



# Developments in security policy: European and US considerations regarding the war in Iraq

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## 1. Introduction

This report is one of the reports for the project ‘Issues in contemporary transatlantic security policy’ that is funded by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. This part of the project aims to analyze European and American considerations with regard to the wars in Ukraine, Iraq and Syria. The analysis is undertaken in three different reports, one for each of these wars. This report covers the war in Iraq. When studying European and American considerations we have in particular paid attention to national discourses, goals and solutions, as well as the actions taken by France, Germany, the UK and the US. The analysis has primarily been undertaken from a national perspective; for each war, we study the countries separately, but the analyses also cover consequences for relations in security policy and the role of NATO and other organizations. The analyses in the reports focus on 2015 but cover the years 2013 or 2014-2015 with slightly different emphases depending on the political development.

In a report written for the Swedish Ministry of Defence in 2013 a number of trends in contemporary security and defence policy were identified. The analysis made in this report will be discussed in relation to some of these trends. The first trend to be discussed again is insecurity about the change in US foreign and security policy after the so-called pivot towards Asia. However, this was before the war in Ukraine and before international re-engagement in Iraq and engagement in the war in Syria. The second trend to be discussed again is that of increased bilateral co-operation, which was partially a consequence of another trend: that of the increased influence of the economy in defence policy. Increased bi-lateral co-operation was discussed in the report from 2013 as a functional trend aimed at increasing efficiency in defence co-operation that mainly had cost reduction as its driving force. The third trend to be discussed again in this report is the diversified role of NATO, which in addition to its traditional role as a regional security organization with territorial defence as its main function, has developed into a global security organization with international military operations as an additional function. In addition, the previous report also discussed the fact that these trends revealed challenges to political leadership in several ways. Domestically, because when aspects other than security and defence, such as the economy, become important for policy development, more actors are involved in policy making. Internationally, one reason for lack of leadership in international organizations could be that the cost of leadership has increased at the same time as trends have been to increase bilateral co-operations.

This report first analyzes the different countries’ political discourse, goals and solutions, as well as actions taken with regard to Iraq in 2014–2015. A short summary for each country is found on the last page of the respective chapter. In the concluding chapter a summary of the

responses is presented. In this chapter the results are also discussed in relation to the trends presented above.

Increased international engagement in Iraq began in the summer of 2014. This was not long after the withdrawal of troops from the previous war. The US had only finished its withdrawal of troops in December 2011. However, the Iraqi government had not managed to be inclusive enough to hold the country together. This provided an opportunity for IS/Daesh to grow. When IS/Daesh became stronger, the Iraqi government did not manage to protect Christians and Yazidis, for example, from violence. The fall of Mosul in June 2014 caused alarm in several European states as well as in the US. The Iraqi army struggled to protect its citizens and therefore the Iraqi government invited the United States to assess the Iraqi forces and the threat posed by IS (US Department of Defense 2014). On June 16<sup>th</sup> 2014, the US President authorized a small number of troops (approximately 275) to provide support and security for US personnel and the US embassy in Baghdad (Office of the Press Secretary 2014a). The US then increased its presence on several occasions, culminating in airstrikes by the US in August 2014. France was the first European country to follow suit with airstrikes, Germany decided on military support, and the UK started airstrikes in the autumn.

## 2. France

### Political discourse

In the early stages of the rise of IS in Iraq (2014), French foreign minister Fabius described the situation as ‘very troubling’, posing a ‘serious threat to the entire region’s stability’ (France Diplomatie, 2014a). It was a triple threat, aimed at Iraq, the world and France said Prime Minister Valls, adding to the gravity of the situation (Prime Minister Valls, 2014a). The French officials spoke bluntly about IS/Daesh describing it as a ‘criminal, ultra-violent and sectarian organization’, an organization associated with: ‘looting, massacres and decapitations’ (Prime Minister Valls, 2015). In August 2014, the French foreign minister called on the High Representative of the European Union, Catherine Ashton, to urgently gather the EU member states in order to take action against the brutalities that IS/Daesh was seen inflicting on the Iraqi population and the Christian and Yezedi minorities (Foreign minister Fabius, 2014a).

Moreover, France saw the situation as a threat to Iraq’s sovereignty, unity and integrity (France Diplomatie, 2014b) – to its survival as a state. Added to this, France recognized the difficulties within the Iraqi army and its inability to counter the threat from IS (Foreign minister Fabius, 2014b). When the call for assistance came from the Iraqi government, Prime Minister Valls expressed a French commitment to helping Iraq in preventing its disintegration and thereby also to ‘preventing destabilization of the region’ (Prime Minister Valls, 2014a).

It was France’s view that the Al-Maliki government had failed to include the various political factions in its state-building and governance and that this was especially unfortunate since it would facilitate the mobilization of people to terrorist groups on sectarian grounds (Embassy of France in London, 2014a). France therefore assisted in every process that was considered to be beneficial to Iraqi unity and inclusiveness and supported the formation of a new Iraqi government with Kurdish and Sunni ministers (France Diplomatie, 2014c). To further strengthen the unity among non-Daesh parties in the region, France viewed Iran as a contributory force, in particular by virtue of its influential and powerful Shia majority (Foreign minister Fabius, 2014c and 2015a).

The situation in Iraq, as a result of the spread of the IS/Daesh was also perceived by France as a threat to global peace and security (France Diplomatie, 2014d; France Diplomatie 2014e; France Diplomatie, 2014f) and to overall European ‘strategic interests and liberties’. Therefore, President Hollande welcomed the decision taken by President Obama on US involvement in the fight against IS/Daesh, with targeted airstrikes and humanitarian aid operations, in what Hollande described as an action in ‘pressing’ and ‘urgent’ circumstances (President Hollande,

2014). During the ‘Paris International Peace and Security in Iraq’ conference, France along with 25 countries from Europe, North America, Africa and Asia reaffirmed the significance of international actors for an improved situation in Iraq. This involved recognizing the United Nations as ‘coordinating and facilitating international assistance to the Iraqi Government’ and the European Union and the Arab Leagues as ‘long term strategic partners to Iraq’ (France Diplomatie, 2014f).

France also perceived the situation in Iraq as a threat to the French national security and described the French help to Iraq as a contribution to French national security (Prime Minister Valls, 2014a). The Daesh terrorist attacks in Paris (France Diplomatie, 2015b) against the journal Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015 (Charlie Hebdo attacks) and the coordinated attacks against a number of places in Paris on November 13, 2015 significantly influenced the French perception of the Iraqi situation. It was strongly felt that France’s engagement in Iraq was one of the major causes of the attacks, and Iraq was also known to serve as a safe haven for Daesh. In view of this, President Hollande stated that the process of fighting Daesh and protecting the French people meant acting at the ‘root of the evil: in Syria, in Iraq’ (President Hollande, 2015). After the November 2015 terrorist attacks, the French President thanked the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, for her offer to have Germany participate in protection, reconnaissance and logistics missions in Iraq and Syria. The offer was interpreted as a ‘very significant contribution’ showing how close France and Germany were and it was hoped that other European countries would follow suit (France Diplomatie, 2015a).

The situation in Iraq was also perceived as threatening to French security in that it was connected to the fact that French nationals had travelled to Iraq to fight with Jihadist groups, and possibly might return to commit terrorist attacks (Embassy of France in London, 2014a). Prime Minister Valls stated that there were around 3000 natives or foreigners residing in France that had to be kept under surveillance due to their connection with terrorist networks in Syria and Iraq (Prime Minister Valls, 2015).

### **Goals and solutions**

France had clear and firmly set goals in terms of the situation in Iraq, the overall outcome of the conflict and the future of the Iraqi state. Fighting terrorism was stated to be one of the ‘*raison d’être* of France’s foreign policy’ (Fabius, 2015b) in the Iraq case referring especially to the goals of weakening the capacities of and destroying the terrorist groups active in Iraq with emphasis on IS/Daesh (France Diplomatie, 2015c):

- ‘Sustainably defeating ISIS beyond the ongoing military campaign’ (France Diplomatie, 2015c) in accordance with UNSCR 2170 (Fabius, 2014e); which also meant removing IS/Daesh from the regions in which it had established itself in Iraq (one of the goals agreed at the September 15, 2014 Paris Peace Conference, together with another 26 countries and three international organizations: UN, EU, the Arab League) (France Diplomatie, 2014f);
- Preventing violence towards minorities (France Diplomatie, 2014a), ensuring the rights of Christian communities in the Middle East (France Diplomatie, 2014g) and other groups in Iraq;
- ‘Formation of a unity government that will work toward an inclusive political solution that is acceptable to all components of the Iraqi population and respects the rights of everyone’ (France Diplomatie, 2014b).

France considered two general sets of solutions to the situation in Iraq. First, political solutions involving the Iraqi government and all the political entities in Iraq with help from the international community including France. Second, military solutions involving both airstrikes oriented towards IS/Daesh elements on the ground and direct support to the Iraqi army, the Kurdish forces and other sectarian forces on the ground that were ready to fight ISIS (France Diplomatie, 2014f).

It should be noted that France was actively pursuing solutions that were coordinated with actors such as the United States and other partners of key importance for France. On the political level, France advocated several different solutions:

- Protection of the local populations with emphasis on the Christian minorities by the Iraqi Federal Government and the Kurdish regional government (France Diplomatie, 2014a);
- Starting an inclusive political process as the only sustainable way for stabilization of the Iraqi state (Embassy of France in London, 2014c) according to the needs of all ‘components of the Iraqi population’ (France Diplomatie, 2014h; France Diplomatie, 2014g) that will lead to ‘broad-based government’ (Fabius, 2014f);

- Development of a national guard force to ‘bring all armed groups under state control’ (France Diplomatie, 2015c) and general reform and modernization within the Iraqi security sector (Prime Minister Valls, 2015);
- Engagement of political and religious leaders in a constructive dialogue that will lead to a political solution to the crisis (France Diplomatie, 2014i);
- Mobilization of the international community to protect the minorities threatened by ISIS (France Diplomatie, 2014j), particularly the UN Security Council (Fabius, 2014);
- Decreasing the flow of foreign fighters and cutting Daesh access to funds, while countering their criminal ideology (France Diplomatie, 2015c);
- Active engagement from the European Union to provide ‘all possible means of assistance – notably of a humanitarian nature – in response to this catastrophic situation’ (Fabius, 2014a; France Diplomatie, 2014f);
- Rapid reforms and reconciliation efforts (France Diplomatie, 2015c);
- Formation of a specific global fund for the reconstruction of the areas affected by the atrocities of ISIS (France Diplomatie, 2014f).

In terms of military solutions, France was initially oriented towards advocating solutions designed to help the forces fighting on the ground, and averse to direct military engagement by its own forces. However, later on, France realized the need of military involvement and included military actions and military assistance in its range of possible solutions ‘in line with the needs expressed by the Iraqi authorities’ (France Diplomatie, 2014e; France Diplomatie, 2015c). These solutions included airstrikes but ruled out French troops on the ground (Prime Minister Valls, 2014a).

### **Actions**

In relation to its goals in the Iraq crisis, France undertook three general courses of action: (1) political and diplomatic, (2) military and security and (3) humanitarian actions. For example, France was active within the UN Security Council to draw attention to the issue of the humanitarian disaster in Iraq and to ask for coordinated actions by the international bodies and partners of France to protect the vulnerable Iraqi population (France Diplomatie, 2014j). Moreover, together with the President of Iraq, French President Hollande initiated and hosted the International Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq in September 2014, an event designed to support Iraq in its antiterrorist efforts, support its integrity, and look for coordinated

solutions as well as actions regarding the situation (France Diplomatie, 2014f). Alongside this, France was active within the EU, asking EU bodies, such as the Foreign Affairs Council, to take decisions at the European level (Embassy of France in London, 2014d), and taking part in the creation of the ‘EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Daesh Threat’ adopted by the European Council in March, 2015 (France Diplomatie, 2015b). Additional diplomatic and political actions included:

- Drafting and proposing, together with Iraq, a resolution in the Human Rights Council ‘establishing a fact-finding mission by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights tasked with investigating the atrocities perpetrated by Daesh’ (France Diplomatie, 2014k);
- France acted at the United Nations with an initiative for IS/Daesh to be registered in the list of terrorist organizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014);
- Initiating a meeting in Paris for the Small Group of the Global Coalition to counter Daesh to discuss the situation in Iraq and Syria. the operations of the Coalition, the process of stabilization of the liberated areas, the safe return of refugees and displaced persons and the protection of cultural heritage. (France Diplomatie, 2015c);
- France played major role in creating Resolution 2199 which is a resolution encouraging the UN member states to take additional measures against the financing of terrorism. France also co-drafted the Emerging Terrorist Financing Risks study together with the United States (France Diplomatie, 2015b);
- In September 2015, France together with Jordan chaired the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East (France Diplomatie, 2015c) and drafted the Paris Action Plan, a non-binding document that ‘identifies concrete measures to be implemented in order to assist and protect persecuted populations in the Middle East’ (France Diplomatie, 2015d);
- One week after the Paris attacks on November 13, 2015, France voted for UNSC Resolution 2249, a resolution that called on the international community to take all necessary measures against Daesh and other armed Al-Qaeda affiliated groups with emphasis on their activities in Iraq and Syria (France Diplomatie, 2015b).

Following a request from the Iraq government on 18 September 2014, France authorized Operation Chammal, an operation oriented towards providing air support to the Iraqi

government to fight IS/Daesh (Ministère de la Défense, 2015a). As of the end of 2015, Operation Chammal in Iraq and Syria included: deployment of approximately 3500 military personnel, one aero-naval group, one frigate, 42 airplanes (Rafale (24), Mirage (6), Super Etendard (8)), two early-warning E2C Hawkeye aircraft, one transportation and one patrol aircraft (Ministère de la Défense, 2015b). On February, 2015, in response to the Charlie Hebdo attacks on January 7, 2015, the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* was called into action as part of the coalition led by the United States (Gouvernement français, 2015). Since September 2015 Operation Chammal has been extended to targets in Syria (France Diplomatie, 2015e).

In order to increase the operational capability of the Iraqi army and the Kurdish fighters to fight back against Daesh and the other Al-Qaeda affiliated groups, France provided weapons, training and advice (President Hollande, 2014; Embassy of France in London, 2014d; Prime Minister Valls, 2015; Ministère de la Défense, 2015a).

Finally, in line with its objective to minimize the consequences of the humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq, France provided humanitarian aid to the Iraqi civilians, focusing its assistance on the minority groups that suffered the most from the attacks conducted by IS/Daesh (Fabius, 2014h). The humanitarian aid was often delivered through humanitarian air drops and coordinated with other countries. It included various supplies in the form of food, medication, tents, water treatment, blankets and kitchen equipment (France Diplomatie, 2014l; Fabius, 2014h; France Diplomatie, 2014m).

## Summary

At the beginning of the war in Iraq, French **political discourse** mainly revolved around the domestic problems in Iraq and the need for a government including all major political factions. As the war went on, Iraq's fragile unity was further destabilized and this also posed threats to regional stability, to global peace and security, and to France itself. The threat against France was primarily in the form of French jihadists participating in the war and then returning to France.

With regard to the **goals and solutions** presented, an Iraqi state including all the major political factions in its governance structures was presented as a objective. In order to achieve this several solutions were presented: state-building and security sector reform initiatives, as well as reaching out to political and religious actors. In order to create security in the short term, military solutions were presented along with diplomatic measures to be undertaken by the UN, the EU and other such international actors

When it came to French **action**, this revolved around three areas: diplomacy, military operations, and humanitarian aid. France was active in international organizations and other international collaborations, it engaged in military airstrikes, provided weapons, training and military advice to the Iraqi forces. It also provided humanitarian assistance.

### 3. Germany

#### Political discourse

By the time the Iraqi government officially requested a US intervention to help fight IS/Daesh on June 18, 2014, German official statements expressed deep worry over the situation in Iraq. Foreign Minister Steinmeier warned that IS/Daesh was not only threatening the unity of Iraq, but posed a threat to the entire region (Tageszeitung Kurier, 2014). Further, he clarified that the situation was part of a region-wide problem where engagement by regional actors, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, was crucial (Bild, 2014).

Defence Minister von der Leyen argued along the same lines: When meeting her US colleague, she stated that the US and Germany agreed that IS/Daesh posed a threat to Iraq and the entire region, and acknowledged the region's widespread turmoil was in need of solutions (BMVG, 2014a). However, Steinmeier stressed that Europe should have no illusion of replacing the US in the Middle East, and argued that close transatlantic cooperation was therefore needed (Nelles and Weiland, 2014). Later in June, Steinmeier added that it was in everyone's interest to prevent ISIS from establishing a 'brutal caliphate', but reiterated that a solution had to come 'from within' Iraq (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014a).

Throughout the summer, Germany stayed out of the conflict, however. Steinmeier repeatedly stated that there could only be a political solution to the conflict, and in mid-August Germany still focused on delivering humanitarian aid. Germany thus rejected the idea of a military solution and refused to participate in military intervention or the armament of military forces (Buchsteiner, 2014). However, Germany recognized that there was a legal basis for US action in Iraq (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a).

This changed when the destiny of the Yazidi population became known. Due to 'the dramatic situation' the government announced on August 13 that it was 'ready to use legal and political manoeuvring room' to reassess its position on deliveries to Iraq. It was highlighted that this was done in close consultation with European and transatlantic partners, and that Germany's emphasis remained on the humanitarian aspect (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b).

Germany's rhetoric again changed after EU foreign ministers agreed at a meeting on August 17 to allow member states to deliver weapons to Iraq. Steinmeier portrayed IS/Daesh as ruthless, saying that 'the ISIS terrorists are using unimaginable brutality,' and 'ISIS has already destabilized Syria and Iraq, and its goal is to create a terror state beyond the current borders of the Middle East. Without a doubt, ISIS would try and spread the terror to other parts of the world as well, including to Europe. Therefore, it lies in the interest of Europe to stop the

advances of ISIS in Iraq.’ The minister was convinced the Iraqi leadership would succeed in this, provided it received help from the international community (Backhaus and Uhlenbroich, 2014).

On August 20, the government decided to boost its support for Iraq by sending military equipment to the Kurdish regional government. Informing the Bundestag, von der Leyen argued that ‘ISIS through its brutal action has unleashed a humanitarian catastrophe, but also threatens the very existence of the people living in the region and the refugees’ (BMVG, 2014b). Steinmeier argued in his address that the Germans could not ignore the humanitarian catastrophe and the threat that Iraq posed to the entire region. Both ministers mentioned that the German government was in favour of joining its European partners in providing weapons, but stressed that this would happen after close consultations with transatlantic partners and the Iraqi government, and only if it was in accordance with international law (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014b).

The announcement by the German government caused a debate on the principles of German foreign policy. Steinmeier argued that ‘this is neither a paradigm change nor a diversion from a solution-oriented foreign policy,’ but rather a responsible solution to a situation that threatened common values and interests. The minister stressed that this decision stemmed from Germany’s size and not from global power ambitions (Siebert, 2014). Arguing along the same lines, von der Leyen claimed that the decision did not reflect a change in foreign policy, but a development of German security policy. Further, she stated that international expectations on Germany were high, and that due to its economic and political weight, it needed to act. Events unfolding over the past year had changed the preconditions for German foreign policy, and the case of Iraq posed a test for it (Dausend and Hildebrandt, 2014). Addressing the German ambassadors in late August, Steinmeier argued that an ‘active German foreign policy is not a “nice-to-have”, but an existential necessity’ (Steinmeier, 2014a). Minister of the Interior de Maizière acknowledged that the decision to deliver military equipment might heighten the level of security threats, but said that this should not be a benchmark for political decisions. According to him, ‘Germany is never neutral’ (Backhaus and Eichinger, 2014).

On August 31 Germany announced its delivery of weapons to northern Iraq and from that point on, the threat posed by ISIS stayed the focus of the debate. When announcing the decision, Steinmeier repeated that ISIS endangered the safety of people in the region, and also posed an existential threat to Northern Iraq, the Iraqi state, and the whole region, which could have consequences for Germany and Europe. Therefore, ‘the international community must help those in Northern Iraq who are willing and able to fight back against ISIS by providing them

humanitarian assistance, but also military equipment' (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014b). In a joint article, Steinmeier and Vice-Chancellor Gabriel wrote that helping people in need requires a safe environment. Since ISIS was superior to the Kurds in terms of weapons, the German government considered it necessary to provide the Kurds with not only humanitarian, but also military assistance. They recognized that the weapons risked ending up in the wrong hands, but argued that it was imperative to save human lives and guarantee security in the region (Steinmeier and Gabriel, 2014). In October, Merkel stressed the need to assist the Iraqi government, since the Kurdish Peshmerga was 'fighting with scarce resources' against 'ruthless and heavily armed ISIS terrorists' (Merkel, 2014). However, it was stressed that the arming of the Peshmerga needed to be seen as part of a broader political strategy for the situation in Iraq, and did not in itself present a solution to the problem (Steinmeier, 2014b).

Following the decision on weapons delivery, the arguments of both the transatlantic and European partnerships became prominent. When addressing the Bundestag, Merkel placed Germany firmly within the Western alliances; she highlighted German contributions to NATO, and stated that the fight against ISIS would be successful in the long run thanks to the alliance consisting of the US, the EU and partners in the Arabic region (Merkel, 2014). In early September, Steinmeier wrote that Germany could not accomplish much alone, and 'joint action with our European and transatlantic partners remains the cornerstone of German foreign policy' (Steinmeier, 2014c). The following month, he warned that transatlantic relations were no longer self-evident, although they were needed more than ever to respond to the conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood. Steinmeier argued that recent conflicts in Europe had shown how well the US and Germany complement each other in the international arena in taking action and asserting influence over their partners. Unless action was taken, 'the transatlantic friendship will, at the end, be nothing more than a community of interests' (Die Zeit, 2014). Giving a speech on the topic *How to defend 'The West'*, von der Leyen highlighted the importance of European unity in addressing current conflicts, and argued that the ongoing wars tested Europe's ability to act jointly and solve crises together (von der Leyen, 2015a). However, during the autumn of 2014 it was mostly the US and France that were referred to when touching upon wars, while other European countries were mentioned in the context of non-military issues, such as handling the refugee situation.

On January 15 2015, the German government announced the deployment of a military training mission to Iraq. It was highlighted that the mission was agreed upon following a request from the Iraqi government, and was to be conducted together with international but mainly European partners. Steinmeier argued that the mission was needed to help the Iraqi government

stabilize the situation and above all to provide safety for the locals as well as the refugees in the region (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015a). At this point, Steinmeier asserted that ‘the world is out of joint, and we are looking for a new global order’. The deployment of the military training mission was considered the most Germany could do, since there seemingly was no exit strategy from a military intervention, and the alliances on the ground remained unclear (Machado, 2015).

This event again sparked debate on German military involvement; Germany’s role as an international actor, and the nature of IS/Daesh were frequently discussed. Justifying German foreign policy coherence, von der Leyen argued that realities on the ground enabled military assistance for the Peshmerga but not for Ukraine. According to the minister, the military arsenal of ISIS was assessable, while this was not the case with Russia. Further, there was dialogue with Russia and thereby the possibility to find a peaceful solution. This was not the case with ISIS, since the terror organization ‘beheads, but does not negotiate’ (Fischer et al., 2015). Merkel said that reacting to the cruelty caused by actors such as ISIS was ‘a commandment of men as well as a German interest’, and that stabilizing the region was in the country’s general security interest. However, Merkel highlighted the humanitarian aspect, and said that ‘development and security must go hand in hand’ (Merkel, 2015).

The transatlantic bond remained important, and when meeting with Obama in February 2015, Merkel stated that the US-German alliance would stand firm despite some disagreements, since ‘this partnership stands out above the rest’. Despite Germany’s commitment to its European partners, the US still was considered indispensable to Germany (Die Bundesregierung, 2015). This commitment to the transatlantic partnership was considered important because of the shared values of the partners within the community and the accountability this provided (von der Leyen, 2015b). However, there was a concurrent distancing from Russia, since ‘we know that at the moment, Russia no longer is our partner, however we need to be careful not to let it become our enemy’ (Remme, 2015).

In the spring of 2015, less attention was paid to Iraq, and when mentioned, solidarity and humanitarianism in the fight against terror were highlighted. On May 26, Germany reiterated its support for the global anti-ISIS coalition, since ‘Germany will not leave alone those states that have taken up millions of refugees. We want to contribute to a region where people can live in freedom and peace, and human rights are respected’ (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015b). Simultaneously, ISIS was described as a terrorist organization, and in July, Steinmeier stated that Germany was not participating in a war between the West and Islam, but took responsibility and ‘stood up against the terror’ (Hartvig, 2015). Addressing the Bundestag in September,

Merkel said that domestic politics, development politics and foreign policy were intertwined at a level previously unseen; this was especially the case with the terrorist organization ISIS, as its fighters also were of German origin. Merkel remarked that there was no certainty of victory, but she praised Germany for having taken on leadership on several levels in difficult times and living up to its responsibilities. Iraq was briefly on the agenda towards the end of 2015 when the military intervention in Syria was debated, since it was presented as a way to support not only France, but also Iraq in fighting ISIS (Steinmeier, 2015a).

### **Goals and solutions**

Early German reactions to the Iraqi requests emphasized that there needed to be a political solution to the conflict. According to Steinmeier, the main priority had to be to avoid another proxy war on Iraqi soil. In this endeavour, Iraq had to solve its domestic problems, and priorities were to manifest the central authority of the state and to form an inclusive government that allowed for all currently excluded segments of society to participate in the political process (Tageszeitung Kurier, 2014). Following this logic, von der Leyen stressed that there was a need for a region-wide solution including regional actors ranging from the neighbouring countries to the Arab League (BMVG, 2014a). Steinmeier also stressed the importance of dealing with ISIS as a distinct Sunni group, as well as withdrawing its support on the ground (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014a).

In late July, Germany's policy was clarified: the main objectives for Iraq were to establish an inclusive government; to destroy ISIS support channels; and to help the neighbouring states in dealing with the refugee situation. Further, Steinmeier suggested the creation of a new order for the Middle East that addressed the changed security interests in the region. He also voiced his support for a Middle Eastern common security architecture (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014c). However, Steinmeier maintained that there could only be a political solution to the conflict and thereby rejected the idea of a military solution (Buchsteiner, 2014).

When the German government decided in August on an assistance package to Iraq, it was emphasized that Germany's main objective was to relieve the humanitarian suffering in the region. Von der Leyen stated that the support provided by the German government contributed to easing the humanitarian catastrophe, and was 'embedded in a political process that aims at stabilizing Iraq in such a way that all ethnic groups are included, and accompanied by diplomatic efforts on an international level to create sustainable peace in the region' (BMVG, 2014c). This decision to provide assistance was, however, surrounded by confusion as there

was great variation among the ministers' media statements on what the aims and limits of German engagement were (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b).

Simultaneously, an international aspect was added to German policy goals. The international community was urged to come up with a politically embedded strategy that comprised international humanitarian aid, but also military assistance. Similar to the German goals, this strategy comprised creating a viable and inclusive Iraqi government, and international measures to stem the flows of money and foreign fighters to ISIS. In addition, it included a call for a regional joint approach to fighting ISIS, and an proactive ideological debate within the Muslim community to strip ISIS of its religious legitimacy (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014d).

## **Actions**

According to von der Leyen, the main objectives for the international community were to maintain the integrity of states and strengthen governments by fostering inclusion in policy making. The minister also sought action on an EU level to address the turmoil in the EU's neighbouring regions, and called for closer coordination among the member states in terms of security and defence issues (Dausend and Hildebrandt, 2014). As part of this international approach, Germany actively supported work in international settings and as part of this, restoring the transatlantic relationship became central. Referring to the coolness of US-German relations, especially the NSA affair, in October Steinmeier encouraged dialogue on issues that constrained the relationship: 'on shared values and mutual trust, on the balance between security and freedom, as well as on the future goals on both sides of the Atlantic' (Die Zeit, 2014). In December, Germany joined the counter-ISIL coalition which had as its goal 'to degrade and defeat ISIL/Daesh' by five measures: 'supporting military operations, capacity building, and training; stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; cutting off ISIL/Daesh's access to financing and funding; addressing associated humanitarian relief and crises; and exposing ISIL/Daesh's true nature (ideological delegitimization)' (US Department of State, 2014). There was also an increased interest in NATO, and in February 2015 von der Leyen stated that 'one of the central strategic tasks for the French–German tandem is to keep the US engaged for and in Europe', and to keep the West united (von der Leyen, 2015c).

Another central issue was German leadership, which the government openly started addressing in 2015. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in February, von der Leyen said that Germany took on 'leadership from the middle', which referred to cooperating with partners and optimizing the use of resources (von der Leyen, 2015d). In March, she called upon

‘the West’ to take up leadership and find political solutions to the conflicts. In this endeavour, she reiterated Germany’s strong support for its partnerships within NATO, the OSCE, and the EU. For the latter, she aimed at ‘strengthen[ing] our tools in the field of security and defence policy: we have to establish new priorities in the Common Security and Defence Policy’ (von der Leyen, 2015b).

Along with this increased security focus, Germany stayed committed to its policy on providing humanitarian assistance, however. In March, von der Leyen reiterated that despite the fight against ISIS, Germany’s main priority remained to help those who had fled ISIS and relieve human suffering (Remme, 2015). The same month, Germany, through the coalition against ISIS, engaged in stabilization efforts aiming at reconstruction work in the areas reconquered from ISIS. The main objectives were to provide public security and cover infrastructure needs, but also to prevent old confessional lines from being redrawn. Further, Steinmeier stressed the need to help the Iraqi government better meet the needs of the locals, as well as to inform the international community on the importance of the humanitarian sector (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015c).

However, in 2015 the fight against ISIS took precedence on the Iraq agenda, although the domestic political process was still supported. At a G7 meeting in April, the participating foreign ministers stated that ‘We commit to continue our support for Iraq’s unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity through political and economic cooperation and military means to enable Iraq to degrade and defeat ISIL/Daesh. We encourage all Iraqis to actively work for national reconciliation and encourage Prime Minister al-Abadi to continue the path of reforms to achieve rapidly effective and comprehensive inclusiveness’ (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015d). In November a six-point counter-ISIS strategy was presented, emphasizing both military and political aspects. This strategy included first, a united international alliance against ISIS; second, military strength to fight to weaken ISIS and retake occupied areas; third, fight ISIS on all levels, including approaches such as hindering foreign fighters from joining, and removing ISIS propaganda from the internet; fourth, include regional partners in the fight to avoid an image of Western crusaders; fifth, focus on reconstruction and resilience efforts; and sixth, address radicalization and extremism (von der Leyen, 2015e).

Following the Iraqi request for help, Germany stressed the need to find a political solution to the conflict but soon reassessed its realm of options. The German government first focused on providing humanitarian aid, and in mid-August reiterated its commitment to Germany’s policy of not sending weapons to conflict zones (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a). However, only days later, the government announced it was following developments closely and was assessing

the need for other assistance on a daily basis (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b). On August 20, Germany decided to provide Iraq with both humanitarian aid worth EUR 50 million, and also non-lethal military goods and training. The latter included sending military personnel to Iraq to provide weapons training to the Peshmerga, and providing training for Peshmerga soldiers in Germany (Auswärtiges Amt, 2014b). However the cabinet remained open to sending military equipment to the Kurdish regional government at a later date, and two days later unilaterally decided to do so (Die Bundesregierung, 2014c). This delivery included 16,000 assault rifles, anti-tank weapons, and armoured vehicles (Drennan, 2014).

In November 2014, the delivery of weapons ended, but Germany stayed committed to assisting Iraq and fighting ISIS. In early December, Germany contributed to establishing the counter-ISIL coalition that aimed at degrading and defeating ISIS. Within this forum, Germany highlighted the need for humanitarian assistance to those communities hosting Syrian refugees as a way to maintain regional stability (US Department of State, 2014). Following a request from the Iraqi government, in January 2015 the German government proposed to send a military training mission to Iraq together with its international partners (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015a). This was approved by parliament, although the opposition argued it lacked constitutional grounding. According to the German constitution, missions have to be conducted in the framework of collective security under the leadership of the UN, or mandated by the EU or NATO. The Iraq mission was the first not to be conducted within either of these frameworks (Gebauer, 2015). In October, von der Leyen announced that the support to Iraqi security forces would be continued in 2016 (BMVG, 2015).

In addition to military training, Germany was also committed to its original policy of humanitarian aid. In January, Germany increased its humanitarian support for Iraq and established a new department for emergency aid (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015e). This approach was further underlined in March when Germany, in the framework of the counter-ISIL coalition, joined the international working group on stabilization and recovery of re-conquered Iraqi regions (Steinmeier, 2015b). Another priority remained stabilization in the areas regained from ISIS control. In November, von der Leyen announced that for the fiscal year of 2016, €24m was earmarked for different stabilization measures in Iraq (von der Leyen, 2015f). On a visit to Iraq in December, Steinmeier confirmed this approach when announcing German cooperation with the Iraqi regional government in improving security and demining, as well as providing five mobile health care stations (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015f)

## Summary

German **political discourse** initially emphasized that the problems in Iraq needed to be solved through improved, more inclusive domestic policy. However, the discourse over time came to be more and more about the challenge that IS/Daesh created and what role Germany could play there. When it was decided that Germany would support Iraq militarily, through training of personnel and delivery of weapons to the Peshmerga, a comparison was made with Ukraine and it was stated that realities on the ground made military support to Ukraine impossible. The relationship with Russia was also commented on, and it was made clear that it was seen neither as a partner nor as an enemy. An important factor in German political discourse was the role of international co-operation in general for fighting IS/Daesh and the transatlantic link and the relationship between Germany and the US in particular. However, this did not give NATO a role in Iraq.

Five **goals and solutions** were particularly emphasized by Germany. First, to establish an inclusive government in Iraq; second, to destroy IS/Daesh's channels of support; third, to help neighbouring states; fourth, to relieve humanitarian suffering in the region; and fifth, to have an international strategy with a political solution that included both humanitarian aid and military assistance. A sixth proposal was to call for a joint regional approach where the Muslim community would be active in taking away the religious legitimacy of IS/Daesh.

With regard to **actions** in Iraq, these mainly consisted of bilaterally arranged (but internationally coordinated) humanitarian support, stabilization support (state-building) and military assistance in the form of equipment and training. Despite the fact that NATO was not given a role in Iraq, Germany stressed the importance of the international community by emphasizing work in both the EU and NATO. It also stressed the relationship with the US and encouraged dialogue on issues of disagreement, as well as stressing the importance of French–German co-operation to keep the US engaged in Europe. This kind of leadership, pushing for increased international co-ordination, was described by von der Leyen as 'leadership from the middle'.

## 4. The UK

### Political discourse

At the time of the Iraqi request for military support, the UK considered the situation in Iraq an existential threat to the Iraqi state. When meeting Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki in June 2014, UK Foreign Secretary Hague stated that this had ‘huge ramifications for the future stability and freedom of this country. The single most important factor that will determine whether or not Iraq overcomes this challenge is political unity,’ since this would strengthen the state’s internal structures and capabilities, and also attract support from the international community.

The UK government positioned itself against IS. Hague described IS as ‘a brutal terrorist group that is alien to this country (Iraq), to the Middle East, and to the Islamic faith’ (Hague, 2014). Government officials repeatedly disclaimed IS’ religious legitimacy. ‘Daesh is a terrorist organization that claims to represent Islam, but it uses the banner of religion to carry out barbaric atrocities including beheadings, crucifixions, slaughter of children, selling of women as slaves and the systematic use of rape as a weapon’ (UK Government, 2014a).

The advances of IS/Daesh were presented as a threat not only to the neighbouring countries to Iraq, but also to British security. In a September 2014 article, Cameron outlined that ‘the creation of an extremist caliphate in the heart of Iraq and extending into Syria is not a problem miles away from home. ... if we do not act to stem the onslaught of this exceptionally dangerous terrorist movement, it will only grow stronger until it can target us on the streets of Britain’ (Cameron, 2014a). When outlining the UK approach to Parliament the same month, Cameron argued that British security was threatened because IS/Daesh had murdered a British hostage and the first ‘ISIL-inspired terror acts in Europe’ had been committed (House of Commons, 2014a). Within the domestic and national security context, the phenomenon of foreign fighters was central. According to Cameron, ‘one of the most disturbing aspects is how this conflict is sucking in our own young people, from modern, prosperous societies. And the threat to our security from foreign fighters is far greater today than it’s ever been in previous conflicts’ (Cameron, 2014b).

In response to the threat posed by IS/Daesh, the UK government put itself in opposition to IS/Daesh and signalled determination. The Iraq war was distinguished from the ‘war on terror’ and religious conflicts. Instead, it was described as ‘a struggle for decency, tolerance and moderation in our modern world’ that threatened British values. Cameron thus called for ‘political will to defend our own values and way of life with the same determination, courage and tenacity as we have faced danger before in our history’ (Cameron, 2014a). In an October

statement to Parliament, Cameron said that ‘a country like ours will not be cowed by these barbaric killers. If they think we will weaken in the face of their threats, they are wrong. It will have the opposite effect. We will be more forthright in defence of the values – liberty, under the rule of law, democracy and freedom – that we hold dear’ (Cameron, 2014c).

The same attitude was seen on an international level, where the UK sought international cooperation, especially with the US. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2014, Cameron called for unified action: ‘My message today is simple. We are facing an evil against which the whole of the world should unite. And, as ever in the cause of freedom, democracy and justice, Britain will play its part’ (Cameron, 2014d). In a joint article the same month, Cameron and US President Obama outlined that the nature of security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needed a reactive approach as ‘the problems we face today threaten the security of British and American people, and the wider world’. Facing this situation, ‘we will not waver in our determination to confront ISIL. If terrorists think we will weaken in the face of their threats they could not be more wrong. Countries like Britain and America will not be cowed by barbaric killers. We will be more forthright in the defence of our values, not least because a world of greater freedom is a fundamental part of how we keep our own people safe.’ In this effort, Obama and Cameron saw a role for NATO and argued that the US and the UK should continue to play leading roles (Cameron and Obama, 2014).

In addressing the alleged security threat posed by IS/Daesh, the UK prioritized domestic security, and applied a comprehensive approach to dealing with IS/Daesh. In an August article, the Prime Minister outlined that ‘Britain – our economy, our security, our future – must come first’. At this point, Cameron did not rule out the option of military intervention, but stressed that a military approach alone would not bring a solution to the war. ‘I agree that we should avoid sending armies to fight or occupy. But we need to recognize that the brighter future we long for requires a long-term plan for our security as well as for our economy. True security will only be achieved if we use all our resources – aid, diplomacy, our military prowess – to help bring about a more stable world’ (Cameron, 2014a).

In September 2014, military intervention was decided upon. In the government’s legal position on military action in Iraq against IS/Daesh, it was highlighted that the mission was international in nature and led by the US and that it was established upon request from the Iraqi government. Therefore it was in accordance with international law (UK Government, 2014b). When debated in Parliament, Cameron stressed that military intervention lay in the UK’s national interest, and that a comprehensive plan was in place to fight IS/Daesh. ‘Let me make some progress on why I believe military action is necessary before taking more interventions.

Frankly, without it, I do not believe there is a realistic prospect of degrading and defeating ISIL. ... We have to decide if we are going to support them (Iraqi security forces) and I believe that we should. If we are to beat these terrorists, it is vital that the international community does more to build the capability of the legitimate authorities fighting extremism' (House of Commons, 2014b).

Towards the end of 2015, attention shifted away from the war in Iraq. Following the advances accomplished against IS/Daesh in Iraq, as well as the shift of attention towards the situation in Syria, statements on Iraq were rare, however encouraging. At a UNSC meeting in December, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that IS/Daesh's 'acts of violence were designed to intimidate and divide us but they have failed ... yet today the unity of the world is on display and far from dividing us, actually the terrorists in Daesh and ISIL are actually uniting us and we are determined to take the fight to them, to deprive them of their financing and to defeat them' (Osborne, 2015).

### **Goals and solutions**

The UK government held the view that the conflict in Iraq needed a domestic, political solution. Foreign Secretary Hague in June 2014 highlighted that the main responsibility for solving the conflict lay with the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people, and that political unity was key to a solution. Further, that the priority was to form an inclusive government, including all the major ethnic groups, 'that can command the support of all Iraqi people and work to stop ISIL in its tracks. The UK can provide diplomatic, counter-terrorism and humanitarian support to Iraq' (Hague, 2014).

The UK response to the situation in Iraq, as outlined in August 2014, was threefold. First, addressing the humanitarian situation and relieving the suffering of those targeted by IS/Daesh; second, 'promoting an inclusive, sovereign and democratic Iraq that can push back on ISIL advances and restore stability and security across the country'; and third, working with the international community to coordinate efforts to tackle the threat posed by IS/Daesh (Prime Minister's Office, 2014a). However, in an article later the same month Cameron recognized that although relieving human suffering was the UK's priority, 'we also need a broader political, diplomatic and security response' to counter IS/Daesh. Along with the political approach of fostering democracy in Iraq and the role of the international community outlined in the UK strategy, Cameron thus suggested taking security measures. This approach included 'a firm security response, whether that is military action to go after the terrorists, international co-

operation on intelligence and counter-terrorism or uncompromising action against terrorists at home’.

Cooperation within the international community played a central role in the UK’s approach. Cameron stressed that international cooperation for countering IS/Daesh needed to include Iraq’s neighbours: ‘we must work with countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the UAE, Egypt and Turkey against these extremist forces, and perhaps even with Iran’. Further, he gave assurances that the UK would play a leading role in the diplomatic and coordinating efforts (Cameron, 2014a). In addition to the broader international framework, NATO was presented as a forum for cooperation. In a joint article, Cameron and US President Obama outlined a common approach to Iraq and envisaged a role for NATO as a provider of national security. Ahead of the Wales summit, they stated that ‘we believe that NATO can adapt to meet the new challenges we face and that this summit can be a landmark in shaping this transition’ (Cameron and Obama, 2014).

The war in Iraq was initially intertwined with the fight against extremism. Throughout the Iraq war it was highlighted that the Iraqi government bore the main responsibility for solving the situation, but in the autumn of 2014 and throughout 2015, countering IS/Daesh and extremism at large took precedence over the war in Iraq. On a domestic level, the issue of foreign fighters was prioritized. In September 2014, Cameron outlined a threefold approach: ‘First we must reinforce our counter-terrorist efforts to prevent attacks and hunt down those who are planning them. ... Second, and I believe crucially, we must defeat the poisonous ideology of extremism that is the root cause of this terrorist threat.’ Third, international cooperation was crucial, as ‘our strategy must work in tandem with Arab states; always in support of local people; in line with our legal obligations; and as part of a plan that involves our aid, our diplomacy and yes, our military’ (Cameron, 2014b). The issue of foreign fighters was also dealt with on a European level: the UK and France planned to increase their cooperation on tackling radicalization, and promoted EU rules aimed at easing the sharing of information on passengers travelling between European countries (Prime Minister’s Office, 2014b).

The emphasis on fighting extremism was seen most clearly in the UK’s strategy on Iraq, in which there was an important change after one year. The emphasis on forming an inclusive Iraqi government remained, but the strategy from 2015 replaced issues of humanitarian aid and international cooperation (which were emphasized in the previous strategy from August 2014) with military assistance or ‘help to train Iraqi security forces so they can defeat ISIL on the ground’, as well as stopping the spread of ISIL ideology and propaganda (Cameron, 2015). UK military assistance ultimately aimed at defeating IS/Daesh, while the immediate goal of the

support was to ‘end the constant threat to Iraq, protect Iraq’s citizens and, ultimately arm Iraqi forces and enable them to regain control of Iraq’s borders’ (UK Government, 2014b). In December the same year, the UK joined the global counter-IS/Daesh coalition that aimed at defeating and degrading IS/Daesh. Towards this goal, the UK together with other signatories vowed to ‘support... military operations, capacity building, and training; stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; cutting off ISIL/Daesh’s access to financing and funding; addressing associated humanitarian relief and crises; and exposing ISIL/Daesh’s true nature’ (Department of State, 2014).

## **Actions**

Solutions to extremism were sought on an international level, for example by addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2014, (Cameron, 2014d). The UK had been sending humanitarian aid to Iraq before the Iraqi government’s request for military intervention, and stepped up its efforts in the summer of 2014 in the face of rapidly growing numbers of refugees. A total of £23m in humanitarian assistance comprising basic necessities was provided for internally displaced people, with a special focus on women and children (Department for International Development, 2014a; UK Government, 2015). In these efforts, the UK worked closely with international partners, and especially the US (Prime Minister’s Office, 2014c). In December 2014, the UK provided further £16.5m in humanitarian aid, including winter supplies. Half a year later, in July 2015, the UK allocated £20m in humanitarian aid. UK aid at that point thus amounted to a total of £59.5m (UK Government, 2015). As part of the aid provision, in August 2014 the UK decided to position a small number of Tornado aircraft in Cyprus, available to provide intelligence to assist aid delivery and also participate in aid delivery (Department for International Development, 2014b). As part of humanitarian efforts and reconstruction work, in October the UK launched the Iraqi Emergency Heritage Management Project for preservation and reconstruction of cultural artefacts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2015).

The UK mobilized support for Iraq in the UN and led efforts in the UNSC for an international response to IS/Daesh. In August 2014, the UK authored a UNSC resolution to mobilize international action against IS/Daesh. Further, the UK worked to strengthen the international framework under which states are obliged to adopt measures to tackle terrorism. This included a proposed UNSC resolution to stem financial flows to IS/Daesh, sanctions on

those recruiting new members, and preventing those suspected of joining a terrorist group from travelling (Prime Minister's Office, 2014a; UK Government, 2015).

Simultaneously, the UK cooperated with the Iraqi government and provided military support to Iraqi forces. At the request of the Iraqi government, in September 2014 the UK supplied the Kurdish Peshmerga with heavy machine guns and half a million rounds of ammunition (Ministry of Defence, 2014). The following month, the UK announced its training of up to 18 students from the Peshmerga on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to NATO-level standards (Hammond, 2014). The training of Iraqi security forces was further expanded in June 2015 when the UK deployed 125 more personnel to Iraq. These forces provided IED training as well as training in other areas such as medical skills, equipment maintenance and information operations (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). At the NATO Wales summit in 2014, members agreed to offer the Iraqi government a NATO training mission (Cameron, 2014e, p. 20).

British military support also included the use of UK air strikes in Iraq. A week after the first supply of weapons to the Peshmerga, Parliament backed a motion on UK support for Iraq, calling for UK support for the government of Iraq 'in protecting civilians and restoring its territorial integrity', including the use of UK air strikes to help Iraqi security forces fight IS/Daesh (Prime Minister's Office, 2014d). Starting from the first deployment in October 2014, air strikes were carried out against IS/Daesh in both Iraq and Syria every second day on average, with the UK thus delivering the second largest number of air strikes among the members of the global coalition. Over the course of the campaign, the deployment was extended several times. In August 2015, Tornado deployment was announced to last until March 2017 (Fallon, 2015; Ministry of Defence, 2015). In December 2014, the UK joined the global coalition against IS/Daesh which worked to defeat IS/Daesh by targeted military action, cutting off IS/Daesh's access to finances, and reducing the influx of fighters (Department of State, 2014). This also included domestic counter-terrorism measures, as outlined by Cameron in a September 2014 speech: 'in the UK we are introducing new powers to strengthen our ability to seize passports and stop suspects travelling; to allow us temporarily to prevent some British nationals getting back into the country; to ensure that airlines comply with our no fly lists and security screening arrangements; and to enable our police and security services to apply for stronger locational constraints on those remaining in the UK but who pose a risk' (Cameron, 2014b).

However, military action was limited to air strikes, training and the provision of equipment, and did not include ground forces. When addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2014, Cameron made clear that the deployment of 'Western ground troops' offered no solution

to the war, but that the role of the military was to provide support in different areas (Cameron, 2014d). In December 2014, Defence Secretary Fallon gave reassurances that the option of deploying ground forces was not on the table. ‘We are not providing “combat boots on the ground”. Why not? The lessons from our experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere are that defeating insurgencies does require boots on the ground, but the best approach is local forces that are inclusive and enjoy popular support’ (Fallon, 2014).

## Summary

An important part of the British **political discourse** on the war in Iraq was the necessity of a political solution in that country. In addition, it was pointed out that IS/Daesh was a terrorist organization that threatened not only Iraq but also the UK. International co-operation, the role of the UN and the importance of US and UK leadership was also discussed. In the political discourse it was also emphasized that all resources were needed: aid, diplomacy, and military power.

The **solutions and goals** presented by the UK reflected aspects of the political discourse and a domestic political solution in Iraq including a democratic government was emphasized. However, it was also stated that it was important to relieve human suffering. With regard to the security situation the UK also stated that a firm security response was necessary as well as co-operation with regional actors. There was also an emphasis on the fight against extremism. NATO was stated to be important as a provider of national security.

With regard to the **actions** taken, the UK engaged in humanitarian aid, projects for the preservation and reconstruction of cultural artefacts and tried to engage the UN to propose international responses and different kinds of measures against IS/Daesh. The UK also offered military support in the form of airstrikes, training and equipment. However, there was no support for boots on the ground.

## 5. The USA

### Political discourse

The atrocities of IS/Daesh were referenced as the main reason for US re-engagement in Iraq. Therefore, the actions of this group received the most attention from US officials regarding the situation in Iraq. Ever since the beginning of the IS/Daesh atrocities in Iraq, the United States alone, and in coordination with the Iraqi government and regional partners and allies, strongly condemned the attacks by IS/Daesh throughout Iraq (President Obama 2014a; The White House 2014b) with Secretary Kerry pointing out that IS at that time controlled more territory than al-Qaeda ever did (Secretary of State, Kerry 2014).

The United States perceived IS actions as a threat to the security of Iraq, the broader Middle East and the United States itself (Secretary of State, Kerry 2014). Regarding the situation in Iraq, the United States considered IS/Daesh actions as ‘barbaric’ and an ultimate threat to all communities in Iraq (President Obama 2014a). The United States continuously supported Iraqi leaders from all sides of the political spectrum, because it perceived that national unity was a key priority in the fight against IS/Daesh. Moreover, the support from the United States was in accordance with the Strategic Framework Agreement from 2008 (Office of the Vice President 2014a).

The inclusive character of the new Iraqi government was of great importance for the United States, which meant that all steps that led to further inclusion of less represented groups or minorities were endorsed by it. It also supported Iraqi efforts to strengthen ties with neighbours (The White House 2015a). Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi was given US support from the beginning of his mandate for his efforts to govern in an inclusive manner and ‘begin building a united front among Iraqis to combat ISIL’. The United States committed itself to help the Iraqi government in the fight against IS, and to regain territory (Office of the Vice President 2015c) through assistance and training programs, provision of weapons and equipment, as well as through airstrikes (The White House 2014f).

The failure of the Iraqi army to fight against IS was confirmed by the United States (President Obama 2014a) and therefore it supported and facilitated the efforts of expanding the front against IS/Daesh with different stakeholders, if they seemed capable. For example, the United States supported the efforts by the Iraqi government to integrate Sunni tribal fighters in the Iraqi security institutions (The White House 2014f) and welcomed the decision of the Iraqi Council of Ministers to ‘accelerate the training and equipping of local tribes in coordination with the Anbar authorities, expand recruitment into the Iraqi Army, train local police, and

develop a consolidated plan to retake Ramadi with all associated forces acting under Iraqi command' (The White House 2015c).

In addition, the importance of the relationship between the United States and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region was emphasized (Office of the Vice President 2014a), and both President Obama and Vice President Biden reaffirmed strong and continued support from the US to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the Kurdish people. At the same time they emphasized the importance of a 'united, federal and democratic' Iraq (The White House 2015a). The United States sympathized and commended the 'bravery' of the Kurdish Peshmerga Forces (Ibid) thus emphasizing their importance in the fight against IS/Daesh.

The United States recognized IS actions in Iraq as a threat to the security of the United States. The United States explicitly described IS as a threat to US personnel in Iraq as well as to US national security. Therefore, air strikes and training provided by the US to the forces fighting IS in Iraq were stated to be measures that addressed the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States (President Obama 2014c). The assessment of the threat was upgraded in February 2015 when President Obama asked Congress for authorization for the use of United States Armed Forces against IS. In this upgrade IS was found responsible for the death of several American citizens and Obama stated that IS could pose a threat to US homeland security (President Obama 2015a).

In May 2015, President Obama informed Congress of his decision to further continue the National Emergency with Respect to Iraq, which was based on Executive Order 13303 from President George W. Bush from 2003 (The President of the United States 2003), a continuation that confirmed the assessment of the crisis in Iraq from 2003:

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States (President Obama 2015d).

The internationalization of the efforts in Iraq was an important aspect for the US, and therefore it welcomed the announcements of all allies that decided to join the campaign against IS. During the first three months of the air campaign (August, September and October of 2014), the United States welcomed the positive decisions by the UK and Belgian parliaments to approve their countries' engagement in the campaign in Iraq. In addition, the United States welcomed the decisions by more than ten US allies to authorize military force against IS: Denmark, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Australia,

Turkey, France and Canada. On all occasions, the United States described these decisions as a demonstration of clear commitment among the international community to take action against IS/Daesh (Office of the Press Secretary 2014b; Office of the Press Secretary 2014d; Office of the Press Secretary 2014c).

## Goals and solutions

It was mainly the ‘significant and rapid advances’ (Garamone, DoD, 2014) by IS that shaped the goals of the US. First and foremost, the US sought immediate protection of American citizens (diplomats, civilians or military personnel) (President Obama 2014b), as well as of US facilities (NSC Spokesperson Hayden 2014). Second, the US specified its aim to ‘degrade, and ultimately destroy ISIL’ (President Obama 2014d) and to shrink the territory controlled by ISIL (Secretary of State, Kerry 2014) while at the same time avoiding engagement in a prolonged ground war in the Middle East (President Obama 2015b). Third, it intended to provide regional and international support to an inclusive Iraqi government which would ‘unite the Iraqi people and strengthen Iraqi forces against ISIL’ (President Obama 2015a) and re-establish the security of Iraqi borders (The White House 2015a). Therefore, it was important for the US to keep the political process in Iraq alive and ensure the implementation of constitutional reforms (The White House 2014a). A fourth goal was to reform, strengthen, and modernize Iraqi defence capabilities (The White House 2015a). The US, therefore, in December 2015, called for Turkey and Iraq to ‘defuse the tensions’ between them ‘in a manner that respects Iraqi sovereignty and fully coordinates counter-ISIL efforts with the Coalition’ (Office of the Vice President 2015f). Fifth, the US addressed the issue of foreign fighters going to Syria and the difficulty in preventing these fighters from coming back to Europe and the United States (President Obama 2015c).

Several sets of solutions were offered by the United States, and most of them were designed to create conditions for the ultimate defeat and degradation of IS in Iraq. The military solutions proposed included:

- An airstrike campaign conducted by a broad international coalition of US partners and allies (The White House 2014d) in a ‘systematic and sustained’ way (President Obama 2015b).
- Creating conditions on the ground for local forces to abandon their differences and fight against the common enemy in partnership with US allies, such as the local communities where IS/Daesh was active. For example, Sunni tribes in Iraq and Syria, the Kurds, and groups like the Yezidis (Malinowski 2014). In addition, mobilizing the Iraqi population against IS (The White House 2014a). For example, the US called for increased

coordination between the US, the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in the fight against IS (Office of the Vice President 2015d).

- Passing key legislation to strengthen Iraqi unity and accelerate the mobilization, training, and integration of local fighters against IS/Daesh (Office of the Vice President 2015e).

While most of the solutions proposed by the United States included some form of military engagement whether by the US and coalition partners or by stakeholders based in Iraq, the military dimension was considered to be only one dimension of a solution (The White House 2014e). Non-military solutions proposed against ISIS included:

- Decreasing the capacity of ISIS to conduct its operations through cutting off its financing, exposing the ‘hypocrisy of ISIS’ absurd religious claims’ and blocking the recruitment of foreign fighters (Secretary of State, Kerry 2014).
- Encouraging Sunni Iraqi reconciliation as a way to defeat ISIS and ultimately stabilize Iraq. These efforts should build local or regional reconciliation measures that would make sure that every action taken, including military actions, was planned to ‘preserve and improve’ the relations between the Sunni population and the Iraqi state (Connable 2014).
- A ‘whole of government’ approach to improve governance and reconstruction efforts and enhance economic opportunities in the areas liberated from ISIL (Office of the Vice President 2015a).
- Providing humanitarian aid for Iraq’s internally displaced citizens (Office of the Vice President 2015e).

However, alongside the military and non-military solutions designed to destroy and degrade IS, the United States assessed the Iraqi situation in a wider context and also proposed ways of encouraging political and economic reforms in Iraq, a process that would ultimately lead to better prospects for long term peace and security in the country. Such solutions included:

- Formation of new government that would be inclusive for all communities (Office of the Vice President 2014a).
- Passing of key legislation to strengthen national unity and promote reconciliation for all Iraqi citizens (Office of the Vice President 2015e).
- Addressing long-standing disputes between the central and regional governments in a way consistent with the Iraqi constitution, such that any dispute arising from the current crisis would be resolved ‘peacefully, in a fair and transparent manner, and in full consultation with all communities’ (Office of the Vice President 2014b).
- Promoting the inclusion and empowerment of women and minorities (Lindborg 2014).
- Stemming the flow of foreign fighters and building the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces (The White House 2014a).

## Actions

In order to contribute to its vision for Iraq, destroy IS and achieve its goals regarding the situation in Iraq, the United States took several concrete steps and actions. First, the military actions taken included direct support to the troops fighting on the ground with advice, equipment, and targeted airstrikes. US military actions developed according to the situation on the ground, so what started as a placement of a small amount of troops to protect US personnel and the US Embassy in Baghdad developed into a major coalition airstrike campaign against IS/Daesh. The US also provided support to Iraqi and Kurdish forces on the ground.

Before help was requested by the Iraqi government in June 2014 (BBC 2014), 200 US Armed Forces personnel were deployed to protect the US Embassy, US support facilities, and Baghdad airport (Office of the Press Secretary 2014a). This force included additional security forces, rotary-wing aircraft, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support (The White House 2014c). US Armed Forces were also used in coordination with Iraqi forces and provided them with training, advice, communication support, intelligence support and other support to particular branches of the Iraqi security forces. The Kurdish Peshmerga forces also received support in order to fight IS (President Obama 2014f; Office of the Press Secretary 2014e; The White House 2015g). Joint Operations Centers were established in both Baghdad and Erbil in order to prepare for action in Iraq (Ibid).

Additionally, on 22 October 2015 US armed forces supported the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters in an operation to rescue hostages from an IS/Daesh detention facility. As of 11 December 2015 the Force Management Level for US forces in Iraq was 3500 (The White House 2015g). In terms of equipment support, since the autumn of 2014, the United States provided the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga forces with essential equipment such as ammunition, small arms systems, Hellfire missiles, tanks, mine resistant vehicles, rifles, body armour, helmets and first aid kits (The White House 2015a). All of the security support was part of a \$1.6 billion Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF), a fund established solely for the purpose of providing support to Iraq to fight ISIS (Department of State 2015). When it came to airstrikes, the US led (Malinowski 2014) a coalition of 8 countries in order to ‘defeat, degrade, and delegitimize Daesh and its campaign of horrors’ (Ibid) by providing support to efforts on the ground in both military and humanitarian terms (President Obama 2014f). Up until April 2015, the US conducted nearly 1300 airstrikes alone (Office of the Vice President 2015b).

Second, political actions were taken in order to provide structural support, humanitarian aid and reconciliation such as:

- Strengthening civil society and governance structures on the ground (Malinowski 2014), strengthening the Iraqi federal system, and supporting the process of decentralization (The White House 2015a).
- Specifically seeking to support women and children.
- Working closely with representatives of religious communities and other vulnerable groups in Iraq and Syria.
- Supporting the documentation of atrocities in order to hold all actors accountable (Malinowski 2014).

Regarding humanitarian aid, the United States, both alone and together with the coalition partners, dropped necessary supplies to different locations in Iraq (NSC Spokesperson Hayden 2014) with the total amount of humanitarian aid provided reaching \$416 million in the period from June 2014 to June 2015 (Office of the Vice President 2015e; President Obama 2014b). The humanitarian aid included food, shelter, water, medical services, cash assistance and other essential goods and services, as well as support to the Internally Displaced Persons (The White House 2015a).

## Summary

With regard to US **political discourse** on the war in Iraq, IS/Daesh's advances became the reason engage in Iraq again, despite the fact that the US had left quite recently. From the beginning, there were efforts to help Iraqi security forces to become stronger, and to help other groups with military capacity to engage in fighting IS/Daesh. The US emphasized the importance of an inclusive Iraqi government. The situation in Iraq was also described as a threat to US national security, and the was stated to require international co-operation. Therefore, calls were made for assistance from allies around the world, from both western countries and countries in the region.

US **goals and solutions** all related to the military destruction of IS/Daesh through the use of military force by US, its allies, and different groups within Iraq, as well as the Iraqi armed forces. Another goal was to strengthen the Iraqi state through state-building efforts and different processes to include minority actors and push reconciliation between different groups, such as Sunni, Kurdish, and Yezidi.

These goals and solutions steered US **actions**, which were more comprehensive than the actions taken by the European countries. This was particularly the case with military action, which consisted of the use of US forces for extensive airstrikes, and also of support to the Iraqi

armed forces. Even though a ‘no boots on the ground’ policy was important, on the ground support in the form of advice and training was undertaken. This support was given both to the Iraqi armed forces, and to other groups on the ground with the capacity to fight IS. In addition, the US protected its own personnel and facilities. It also engaged in different kinds of state-building and society strengthening actions, including security sector reform and support of various political processes. The US was also engaged in humanitarian aid in collaboration with its allies.

## 6. Conclusions

All the countries studied here have emphasized the role of the Iraqi government in creating an inclusive political process in Iraq and the importance of including different groups in the political process. For France and Germany, domestic stability in Iraq was the main focus of political discourse at the beginning of the time period studied. Gradually, however, the role of IS/Daesh became more important. For the US, it was IS/Daesh actions and the Iraqi request that caused it to engage again militarily in Iraq. All the countries except Germany also stressed in their political discourse the threat that the war in Iraq posed to their own national security. The role of international co-operation was stressed in different ways, primarily by Germany, the UK and the US. However the UK pointed out that NATO involvement was needed for national security. The goals and solutions presented for Iraq were fairly similar for all the countries studied here – a democratic Iraq with an inclusive government representing and protecting minorities, perhaps even a unity government. For a long time a political solution to the increasingly difficult situation on the ground was emphasized. Fighting IS also became a major goal, and in connection with this international co-operation was increasingly emphasized. The increased threat posed by IS/Daesh also strengthened the focus on humanitarian aid. With regard to the actions taken by the countries studied here, US actions were comprehensive with military, state-building and humanitarian efforts. For the European countries the most striking fact was not that both France and the UK engaged in airstrikes, but that Germany also engaged militarily in the form of equipment and training.

From the analysis undertaken here it is clear that the US again assumed a leadership role in Iraq. Not surprising perhaps, because it was not that long ago that the US had left Iraq militarily and the relationship between the Iraqi government and the US was still fairly close. It was therefore to the US that Iraq turned with its request for help. Bilateral relations seem to have been very important with regard to the actions taken in Iraq. These were initially undertaken mainly as bilateral efforts between Iraq and the US or Iraq and Germany, for example. However, as the efforts to increase military and humanitarian aid to Iraq became stronger, international co-operation increased. These kinds of bilateral co-operation differ from the ones discussed in our previous report from 2013, however, as those were not primarily meant for international operations, but for improving domestic capacity within the European states. The way in which the military and humanitarian aid started in Iraq also meant that NATO was never given a role. Some of the states studied here even took the opportunity to point out that NATO's role was to increase their domestic security. This came as a consequence of the situation in Iraq coming to be seen as a threat domestically. This means that the diversification of NATO's role was halted,

or even rolled back. This was not primarily as a consequence of the situation in Iraq, but the situation does not seem to have stopped the 'back to basics' conception of the role NATO should play. With regard to leadership it became clear, as stated above, that US leadership was important for the development of the international operation, but also that Germany started to change its view of itself and to speak about leadership in international affairs, using the expression 'leading from the middle'.

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