to the EU for help after the deadly Paris attacks in late 2015, the German Bundestag decided on a German military support mission against IS. Germany's decision to take part is of great political significance as it is a proof of the country's solidarity with France and the UK. It is the latest German mission in a series of missions where Germany has intended to show its will to provide international stability along with others. It is likely that Germany will continue to follow this pattern. A deviation like Germany's stance on Libya in 2011 would cause many of Germany's allies to question even further its credibility as a partner in hard security. The operations in Syria can be expected to bring the three countries closer together in military cooperation: after all they are large but not comparable members of NATO. However, the three do not share the same perspectives on the problems caused by the Syrian crisis. It is likely that they can find common standpoints on countering terrorism but not on issues like the influx of refugees and illegal immigrants.

It is obvious that US-German relations have become stronger with Germany's strengthened position in Europe and its role in Ukraine. Germany has risen as the US's prime partner in the EU and its relations with Russia. How this will develop

is highly dependent on who becomes the next US president and on how US-British security relations develop. Should the UK leave the EU it would weaken its relationship with the US since it would lose important leverage in the EU, where the US would like to see the UK involved. Furthermore, it sometimes seems as if the British view is that it is up to the UK and the US to ensure that NATO is able to handle a conventional threat to defend Europe. The US is also vital for one key component of the UK's claim to be a great power – the British nuclear deterrent.

The study shows that the ongoing reforms and changes in the three great powers' defence and security policies are foremost not triggered by Russia. The French increase of the defence budget is above all a response to the threat of terrorism and wide operational engagements. The UK's decision to continue to live up to NATO's target for defence spending may have been to a certain degree influenced by Russia's behaviour, but it was the US which put the most pressure on the UK to fulfil its promise of that level of spending. Besides, maintaining and developing their nuclear arsenals is expensive.

It is also important to put the reforms and changes into perspective. The current security challenges are serious, both in the north and in the south. Moreover, for the first time in many years there is also a palpable threat to the security within the European great powers' own borders. At the same time, the indivisibility of security and the perils of a division of labour in NATO are being stressed. The latter still being almost a taboo. Even so, in practice the need for regionalization becomes more and more evident (as a means for the states to respond to the development). All the three European great powers are overstretched in some sense and no one seems to believe that the ongoing reforms will have any significant effect in the near future. The military overstretch has its roots in the far-reaching reorientation towards international operations which began in the early 2000s. The reorientation was accompanied by cuts in their military budgets which in combination have left the armed forces too small and not fit for the current European and international security situation.

The French military overstretch is also due to the willingness to contribute to hard security and counter IS. France sees no other way but to take action against the security threats. The vast commitment in international operations, and within the framework of the national Operation Sentinelle and in Syria, has already had a negative impact on several levels – equipment, personnel and budget. During the past months the pressure to act has not diminished, rather the opposite. France has tried to respond to the increased pressure by adding more funds but few seem to think that this will be enough. Additionally, France has a worse economic situation than e.g. Germany. Under more regular circumstances, a little less focus on international issues during the upcoming presidential election campaign could be expected. But it would be hard for the president to back away from the current active approach since it is directly linked to national security.

Germany's military forces are overstretched due to their commitments in Afghanistan and problems with recruiting soldiers and specialists for several positions. Moreover, there have been reports of the poor state of the military equipment in many German units, which drastically reduces its capabilities and readiness. It is fair to expect that the available equipment and soldiers are to a great extent already allocated to the NRF. Given the large size of the German arms industry and positive economic forecasts, the flaws in equipment can be overcome within a reasonable time span if the administrative procedures are there, while the lack of competent personnel will be harder to overcome. Germany lacks a military culture that facilitates recruitment, and the positive economic development forces the armed forces to compete over good labour with the civil labour market.

The UK, on the one hand, has a greater military capability than Germany and, on the other, has fewer international commitments than France and is therefore at less risk of a military overstretch. There are other issues, such as the referendum on the EU membership, that take much of the attention and energy. At the same time, the UK is committed to a rules-based order and its latest strategic documents emphasize the country's international role. Exactly what 'international' entails is not yet clear but it invites the risk of overstretch.

None of the three great powers believes that Russia's actions will change in the foreseeable future. At the same time, all three have an interest in a workable relationship with Russia. Russia is important for the energy market and as a trading partner as well as an international actor that they, despite what they think of the actions in Ukraine, need to relate to and interact with. Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and can also give legitimacy and weight in different international negotiations like the Iran negotiations and in the fight against IS. At the same time, all three states, like Europe in general, have strong domestic lobby groups, public opinions or political groupings which advocate understanding for Russia's positions or wish to downplay the security concerns in favour of trade.

France, the UK and Germany have, like many other Western states, been criticised for abandoning their criticism of Russia too fast after the Russo-Georgian war of 2008. In fact some critics have assumed that a more resolute and durable response could have hindered Russia from grabbing Crimea. With the situation in eastern Ukraine, which threatens to become a frozen conflict, and other conflicts coming up, the great powers now find themselves in a similar situation. Implementation of the Minsk agreement is a basic condition for lifting the sanctions against Russia. It can thus also be understood as a basic condition for entering onto a path to normal relations with Russia in international organisations and regarding common issues.

However, the current climate shows few signs of common ground for such relations. The annexation of Crimea will still remain an obstacle for deeper bilateral and multilateral relations. Moreover, the harshening political climate in Russia has shown the three countries that the time of hopes for political liberalisation in Russia is over. Increasing corruption and the lack of rule of law will create other obstacles in the political and economic contacts between Russia and the West. All three have an interest in enhanced working relations due to the large investments made by companies in Russia. This is especially true for Germany with the largest investments in Russia of the three. But the longer the sanctions last the less relevance the investments will have, which will reduce the influence of economic interests. All three great powers will, however, be able to resume these contacts to an extent without taking up closer political relations or letting it influence their security obligations. Germany, as well as France, is also looking for new issues and formats to maintain an ongoing dialogue with Russia.

With regard to the relationship with Russia, the prospect of a new leadership in one or several of the great powers is a factor that could affect developments. A new leadership can choose to resume cooperation or on the contrary sharpen the tone. Both France and Germany await general elections in 2017 while in the UK a referendum on EU membership will be held in the summer of 2016.

In France, although the official candidatures have not yet been launched, it would come as no surprise if the country ended up with a change of power in 2017. President Hollande has struggled with extremely low public support throughout his term in office. Neither his active foreign policy nor his handling of the terror attacks have changed this. Two of the other potential candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy and Marine Le Pen, represent other positions than Hollande on a range of foreign policy issues. With either of them in the Elysée Palace France would on the one hand have a president who was keener on deviating from the traditional line on issues like the EU and on the other hand more open to re-establishing the traditionally good relations with Russia. Both of them are more pro-Russian than many other Western politicians. According to several polls it is however Alain Juppé, former minister of foreign affairs and ex-prime minister, that so far has the largest support. For long he stood out as openly critical to Russia, in the otherwise very pro-Russian Republican Party. After the attacks in Paris in November he expressed a willingness to collaborate with Russia but also signalling that he wants to respect the official approach and the need for a united front on the issue.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ Alexandre Lemarié in *Le Monde* 20 November (2015) Alain Juppé se met dans les pas de François Hollande and Matthieu Goar in *Le Monde* 13 February (2016) Sarkozy-Juppé, un duel de styles.

Germany's position will to some extent remain even after Chancellor Merkel. A government led by the CDU, after the 2017 elections, will most probably continue the present policies on Russia, the EU and transatlantic relations. This will include lifting the sanctions on Russia only after the Minsk agreement has been implemented. Whoever succeeds Merkel will not be able to change too much since such changes would risk breaking confidence among Germany's allies in security issues and foreign policy in a way that would harm Germany's political position for a long time. In comparison to the UK and France, the demands on Germany as a security provider are higher because of its geographical proximity to Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea region and its economic resources. In order to satisfy the Russia-friendly interests in Germany, increased trade relations might be considered. A German opening towards Russia in the economic area would lead to a compartmentalisation of German policies where trade and security are not interlinked and where increased trade does not mean Germany backing away from its security commitments to its allies. However, it would lead to a delicate balancing act between security and economy, as in the case of Nordstream II.

In the UK, the efforts to bolster the UK's relations with other EU members and manage the referendum campaign on EU membership will preoccupy Prime Minister David Cameron. Settling the European question will be the top priority of British foreign relations. Regarding Russia it is not so much the next British general election that is the main concern but the US presidential elections. The UK is likely to want to see what the next American administration will make of the West's relations with Russia and try and see if British policy can continue, at least in part, to build on that.

From Sweden's perspective, it is important to consider the implications of these ongoing changes for our neighbourhood. Changing dynamics between the European great powers and the attention they pay to other security concerns in other parts of the world will have an impact on Sweden's neighbourhood. Sweden has long regarded the UK as the US' channel to Europe and as a key partner to Sweden within the EU. Today the UK has lost some of its leverage, both within the EU and in transatlantic relations. A Brexit would accentuate this further. Instead Germany and France are becoming more important for Sweden. Germany has become the US' number one political partner in Europe at a time when Sweden's cooperation with and dependence on the US in security issues is increasing. Sweden and Germany have also come to stand close in several issues on the EU agenda, such as budget discipline and recently the influx of refugees to Europe. As countries dependent on exports and on the global market they also share interests in these issues. The common stand on budget discipline is also shared by the other Baltic Sea States. France is a great power with global reach interacting with Sweden in the field, as in Mali. It is therefore likely that future operations in the Middle East or Africa involving Sweden will be led by France.

The ongoing destabilisation of Europe's southern neighbourhood and the challenges it causes through refugees, illegal immigrants and terrorism have increased the great powers' engagement in the Middle East. This may affect NATO's eastern and northern flanks since more of their already overstretched resources and attention may be redirected to the south. However, at the same time, Germany is caught up with its commitment to Northern and Eastern Europe through its geographic location, the UK's commitments to NATO have led the UK to pay increasing attention to the security of the Baltic states, and France is determined to continue its engagements in the region, although to a lesser extent than originally planned.

Common to France and the UK is that they continue to see themselves as great powers with global reach – despite their shortfalls – and find it difficult to make strategic choices, between internal and external security. At the same time Germany refuses to see itself as anything but an economic great power, while others want German leadership on issues beyond the economic realm. This cannot go on forever and is destined to create tensions in European and transatlantic cooperation. The great powers neither act in a political vacuum nor lead developments alone. They are forced to act on several levels where different dynamics interplay, where a Brexit, an approaching crisis in Libya, or a changed leadership in the US or in a major European country can once again change the conditions and realities. Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea, have been a wake-up call for the European great powers. But as Europe is rising, the telephone will keep on ringing.

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Interviews

Interviews in Berlin with persons at

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Defence

The Swedish Embassy

Interviews in Brussels with persons at

European External Action Service (EEAS), the Russia division

European External Action Service (EEAS), the Eastern Partnership division

Friends of Europe

German delegation to NATO

Permanent representation of France to the EU

Permanent representation of Germany to the EU
Permanent representation of Sweden to the EU
Permanent representation of the UK to the EU
Permanent representation of France to NATO
Permanent representation of Sweden to NATO
Private Office of the Secretary General, NATO HQ
Swedish delegation to NATO
Swedish permanent representation to the EU
UK delegation to NATO

Interviews in London with persons at

CER (Center for European reform)
Chatham House (The Royal Institute of International Affairs)
FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) officials
IISS (the International Institute for Strategic Studies)
LSE (London School of Economics)
RUSI (Royal United Services Institute)
The Swedish Embassy

Interviews in Paris with persons at

FRS (Fondation pour la recherche stratégique)
IFRI (Institut français des relations internationales)
L'Opinion
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The Ministry of Defence
The Swedish Embassy

Interviews in Riga with persons at

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Latvian foreign policy correspondent

Interviews in Stockholm with

German foreign policy correspondent

German visiting researcher on foreign and security policy

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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Defence

ICDS (International Centre for Defence and Security)

Interviews in Vilnius with persons at

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This study analyses whether and how the three European great powers – France, the UK and Germany – have reacted to and remodelled their respective security and defence policies to the current security threats, especially Russia's challenge to the European security order. It also gives valuable insights on how the three view their role in international security landscape and within multilateral organisations, such as the EU and NATO.

The study has been produced within the Nordic and Transatlantic Security Programme (NOTS) at FOI. NOTS studies security and military-strategic developments within three main areas: the Nordic and Baltic regions, the European major military powers and the foreign-, defence- and security policy of the United States. Defence economics, defence reform, capabilities and conditions for military operations in Northern Europe are also included in the field of study. Exercise patterns, different countries and relevant multilateral security organisations (NATO and EU) means of action of relevance to security in the Northern European region and possible consequences for Sweden also forms part of the studies.

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