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Introduction: Will Europe Lead in NATO?

J. H. Matlary and M. Petersson

The purpose and the relevance of the book

In a speech at the National Defence University in Washington, DC, in February 2010, former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates talked about the ‘demilitarization of Europe’ (Gates, 2010). When he gave his last major speech at NATO’s ministerial meeting in Brussels in June 2011, he argued that NATO had become a ‘two-tiered’ alliance,

between members who specialize in ‘soft’ humanitarian, development, peacekeeping, and talking tasks, and those conducting the ‘hard’ combat missions, between those willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, and those who enjoy the benefits of NATO membership – be they security guarantees or headquarters billets – but don’t want to share the risks and the costs.

(Gates, 2011)

At a closed-door meeting with NATO Defence Ministers, Gates also named two states – Germany and Poland – that could contribute to the Libya operation but did not, and three states – the Netherlands, Spain and Turkey – that could do more (Spiegel, 2011). As a commentator put it later: ‘the real danger comes from within – from European reluctance to pay for its own defence and from growing US indifference towards what Washington sees as feckless allies’ (Stevens, 2011).

The US criticism has continued since then, and the gist of the criticism is the same: Allies do not carry their share of the burden, neither in terms of defence spending – which stands 75/25 in American’s favour today – nor in terms of military contributions to operations.
How valid is this criticism? Which of NATO’s European allies are ‘able’ militarily and ‘willing’ politically to undertake ‘sharp operations’ and to actually use force for the purpose of policy? Robert Kagan has argued that Americans are ‘from Mars’ and Europeans are ‘from Venus’ (Kagan, 2002, 2003), and that the attitude to the use of military force differs between the United States and Europe. How accurate is that picture?

The question of burden sharing has always been important in NATO – it has resulted in a ‘crisis literature’ on NATO (Thies, 2009) – but it has an acute relevance today because the United States will cut its defence budget over a ten-year period and is no longer automatically willing to lead military operations. The Libya mission ‘Unified Protector’ is a case in point. The United States did not want to lead, but was forced to ‘lead from behind’ because allies lacked some of the necessary capacities: ‘shortages in allied intelligence-gathering, aircraft, aerial refuelling tankers and precision-guidance kits for bombs proved that the US remained the backbone of NATO-offensives’ (Shanker and Schmitt, 2011, see also Hallams and Schreer, 2012). Thus, even if Europeans are politically willing, as in this case, they may not be militarily able.

In this book, we provide the first in-depth analysis of the relationship between these factors – political willingness and military ability to use force – asking whether Europe in this new situation of economic austerity and postmodern political values can play a key role in regional and global security and defence. Hitherto Europeans have been called upon to rise to the occasion of matching the United States with minor contributions, ranging from ‘showing the flag’ to militarily important contributions. But when the US signals that its lead role no longer is automatic, what about the European allies? Can they and will they undertake sharp operations on their own, assuming leading roles?

This issue is of key importance for policy as well as for scholarship on NATO. European defence today is marked by sharp cuts in budgets and a lack of integration of materiel. This happens while many national defence systems are not yet modernized or transformed towards expeditionary forces. Further, we need to ascertain whether it is true that Europe is a civilian power that refrains from using the military tool for coercion, deterrence or war-fighting in general (Sheehan, 2007).

Put differently, how important are domestic factors in security policy? There is ample research on the importance of geopolitics for the defence and security policy of the state if we look to realism in its various forms. Indeed, the main reason for military defence and for military alliances lies in the self-help fact of international anarchy. Especially for great powers, geopolitics and power-balancing matter as
explanations for their willingness to maintain and use their armed forces (Nye, 2009). For smaller states, however, there is little they alone can do about their geopolitical position or about changes in threats. They are too small to matter in their domestic defence and security policies, hence their dependence on allies, especially the hegemonic power of the United States. This is often referred to as the ‘alliance dilemma’ in NATO (Snyder, 1984). For instance, Ringsmose has shown that Denmark, a small NATO member, is influenced by US pressure rather than by geopolitical changes in its security and defence policy (Ringsmose, 2010).

This is logical – small states depend on the hegemonic power for their security and are therefore prone to being influenced by its demands and wishes. Geopolitical threats and risks are second-order concerns, but matter as the ‘prime movers’ for being an alliance member. Thus, we can expect that European NATO members will be influenced by US pressure and expectations more than by geopolitical changes such as the current development of a multi-polar system (Strachan, 2009). Thus, what happens in US security and defence policy is of prime importance in Europe: On the one hand, less US engagement in NATO may lead to ‘relaxation’ due to less pressures in European states. On the other hand, the same phenomenon may lead to more European engagement because one can no longer ‘pass the buck’ to the United States. The worst outcome would be the former, but it may be the most likely, as we shall discuss below.

If we assume that alliance dependence explains most European NATO members’ security and defence policy, the question becomes how true this will be in the time ahead. Whereas political elites seem to want to prioritize alliance dependence, Krebs finds that only an elite consensus across parties allows for this: European NATO states defy public unpopularity regarding International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and continue to send troops, but this may be because there is (still) agreement across parties on this. Conversely, if this consensus is broken and parties take advantage of public opinion in order to get elected, alliance dependence no longer commands the importance it has had throughout the Cold War and beyond (Kreps, 2010).

The role of domestic politics in security and defence was secondary to alliance dependence during the Cold War. This was because the threat was clear, something which led to unity among political factions. Security and defence policy dynamics was different from domestic politics. However, when threats are less clear and look more like risks, the national interest is also unclear, and security and defence policy moves down the ladder of political priorities (Williams, 2008).
This has clearly happened in most European states after the Cold War. The academic study of such processes – policy-making in security and defence under diffuse threats and uncertain national outcomes – is still relatively scant (Matlary, 2009). As we know, even under the very clear risk of nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis the policy response in Washington depended on the actors and organizations behind the policy (Allison, 1971).

Security and defence studies have traditionally either been in the realist ‘camp’, emphasizing geopolitics, or in the liberal ‘camp’, looking at alliance dependence, general foreign standing in NATO, the UN, etc., on the part of states as explanatory variables. After 1990, however, especially in Europe, the relevance of domestic factors as explananda seems to rise. In studies of Germany we find that political culture and ideology matter much (Matlary, 2009; Noetzel and Schreer, 2009). We can also expect that domestic factors will trump alliance dependence should this factor become less relevant, given US reticence to lead like before in NATO. Domestic factors therefore suggest themselves to become increasingly more important in explaining NATO policy in Europe.

**Burden-sharing in NATO**

In their classic study of security as a public good, Olson and Zeckhauser showed that the economic theory of public goods applies to defence spending in an asymmetric alliance such as NATO (Olson and Zeckhauser, 1966). This point is underlined by Jason Davidson in his recent analysis of transatlantic burden-sharing: ‘The scholarly literature on alliance burden-sharing…suggests that America’s allies contribute rarely or never to US-led uses of force’ (Davidson, 2011, p. 4).

Yet free riding is not normal in NATO, and most European allies contribute to operations where the United States is in the lead. The main explanation for this in the scholarship is the so-called ‘alliance dilemma’ in NATO (Snyder, 1984). In a study based on more than 50 elite interviews in France, the United Kingdom, and Italy, Davidson argues that national interest rather than alliance loyalty explains many contributions by these states in recent years (Davidson, 2011). He tries to weigh the following variables: national security interests, prestige, alliance loyalty, national public opinion, and human rights/values. He concludes that ‘alliance value is significantly less important than threat and prestige: strong evidence supported threat and prestige in twice as many cases as alliance value (Davidson, 2011, p. 175). Yet he also agrees that ‘interests and prestige overlap with alliance value’ in most cases: states
that want to be close to the United States want this in order to be important in world politics and/or to have US protection in security terms. Thus, if Norway places most weight on geopolitics and Denmark on prestige, they will both support the United States.

However these foreign policy or external variables are weighed, what they have in common is that they are ‘external’ to the state. But in which ways do domestic variables matter in the decision to contribute?

In the Cold War, external factors clearly mattered most as the threat was existential. Europe really needed a US security guarantee. After the Cold War there is no clear-cut external variable – as seen above, the foreign policy reasons for NATO contributions are weighed differently. As the threat is no longer common and existential, there is also much greater scope for domestic variables. External factors no longer automatically trump domestic ones.

The study of the role of domestic variables is rather scant. The study of national strategic cultures is rarely done comparatively. One recent example of a comparative study is Kirchner and Sperlings’ book *National Security Cultures* (Kirchner and Sperling, 2010). In the book, their aim is to study the impact of domestic cultures on various security policy issues, one of them being compellence, which we term coercive diplomacy in this book. The other factors studied in that volume do not involve military force.

With the exception of the few studies on national strategic cultures in Europe there is little systematic scholarly work on how domestic factors influence the political and military ability of NATO’s European allies. The few studies of public opinion concur that it plays little role unless it is used by the political opposition in election campaigns. Davidson finds that public opinion is only relevant as an explanatory factor when it is coupled with opposition parties that may capitalize on this in (re)election efforts (Davidson, 2011, p. 176).

This concurs with Kreps’ conclusion, which points out that ISAF contributions are not stopped by unfavourable publics. She finds that an elite consensus across parties allows for this: European NATO states defy public unpopularity regarding ISAF and continue to send troops, but this may be because there is agreement across parties on this. Conversely, if this consensus is broken and parties take advantage of public opinion in order to get elected, alliance dependence no longer commands the importance it has had throughout the Cold War and beyond (Kreps, 2010). But we can nonetheless assume that the role of domestic politics in Europe will increase in the time ahead, given budget cuts, austerity in general, and a generally negative view about the ‘success’ of ISAF.
Moreover, the great difference among European NATO allies in terms of risk-willing and relevant contributions needs explanation. ISAF illustrates how some states opt for caveats and play little role in dangerous operations, whereas others carry much more of the common burden. All NATO allies contributed to ISAF, but very few to the war-fighting in the dangerous south. NATO’s European allies, therefore, seem to fall into at least two groups today. This classification is based on the degree of risk-willing, relevant military contribution to operations like ISAF. Yet there are also divisions among states regarding strategy for NATO – the most common division is between the so-called ‘globalists’ and ‘traditionalists’ (Noetzel and Schreer, 2009).

We can discern groups of states also in other international organizations, that is in the EU, where the inner core in security policy is made up of the contributing states to any one mission, but led by France and Britain (Matlary, 2009). Multi-tier NATO is a consequence of the lack of a common strategic vision. Noetzel and Schreer describe the ‘traditionalists’ as reversal-oriented, comprising Central European countries, favouring an alliance still focused on Article 5, based on the perception of a resurgent Russian threat. After all, the functioning of collective defence was their primary reason for joining the alliance (Noetzel and Schreer, 2009, p. 216). But even for the ‘traditionalists’ contributions to international operations are needed if the motive is Article 5 guarantee.

Burden-sharing in NATO today is very difficult for governments. Allies expect just burden-sharing in terms of carrying risk, whereas domestic publics are in ‘deep peace’ and not sympathetic to national casualties or political causes in far-away lands. What can a government do about this dilemma? It has to ‘deliver’ on two arenas, at home and internationally, where the demands are conflicting. They have to make painful choices. This is why the modern burden-sharing ‘equation’ is so difficult for states: they must take risk and suffer losses of their own soldiers in wars that are not in their own national interest in a traditional sense.

The ‘alliance dilemma’ formulated by Snyder in 1984 is today characterized by ‘fear of abandonment rather than of entrapment’. Whereas there was a direct dependence between the United States and European allies in the Cold War, allies could be quite certain that they would not be abandoned. But as bipolarity has given way to more of a multipolar system today, and the threat has become diffuse and variously interpreted, ‘abandonment outweighs entrapment fears’ (Snyder, 1984, p. 484). As stated, Ringsmose has studied the behaviour of Denmark, one of the key contributors in coalition warfare, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, and found that the key determinant was Danish interest in
closeness to Washington. Denmark has no geopolitical security calculus to consider, surrounded as it is by NATO states. The Danish abandonment of submarines testifies to this. Yet Denmark strongly supports US policy, to the point of being one of the most loyal supporters and contributors to US-led coalitions. Ringsmose argues that for Norway, the geopolitical relationship with Russia determines coalition contributions, whereas the main point for Denmark is general foreign and security policy (Ringsmose, 2010).

Thus, the perception of the importance of alliance dependence may not be related to national security concerns, contrary to realist theory. The Norwegian and Danish cases are paralleled in the Central-European cases, which like Norway seek US proximity because of geopolitics (‘traditionalists’); and in the British and Dutch cases, which are global partners with the United States although they do not have national geopolitical security concerns (‘globalists’). These two groups of states in NATO both seek closeness to the United States, albeit for different reasons.

In sum, both ‘globalists’ and ‘traditionalists’ among European NATO states need the US security guarantee if the alliance is to be real and deterring. Germany needs the United States as much as Denmark, and we should therefore expect both these states to contribute where the United States asks. But as noted, contributions differ very much within NATO Europe. It must be the case that some states are both willing and able, some are probably willing but unable, some the other way round, and some both unwilling and unable, at least relatively speaking.

Outline of the book

As stated, in this book we analyse European ‘political willingness and military ability’ to use force within a NATO context, both in terms of coercion as well as in actual deployments. The book consists of two distinctive parts. In Part I (Chapters 2–5) which is thematic, important generic factors – history, culture, economy and military structure, and threat and risk perceptions – are discussed. This part forms the analytical basis for the country studies in Part II (Chapters 6–14). The point of departure in this part is the analysis of US strategic thinking and its implications for NATO. Then we examine four major states (the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Spain), two Central European states (Poland and Hungary), as well as two small states (Denmark and Norway).
Through this analysis we are able to detect and empirically show which political dynamics are at work in these states with regard to the political will and military ability to use force for the purpose of policy.

The background factors that affect the military ability and political will to use force for political purposes are many. Yet we have to choose a relatively small but important number of them. Clearly ‘politics’ and ‘ideology’ must be important, as socialist parties generally are more sceptical about military force than liberal-conservative parties. The type of government of a given state must play a role, but this variable alone cannot explain the willingness and ability to use force (Herring, 2007).

‘Military or Strategic Culture’ is another factor. For instance, Italy, and Spain have in many ways an almost pacifistic culture, as does indeed Germany, but none of these states have had by long-time socialist governments. The state’s ‘historical experience’ thus matters, and plays a role in forming cultures – both political and military ones. It can be argued that the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Denmark have different political and military cultures from those of Germany, Italy and Spain. The concept of culture is, however, notoriously difficult as an analytical concept, being used both as an explanatory variable and as a social practice (Lock, 2010). There are examples of ideology trumping and changing culture, as in the case of Denmark, which through political leadership changed its political and military culture from low political willingness and low military ability to use force for the purpose of policy after the Cold War (Saxi, 2010).

However, even when there is a will there may not be a way: in security and defence, the ‘nuts and bolts’ matter more than in other policy areas. Without military capacity, there is no effect or contribution. Factors such as ‘military structure’ and ‘economic strength’ are therefore important. How a state chooses to organize its armed forces has a great influence on how operational and expeditionary it will be, something which can be analysed in terms of deployable and sustainable forces, money for investment rather than wages and so on. Modern armed forces are capital-intensive, not manpower-intensive. The size of defence budgets is quite important to any analysis of military ability, but military ability also depends on how the money is spent (Farell and Terriff, 2010).

‘Threat perceptions’, finally, have always been one of the most central background factors for the build-up and use of military force as well as for alliance cohesion. Charles Kupchan argues that alliance members cooperate more when threat increases and vice versa: ‘allies check rising
threats by seeking to cooperate more closely with each other’ (Kupchan, 1988, p. 324).

The ‘operationalization’ of ‘political will’ and ‘military ability’ is not easy. All states in NATO have defence structures (apart from Iceland) and they are all contributing to various NATO missions, be it in Kosovo, Afghanistan or Libya. They all qualify as ‘willing and able’ by a wide definition of these terms. This is also the diplomatic way of putting things: all are on board. However, the question that the ISAF mission has high-lighted lies in unequal burden-sharing in terms of ‘risk and treasure’.

If Europe has to assume more responsibility for its own security in the future, given a new multipolarity and a weaker United States, and concomitantly play a global role, it will have to engage in coercive diplomacy, too. The ‘use of military force’ that we define as interesting in this study is, therefore, not primarily related to low-risk peace-keeping operations, but to high-risk complex, sharp operations where ISAF is a good example. These are the types of operations that are hard to commit to both politically and militarily but which can be assumed to occur also beyond ISAF in a blend of counter-insurgency and easier forms of ‘wars among the people’, be they induced by humanitarian catastrophes or terrorism.

Further, the ‘use of military force’ is related to coercive diplomacy which we assume will be increasingly necessary in the time ahead in Europe. Multipolarity means that powerful non-NATO states will probably use coercion, and Europe must be prepared to put pressure as well as use incentives in diplomacy beyond its borders. Although coercion very often fails, it is normally the precursor to the actual use of force and is of course preferable to the latter (Byman and Waxman, 2002). In many cases, there is no ‘carrot-only’ alternative, as Europe learnt in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The chapters

In Chapter 2, Magnus Petersson discusses European use of force from a historical perspective. He argues that in the pre-modern and modern ages – when use of force for political purposes was the rule and not an exception – it is more or less irrelevant to the present situation. He also argues that it is wrong to suggest that European states have not used force for political purposes after the Second World War. In particular France and the United Kingdom, but also other European NATO states, have actually used force for political purposes and have had both the
military ability and political will to do so. However, he argues, the motives for the use of force have changed from securing the power and integrity of the state towards securing the values of the Western community. Furthermore, the threshold for using force inside Europe has been much higher than the threshold for using force outside Europe. The use of force, finally, has been exercised integrated and collectively rather than individually. There is a clear difference between France and the United Kingdom, both ‘willing and able’ both to coerce, use force and to lead, and the rest of European NATO.

In Chapter 3, Christopher Coker analyses political culture and the ‘demilitarization’ of Europe, and the ‘growing apart’ between Europe and the United States both intellectually and psychologically. He argues that Europe’s demilitarization is pre-eminently a ‘cultural’ phenomenon: ‘The political class cannot see the point of war, and has not, for a long time, had to think about it seriously, with the US always leading from the front.’ Coker argues that Europe’s demilitarization began with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the ‘Eurocrats’ started to build ‘a structure that was transnational, passionless and above all, safe’. It is a problem, he argues, to believe that it is possible to be a civilian power in a multipolar world: ‘As Asia re-arms, and China flexes its muscles, they may use hard power (or at least the threat of it) to change the rules of engagement that the Europeans tend to take for granted.’ In Coker’s chapter, political culture has strong explanatory power as a background factor for military ability and political will to use force: ‘Europe has developed a distinctive political culture that looks at war very differently from the United States.’

In Chapter 4, Sverre Diesen looks into economy and organization as drivers for the use of force, or – as he expresses it – the ‘fundamental mechanisms behind the ever increasing cost and consequent dwindling capabilities of modern defence forces, known as the problem of critical mass’. The ‘bottom line’, Diesen argues, ‘is that European countries in the face of the economic realities of sustaining today’s force structures cannot afford the price of today’s policies’. Soon they must therefore ‘decide on some kind of defence integration strategy’. If not, they will lose military ability to use force for political purposes – in particular global military reach – and ‘the political influence and status depending on that’. And NATO’s smaller powers will, according to Diesen, even lose ‘basic capabilities’ (such as tanks, submarines or fighters) because of the problem of critical mass, which will make them dependent on others even when it comes to national crisis management. For Diesen, economy and organization are powerful drivers for the use of force. It is
the defence budgets that are ‘driving security policy’ and not the other way around.

In Chapter 5, Asle Toje and Øyvind Østerud discuss NATO’s transformation after the Cold War and the variation in threat perceptions between the members causing internal disagreements: ‘In terms of military force, NATO retained some of its basic features from the former period. The disparities in capabilities (US hegemony) prevail, while there are new disparities in threat perceptions and willingness to take risks.’ The authors argue that NATO has struggled to find a new meaning after the Cold War and that it has not succeeded. The United States wants NATO to be a ‘global police force’, the European members want American security guarantees, while European defence budgets have fallen by about 2 per cent yearly since the 1990s: ‘The experience of Afghanistan has been that decision makers in Washington task whether it really is in its interests to cover defence costs for countries that only partially support US geopolitical objectives.’ The authors paint a dark picture of NATO’s future with unclear US leadership, European infighting, and fragmentation: ‘NATO was a collective alliance – one for all, all for one. What NATO is today, is less clear.’

In Part II of the book, the country studies provide detailed analyses of different NATO members’ military ability and political will to use force for political purposes. We compare a range of different NATO members: Four large states (France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain), two Central European states that are relatively new members (Poland, Hungary), as well as two small states (Denmark, Norway).

As the point of departure, in Chapter 6, Sean Kay starts off with a description of the US’ current view of NATO, Europe and the use of force. Kay argues that United States will not for much longer tolerate ‘status quo’ in the transatlantic relationship. To rebalance, the European NATO members have to be able and willing to take real responsibility for crises in Europe, for example sustain a Balkans-style peace support operation and a Libya-style war simultaneously: ‘there is a deepening assumption in the United States that America’s allies must pick up the leadership in their area’. Kay concludes that it will not be possible for the United States to implement its new defence strategy (that is deep cuts in the defence budget ‘and’ more focus on Asia) without such a rebalancing. In addition, he argues that such a rebalancing would ‘serve to advance the broadest of common interests and create a more sustainable and viable sharing of responsibility across the Atlantic’.

In Chapter 7, Patrick Porter discusses British attitudes to the use of force. He demonstrates that the political will is there, but also that there
is – and has been for long – a ‘mismatch’ between ambition and investment, between theory and practice, and between strategy and identity. The Libyan war, he argues, ‘demonstrates that there is an enduring tendency to see force as a potentially effective means of shaping the external environment’ and that use of force is symbol of British ‘state-ness’; it ‘reflects and reinforces Britain’s identity as a serious power at the top table’. According to Porter, the will to use force has survived ‘disappointing experiences in recent wars’, lack of public support and cuts in the defence budget. The implications of the mismatch between resources and goals could be more focus on alliances, coalitions and defence integration with allies. It could also be a British revision of its ambitions to remain a ‘global player’ with the power projection capabilities to support it. Thus, Britain is willing and able, has shown willingness despite popular opposition in some cases, but needs military integration in order to keep its ability. The French and the British have a major bilateral cooperation in this regard.

In Chapter 8, Yves Boyer analyses the French government’s military ability and the political will to use force. He argues that the organization of security and defence policy in France has been quite efficient, thanks to the strong role of the President, who is constitutional head of the armed forces, gives guidance on the overall strategy and military organization, controls their execution through the military staff, and directs their implementation through the chairing of the High Council on Defence. So, although France is also suffering from the financial and economic crisis, it can still keep up a ‘traditional ambitious’ policy, that is, ‘working for preserving a certain degree of autonomy, acting as a fair player in NATO to wait for the favourable moment to speed up a genuine European defence policy while developing ad hoc bilateral cooperation with the American ally’. The French are willing and able to use force, and cooperate with the British bilaterally and in NATO, as well as with the United States. French strategic thinking seems to continue along the same lines under Socialist President Hollande, something which indicate that political ideology and public opinion are of limited importance in France with regard to the use of force.

In Chapter 9, Benjamin Schreer discusses Germany and the use of force since the end of the Cold War. Schreer argues that ‘Germany has come quite a long way…when it comes to the political will to use military force as an NATO ally’; the political willingness has grown and the transformation of the Bundeswehr into a more expeditionary force has created military ability. However, the German government at the same time ‘grew more self-confident in terms of taking decisions about
the use of force from a purely national interest perspective’, which was demonstrated in connection with the Iraq War in 2003 and NATO’s Libya Campaign in 2011. Schreer thinks that it will continue that way, that Germany ‘most likely’ will remain a ‘selective NATO ally’ in out-of-area operations, and not be able to play a ‘leadership role’ within the alliance. The Germans seems no longer to be motivated primarily by alliance dependence and do not want to lead in a military operation. They can therefore be placed in the category rather unwilling, despite being able.

In Chapter 10, Damon Coletta and David Garcia investigate Spain’s military ability and political will to use force. They argue that Spain has been seen as a both unable and unwilling NATO member, but that these views to some extent have been unfair: ‘Appreciating Spain’s potential for effective statecraft and accepting Spain for twenty-first century diplomacy in a broker’s role requires a shift in perspective from the typical Anglo-American lens.’ A new view undertaken both by outside observers and by the Spanish public ‘could prepare the way for reinvigoration of Spanish statecraft’, they argue. The most important factor seems to be the unwillingness to engage because of public opinion. Democratic communication and public outreach from Spain’s statesmen is what is needed, according to the authors: ‘Brilliant statecraft goes for naught if citizens can neither see a state worth defending nor feel the emotional tug of republican virtue.’ In Spain there is no great willingness to use force, both a rather pacifistic culture and political ideology matter. Under Aznar alliance dependence was evident as a cause for contributions to the Iraq war; but with the Socialist government of Zapatero which was propelled into office after the Madrid terror attacks, there was an immediate withdrawal from this operation.

In Chapter 11, Marek Pietraś discusses Polish attitudes to the use of force. He demonstrates that Poland has been a willing and able NATO partner though limited by financial shortcomings. The goal of Poland’s participation in NATO’s operations has been ‘to enhance its international position and attain the status of a US strategic partner’. However, public opinion has developed a growing scepticism against Polish out-of-area engagement, which has made Poland hesitate towards such operations, as in the Libyan case. The Polish government is also concerned that such operations could undermine NATO’s collective defence. Poland is both willing and able, and is motivated primarily by alliance dependence for geopolitical reasons. Yet its disappointment over the status of the US-Polish relationship allows public opinion to
matter more than before. In terms of military capability, Poland is better off than many other states.

In Chapter 12, Tamás Magyarics analyses the Hungarian military ability and political will to use force. As the other smaller European NATO allies, he argues, Hungary is ‘less and less capable of thinking globally as far as military matters concerned’. Hungary has not lacked the political will to be a reliable ally within the alliance – the track record of the Hungarian governments in the past 20 years has shown that – but the military capabilities have not been in place. Necessary and expensive defence reforms have been very difficult to carry through, especially in times of difficult economic circumstances when resources are badly needed elsewhere. That resulted in a situation where ‘Budapest repeatedly promised more than it has been able to deliver’. According to Magyarics, the situation has now changed and become more realistic: ‘Hungary will not be punching below its weight in NATO in the future.’ Here the picture is clear: Political willingness but lacking military capability, whereas alliance dependence is the main motivator, for geopolitical reasons.

In Chapter 13, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen discusses Danish political will and military ability to use force. Since the end of the Cold War Denmark has shown that it is one of NATO’s most loyal members, and that it does not hesitate to use force for political purposes. It has also built up military capability, and taken many painful decisions, to be able and ready to use force: ‘With the experience from Afghanistan and Libya the Danish armed forces had acquired the skills of expeditionary warfare’ Rasmussen argues. The Danish status as ‘journeyman’ was also confirmed by the appointment of the former Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen to NATO’s Secretary General. The problem is, according to the author, not quality but quantity, because Denmark is a small country, and the solution of the problem is more cooperation with other allies and partners: ‘If Denmark wants to maintain its status as a ‘journeyman’ in NATO, the Danish government will have to continue to develop its ability to network the Danish armed forces with partners.’ Danish political will is crystal clear, and alliance dependence explains it. The underlying motive is probably rather general foreign policy prestige rather than geopolitics. Denmark needs military integration with others in order to sustain the desired level of contributions.

In Chapter 14, Janne Haaland Matlary analyses the Norwegian government’s military ability and political will. She shows how Norway has been an eager and consistent contributor to international operations, starting with UN operations. Norway goes where NATO goes,
and has the military ability to do so for the most part. Norwegian defence capabilities have been restructured towards expeditionary warfare since about 2000, but Norway retains a national focus as the primary one, situated as it is next to Russia. Regarding political ability, the left-Socialist party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti, SV) is shown to have influenced the contributions to ISAF in the period when this party retained much influence, but this was a relatively brief interlude. In conclusion, Norway seeks closeness to the United States for the most part, based on the geopolitical strategy that NATO must deter Russia, but sometimes domestic politics takes precedence or at least modifies traditional security and defence policy. There is a will for the most part, and a way, but also Norway needs ‘smart defense’ integration in order to sustain its contributions to international operations in the longer run.

Will European NATO states carry more burden?

The country chapters bring out the importance of national strategic culture and history. In the United Kingdom, Porter argues, four ‘themes’ well connected to history have ‘shaped’ Britain's use of force today: ‘the tension between continental and global commitments; the Anglo-American relationship; the retreat from empire; and one of the most difficult contexts for relating theory to practice, nuclear weapons’. And Spain’s ‘brokering role’ for twenty-first century diplomacy rests, according to Coletta and Garcia, on ‘the skill with which Spain across multiple centuries negotiated the twisting and at times violent course of great power competition’. With regard to Poland, Pietraś points out that a ‘vitally significant factor for Poland’s participation in NATO peacekeeping operations’ has been the prior experience of participation in many of the most important UN peacekeeping missions since 1953. These experiences became, according to Pietraś, a kind of ‘value added’ to the Polish NATO operations conducted from 1996 and onwards.

Political ideology seems to have been a prominent driver in Germany and Norway. According to Schreer, Germany is not unwilling and unable to play a major military role within a changing NATO – and has also done so after the end of the Cold War in the Balkans, and in Afghanistan – but it has also for a long time developed ‘a strategic culture of military restraint’, which has a great impact on German attitudes to the use of force. In Norway, domestic politics (rather than political culture) has influenced the government’s will to use force for political purposes. ‘Norway has, on the whole, been militarily able’, Matlary
Introduction argues, but the political realities have from time to time reduced the political will.

Economy and organization appear to have been important drivers for the use of force in France and Hungary. As already mentioned, the key role of the French President in policy making and implementation is an organizational factor that has great implications, but – as Boyer underscoring the extent of the likely reduction of the French defence budget could jeopardize the coherence of the French military model. Lack of relevant military capabilities has been Budapest’s biggest problem when it comes to Hungarian use of force, according to Magyarics. This, in turn, has been the effect of the scarcity of resources (i.e. economy), and – as already has been touched upon – inability to reform the defence forces (i.e. organization).

For Denmark organization and political culture have also been of crucial importance for the government’s active and engaged NATO policy; it seems to be consensus in Danish politics that the ability to deploy troops shall be maintained and the Danish Armed Forces are in great shape for NATO missions. But a prerequisite for the changed Danish attitude to the use of force after the end of the Cold War seems – like in no other country – to have been changed ‘threat perceptions’. The Danish Armed Forces have, as Rasmussen argues, transformed ‘from a force dedicated to fighting a war of necessity in the defence of the national territory to a force that fights wars of choice’.

Taken together the findings indicate that it is quite important to, in depth, understand what affects military ability and political will to use force for political purposes in every single case. There is no single European attitude to the use of force. This, in turn, has implications for the burden-sharing within NATO.

Kay concludes that Europeans simply have to assume responsibility for their own security in a real way now. Yet they are not rising to this occasion, judging from the European country chapters. In the two major military powers in Europe, France and the United Kingdom, there is (still) the ability to project and use force globally, but only France appears to have a global strategy for military power. Yet France has only recently returned to the military structure of NATO and is as such a ‘newcomer’ – or perhaps ‘latecomer’ in the alliance. The United Kingdom, the major actor alongside the United States with its ‘special relationship’, undergoes changes in the political willingness to use force: while it is a prerogative (FPP – foreign policy prerogative) of the prime minister, it does not seem to be based on a clear strategy. Afghanistan
has meant major mobilization of public opinion against the use of force, and it seems likely that the latter will influence the decisions on this in the future. Thus, France may be the most ‘insulated’ with regard to decision to use force, public opinion having little impact. The United Kingdom is more prone to being influenced by the latter, yet retains the FPP as well.

In other states in this study, we see that Germany is very influenced by its historical experience as well as its public opinion, adverse to the use of force. Here Christopher Coker’s point that the attitude to the use of force is cultural is surely correct. In Poland the recent reticence to the use of force is rather political than cultural: the desire to have a special relationship with the United States was frustrated, we learn. In Spain, domestic public opinion matters, as well as cultural antipathy to using force. In Hungary the government has followed the United States, but also has genuine national interests in the Balkans. In Denmark and Norway, we see evidence of political and ideological factors playing a key role: both states have variation in their contributions over time – Denmark has moved from being a ‘laggard’ in NATO to being the most responsive to US expectations, while Norway has maintained closeness to the United States as a major strategy since 1945, but in the 2005–2009 Socialist government with left-wing SV in the coalition we have seen how domestic factors trumped this policy line.

Regarding political willingness to use force, we therefore can conclude that political ideology matters directly for NATO contributions and for the relationship to the United States, that is, for burden-sharing. But we also see that states with military cultures that are strategic in nature, thus actively using force, are less influenced by political factors. The United Kingdom and France use force in a habitual manner regardless of ideology: there is no discernible difference between Sarkozy and Hollande, or between Brown and Cameron. Moreover, Germany continues to be averse to the use of military force even when a conservative chancellor is governing – there seems to be little difference between Schröder and Merkel with regard to the aversion to the military instrument.

It is no surprise that military ability is closely correlated with political will, in fact, it is a function of political will. In these chapters we learn that the major ‘smart defence’ project in Europe is the British–French collaboration which has lasted more than a decade. The major military actors in Europe politically are also the major trail-blazers for military modernization and integration. Germany, on the other hand, does not go for much expeditionary force, but continues to keep a large mobilization army. Denmark and Norway are both active in getting to
the best levels in terms of modernization, seeking to be interoperable with the United Kingdom and United States. One interesting feature of the German case is the relaxation regarding the United States and NATO pressures to contribute. Germany seems to say that ‘we have different priorities’, the use of force is not one of them.

The country chapters show that most governments look to the United States when deciding to contribute to international operations. Alliance loyalty or dependence is the major reason why contributions come. This finding is consistent with the literature discussed above, but it also raises a very important question: What will happen to military contributions once the United States is no longer in the lead of an operation? If Libya is the first example of things to come, it will be up to European states and not the United States to both initiate, lead and take full responsibility for operations in the vicinity of the region. As Kay’s chapter brings out, the United States is serious about its new strategic priority in Asia and also about the need for Europe not only to carry much more burden but also to lead operations.

Given this, what do the chapters tell us about such political willingness? The Libya operation was both initiated and led by France, in close cooperation with the United Kingdom. As we have seen, these are the two major military cultures in Europe which both have the FPP and militaries with a global reach. If European allies will continue to conduct international operations, it will probably have to be under French and/or British leadership.

In France the FPP obtains without any important restrictions in terms of political ideology or public opinion. As Boyer underlines, there is no major change in strategy brought by the ideological change of Hollande versus Sarkozy. The French institutional system is so designed that long-term (30 years!) strategic planning is possible, and the system is on purpose insulated from political change in the short term. France is clearly the state where the ‘score’ on political ability or willingness to use force is the highest.

The United Kingdom is similar in terms of FPP, but in the United Kingdom public opinion seems to have become important as a function of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Iraq was agreed to by Tony Blair without much consultation, as necessary given the importance of the ‘special relationship’, but it turned out to be a controversial decision as the situation in the field worsened. The Afghan operation has brought home many fallen, and British public opinion has become engaged in a new manner. The Libya operation was agreed to by Prime Minister Cameron against the strategic advice of advisors, military as
well as civilians. This decision was not the result of long-term strategic thinking.

Thus, the two leading military states of Europe are both equipped with the FPP, making their leaders able to decide themselves on the use of force. However, the United Kingdom seems less clear about strategy today than before, whereas France shows continuity because of its institutional ‘lock-in’.

These states are of course able to deploy globally and to sustain such deployments over time. However, also they experience budget cuts, and have started very important bilateral cooperation as far back as in 1998. These states initiated the EU’s development of battle groups and defence policy with the St. Malo declaration in 1998, and are today more focused on national-level and NATO-level cooperation (Matlary, 2009). The British–French military equipment deal is significant for two reasons: Firstly, it shows that even the biggest states of Europe have to find partners if they are to maintain their status in the future; secondly, it shows that the time is ripe or even overdue for such deals. This arrangement was started more than a decade ago, but to date, few if any other states – which need partners even more – have moved into such encompassing deals with others.

Germany, the third large power of Europe, made a furore over Libya by abstaining from the UN Security Council. Schreer makes the point that this decision can be read as an expression of national interest: Germany is wary of international operations and finds that economic interests are much more important than military interests. Germany simply does not want to be a great power in the world in traditional coercive diplomacy, he argues. Perhaps Schreer is right in pointing out that German assertiveness today means to opt for another type of great power status, that is based on economic power and soft power diplomacy. If this is the case, Germany will continue this strategic line in NATO – not follow the United States, not deploy in international operations as a main rule, in short, be a ‘selective ally’, as he puts it.

The implications of this are that the leading states of NATO regarding the use of force will be France and the United Kingdom to an even greater extent in the future than today. The future model of NATO operations in and around Europe looks like it will centre on British–French leadership around which coalitions will be built. This is a model that is already in place – coalitions have been common in NATO for a long time, starting with Kosovo. The new element is that the United States will no longer lead such operations where its own interests are not involved.
But even if the United States is not in the lead, it will matter greatly to the United States whether European NATO carries more of the burden, even in operations where the United States is not involved. If NATO is to deter, it has to be able both to coerce and to fight. This is the essential point. An alliance that is unable to act is no deterrent. Therefore, there will be expectations that all members of NATO contribute, as an alliance with ‘dead weight’ is not only burdened by free riders but this also has a detrimental effect on the deterring ability of the alliance. This means that the importance of alliance dependence will not go away.

The fundamental need for Europe to keep NATO alive implies that the United States keep a keen interest in Article 5. The United States demands that Europe carry more of the burden and that Europe undertake to lead operations from now on. This demand can be seen as a sine qua non for NATO to continue as the deterrent and security guarantee that it is today. If Europeans do more, the United States will also do its part. This ‘new deal’ in NATO will have to function if the United States is to continue taking interest in the alliance. Therefore European allies must continue not only to contribute but also to accept responsibility for operations.

One may object that there will not be a need for new international operations after ISAF and Libya. This objection presupposes that NATO plans for which operations it will undertake. It does not. ‘Events, my dear boy, events’, is reputed to have been Harold Macmillan’s response when asked what determines international politics. Events determine where NATO goes – no one ever planned to be in sharp operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan or Libya.

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