

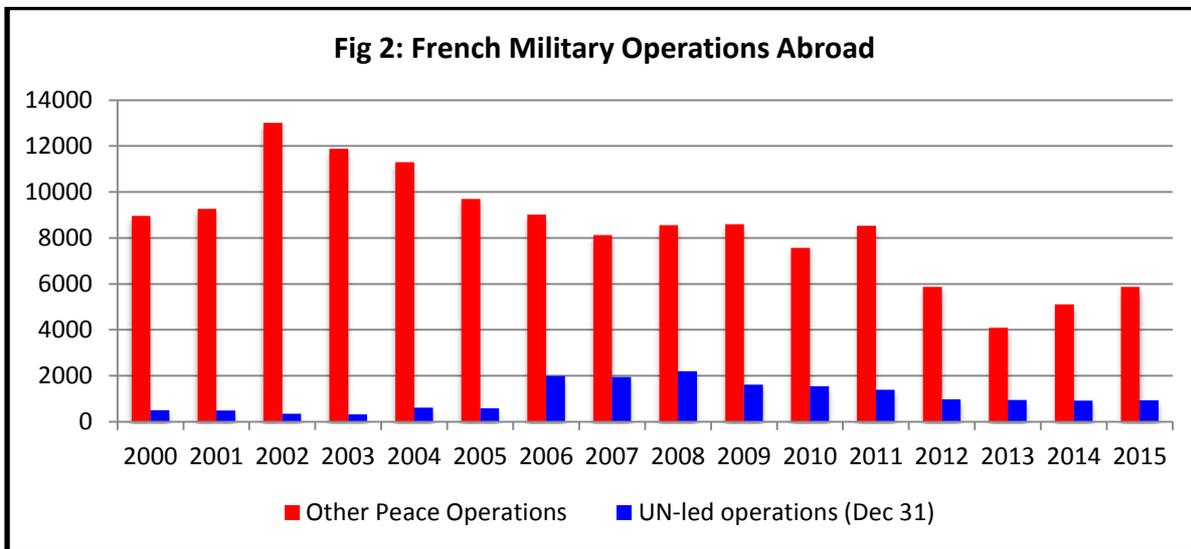
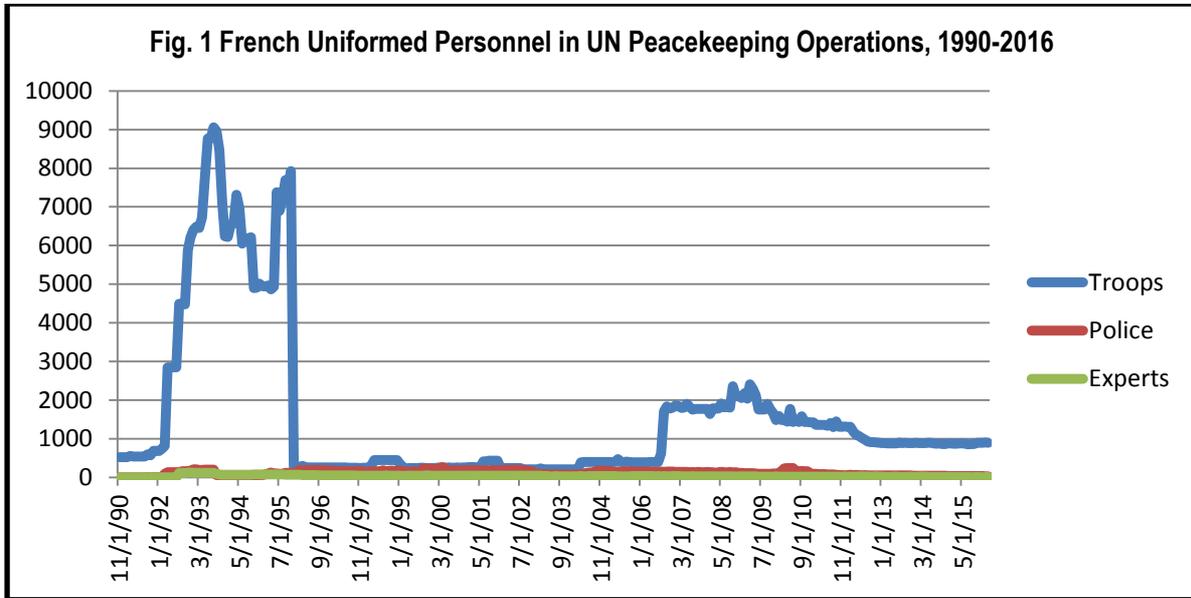
**CONTRIBUTOR PROFILE: FRANCE**

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Active Armed Forces <sup>1</sup>	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
208,950	Attack: 51 (+ 35 Anti-Submarine Warfare)	2015: US\$46.8bn (\$1=0.9€) (1.93% of GDP)	937 (52 women) (29 Feb. 2016)	MINURSO 8 experts	As of Dec. 2015 Gulf of Aden (Chammal): 1 Destroyer with anti-ship missiles
World Ranking (size): <b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>			Ranking: <b>30<sup>th</sup></b>	MINUSCA 12 (3 police, 9 troops)	Mediterranean: Aircraft Carrier Group
Army 111,650	Multi-role: 214	2014: US\$52.1bn (1.84% of GDP)	(2 <sup>nd</sup> largest contributor from EU and NATO after Italy)	MINUSMA 38 (9 police, 29 troops)	Mali (Barkhane): 1,680
Navy 36,050 (inc. 2,200 Strategic Nuclear Forces)	Transport: 204	2013: US\$52.3bn (1.86% of GDP)		MINUSTAH 7 police	Chad (Barkhane): 1,250
Air Force 43,600	(19 hvy; 150 med; 35 light)			MONUSCO 13 (8 police, 5 troops)	Niger (Barkhane): 350
Other staffs 17,650				UNIFIL 846 troops	Burkina Faso (Barkhane): 220
Paramilitary 103,400		World Ranking (2015): <b>7<sup>th</sup></b>		UNMIL 1 troop	Central African Republic (Sangaris): 900
				UNOCI 11 (5 police, 6 troops)	Côte d'Ivoire: 600
				UNTSO 1 expert	
Defense Spending / Troop: <sup>2</sup> <b>\$223,977</b> (compared to global average of approx. US\$79,396; European average US\$115,767)					

**Part 1: Recent Trends**

Having been a large troop contributor to UN-led operations in the early 1990s, in the mid-1990s France underwent a policy shift to distance itself from UN missions. Through its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, France remained very active in shaping debates about UN peacekeeping but largely refrained from contributing to UN operations. In the 2000s, France started to return to UN peacekeeping in a select number of operations, notably in Côte d'Ivoire, Lebanon, and Chad, together with police contributions to missions in Kosovo and Haiti. But with the exception of Lebanon, those contributions did not last. The strengthening of UNIFIL in Lebanon in 2006 saw the largest French contribution to a UN operation since the mid-1990s. The French contingent was increased from 432 personnel in August to 1,531 personnel in September 2006, and up to 2,177 personnel in September 2008. With this deployment France once again became a top 20 UN troop contributing country. It is currently ranked 30<sup>th</sup>.



Since then, however, France’s presence in UN operations has remained rather low, although it remains one of the top European contributors to UN missions. By early 2016, France was participating in nine UN operations with about 900 personnel out. This keeps France around 30<sup>th</sup> in the contributor country rankings, second among the five permanent members of the Security Council after China, and second after Italy in the ‘Western European and Others Group’ (WEOG).

In the meantime, France has contributed to a number of UN-authorized missions, under NATO, EU, or national flag, most notably in Afghanistan, Kosovo, the Gulf of Aden, Côte d’Ivoire, Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), and the Mediterranean Sea. Much larger in terms of troop deployments, these commitments have little to do with the scope of the French presence in UN-led operations.

France’s relatively modest troop and police presence within UN-led operations contrasts with its major role at the political level, particularly at the UN Security Council. In 2009, France, together with the United Kingdom, launched an initiative to improve the overall effectiveness

of operations and in particular their political and military direction.<sup>3</sup> More recently, France has emphasized the need to develop cooperation among UN missions, to further mainstream the protection of civilians in UN mandates, and to better articulate the transition between peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.<sup>4</sup>

While France's 2008 and 2013 [White Papers on Defence and National Security](#) put the UN at the center of the international security architecture, including in its role of legitimizing peacekeeping operations, the UN is still perceived as structurally ill-adapted to France's conception of military crisis management.<sup>5</sup> The 2013 White Paper observed that "Whether the result of a growing aversion to risk-taking, doubts about the effectiveness of recent operations or the impact of financial constraints, Europe and the United States have greater misgivings about committing to large scale, extended foreign intervention", before deploring that "attempts at reform [the UN] launched in the first decade of the 21st century have not achieved the expected results" and that "UN reform has thus far been a failure".<sup>6</sup>

The UN as an operational framework is not prominent in recent French military doctrine. Instead, France has preferred to operate within other frameworks over the last decade, including NATO (Afghanistan, Kosovo), the EU (Democratic Republic of Congo), anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden, Chad, Mali, and CAR), or the national framework (Operation *Licorne* in Côte d'Ivoire, *Sangaris* in CAR, *Serval* and *Barkhane* in Mali and the Sahel).

## **Part 2: Decision-making**

Under the Fifth Republic (starting in 1958), the French foreign policy decision-making process has largely been in the hands of the president. This has been constant regardless of the political orientation of the president and of the prime minister. Insofar as military contingents deployed in UN peace operations are concerned, decisions are made by the president as Chief of the armed forces but are to a large extent shaped by the ministers of defense and foreign affairs. If need be, the president can call a "Restricted Defense Council" meeting that brings under his chairmanship the prime minister, the foreign affairs and defense ministers, the chief of defense staff and other representatives of the French security apparatus. In New York, the permanent representation is closely involved in decision-making, and is traditionally headed by one of the most senior French diplomats.

Parliament plays a limited role in this process. In 2008, [Article 35 of the Constitution](#) was amended to make it mandatory for the executive power to "inform the Parliament of its decision to deploy armed forces abroad, at the latest three days after the beginning of the intervention" and to ask for the "authorization of the Parliament" to prolong the length of the intervention after a period of four months. Such a vote was cast only once in relation to a UN-led operation (over UNIFIL on 28 January 2009). To date, this provision has not significantly modified the decision-making process or degree of parliamentary oversight.

## **Part 3: Rationales for Contributing**

*Political and Security Rationales:* Peace operations appear as tools of France's security policy to influence events in areas where it has strategic interests. At the same time, these operations are a way for France to raise its profile as a political and military power, therefore legitimizing its permanent seat on the Security Council. In general terms, a presence in UN operations is one of the key dimensions of the French response to security threats. By contributing to UN operations, France intends to project security to areas where threats to its own security – such as regional conflicts, refugee flows, organized crime, humanitarian

emergencies, or violations of human rights – can emerge. Côte d’Ivoire, Chad and Lebanon provide examples of situations where French political and security interests were thought to require a military presence in UN operations deployed there. Yet, the French position towards the UN also indicates that if there were core national security interests to be defended through a peace operation, the UN would not likely be seen as the first institutional choice (see below). Put differently, the UN is an option as long as the operation’s mandate falls within the realm of peacekeeping, but is seen as less relevant whenever the operation implies a robust posture that potentially goes beyond the UN capacity (as in Afghanistan, Libya, or the Sahel).

*Economic Rationales:* While economic factors help explain France’s policy towards military interventions in general, they do not play a central role in France’s UN peacekeeping policy. The UN reimbursement system does not influence France’s institutional choices. This being said, cases like Côte d’Ivoire or Chad have shown that a contribution to a UN operation can be partially justified by the necessity to preserve stability in countries where French economic interests exist. Furthermore, they can be conducted at a low price compared with national operations. In the meantime, as with France’s security interests, the UN is unlikely to be perceived as the best option where economic interests are high.

*Institutional Rationales:* Institutional issues create a dilemma for France: on the one hand the UN is seen as a legitimacy provider and a contribution to a UN operation may therefore strengthen the French position at the Security Council. On the other hand, the UN is perceived as too operationally constraining to constitute the first crisis management option. One way in which France has tried to reconcile these two premises is through supporting UN-authorized but not UN-led missions.

*Normative/Cosmopolitan Rationales:* Humanitarian concerns are part of the French foreign policy narrative and play an indirect role in decision-making (as illustrated by the French contribution to MINUSTAH in Haiti in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake). However, as illustrated by EU-led operations in the DRC, Chad or CAR, such cosmopolitan motives do not necessarily find their way through the UN. In these three cases, although UN operations were established, France chose other institutional frameworks for its own action. More generally, the narrative around France’s long-standing supportive stance on human rights should be nuanced by what is essentially a realist approach to military interventions and the use of force. This mix of realist and liberal conceptions of security governance is a recurrent dual narrative characteristic of France’s policy towards the UN.

#### **Part 4: Barriers to Contributing**

*Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management:* The difficulties encountered by the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-95) in which France was one of the largest contributors, have had a direct impact on the French perception of the role of the UN in conflict management, until today. More specifically, a major lesson of the Bosnian experience (and reinforced by the Rwandan genocide of 1994) was that the UN was not an appropriate tool for complex and multidimensional peace operations, and therefore had to be replaced by other instruments, be they multilateral/institutional or national. This led France to look for other institutional options. Those alternative options are mainly NATO, the EU, and the national framework; they have not been clearly identified in doctrinal documents yet were opted for in practice: NATO in Kosovo (KFOR), Afghanistan (ISAF) and Libya (Operation Unified Protector); the EU in the DRC (Operations *Artemis* and EUFOR/DRC), Chad/CAR (EUFOR Tchad/RCA), the Gulf of Aden (Operation *Atalanta*),

CAR (EUFOR RCA) and the Mediterranean Sea (EUNAVFOR Med); the national framework in Operation *Licorne* in Côte d'Ivoire, *Serval* in Mali and *Barkhane* in the Sahel, *Sangaris* in CAR, and Operation *Chammal* in Iraq and Syria. The French narrative emphasizes that these other missions are UN-mandated (with the exception of operations *Serval*, *Barkhane* and *Chammal*, the legal basis of which are bilateral agreements) and are complementary to UN-led operations.

*Financial costs:* In 2014, the extra-costs (or additional costs) of the French contribution to UNIFIL in Lebanon (notwithstanding the UN reimbursement that represents approximately 30% of the expenses in the case of France) were €57.4 million (versus €83.3 million in 2010).<sup>7</sup> Although the financial issue is important, it is not central in shaping France's choice for one institution instead of the other – indeed the UN tends to be cheaper than operations run by the EU and NATO (where the “costs lie where they fall” rule applies) and this does not influence French policy choices.

*Discomfort with the UN peacekeeping principles:* Within the French debate, peace operations are not considered as a specific category of military operations in which different principles would apply. [French doctrinal texts](#) of the last decade are explicit on the need to ensure that wherever the French armed forces are deployed, they are engaged in accordance with some key military principles, among which the freedom of action and the possibility to resort to coercion. Also a contribution to peace operations must not jeopardize the identity of the soldier as a “warrior”. This partly explains the weak presence in UN operations as it creates an inherent difficulty to reconcile the constraints of contemporary peace operations (and the implications of the consent-based and non coercive approach) with the imperative of military action. This was only reinforced with the operations run by France in Mali (*Serval*) and CAR (*Sangaris*) that confirmed that non-permissive environments necessitated a flexible and robust command and control structure, at odds with what the UN offers. Paradoxically, it is also in these two countries that France pushed, often against the dominant trend, for the creation of UN multidimensional operations, in which France refrained from contributing.

*Resistance in the military:* Overall, a broad consensus across the political spectrum has presided over the nature of French involvement in UN operations, and this is likely to hold in the coming years. Over the last fifteen years, many of the current senior generals (who had command responsibilities in UN operations of the early 1990s) have been reluctant to put French soldiers under UN command and have played a key role in advocating alternatives to the UN command and control structure. To illustrate, in 2006, increased French commitment to UNIFIL was made possible by the establishment of the Strategic Military Cell (SMC) within the DPKO, which was supposed to give the French military optimum control over the use of their units. The “imperfect” nature of the UN was therefore partly remedied by the creation of this mechanism. Yet, in practice, the structure was resisted within DPKO and in the end marginalized in the operation oversight, to the extent that few recommended that it should be replicated. The French effort to revitalize the UN Military Staff Committee can also be seen as an attempt to address some of the French concerns by increasing military advice going into the UN system and command and control arrangements.

In the end, the UN is not seen as the most appropriate instrument for the type of conflict management tasks facing the French military. French officials tend to see the UN through the lens of the early 1990s, although it is difficult to distinguish whether this perception is the result of current assessments of UN capacity, or if it is the product of historically-based anguish rooted in UNPROFOR's failures twenty years ago. Nevertheless, distrust of the UN

is not shared equally by the diplomats and the military. Diplomats are more open to a wide spectrum of options depending on the circumstances and geopolitical context, and therefore less reluctant to consider the UN option. This may, in the medium to long run, impact French policy towards a more UN-friendly approach.

*Legal obstacles:* There are no legal obstacles to French participation in UN peacekeeping operations. The decision-making process being in the hands of the executive branch is often presented as an advantage of the French system as it allows for quick deployments. Nevertheless, over the last decade, concerns have been regularly expressed about the excessive legal constraints attached to military operations (“*judicialisation*”) and the ensuing risks for military commanders who may be legally and personally held accountable for orders given in the course of an operation. These concerns gained importance following a court case against French officers over a possible negligence in providing security to soldiers killed in an ambush in Afghanistan in 2008. This debate, however, must not be confused with that over allegations of sexual exploitation by French soldiers in the context of the UN-mandated but French-led operation Sangaris in Central African Republic. French authorities are investigating the matter. Nevertheless, no matter how intolerable these abuses – if proven real – might be, they are unlikely to impact the French policy towards UN peacekeeping operations.

#### **Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues**

UN operations are unlikely to disappear or totally give way to operations conducted by regional organizations, and France will most likely remain an important actor for international conflict management. As a consequence, it would appear to be logical for France to try and strengthen an institution that one day might again become an option for French military projection. Furthermore, though the UN might not be the preferred option, the recent history of conflict management practices has demonstrated how scenarios that seemed unlikely at a given moment can become contemplated and even reality in response to specific circumstances.

And indeed, Mali has provided an example of European states deploying assets in a UN operation after a long period of absence. The Netherlands, and then Sweden, have respectively deployed 450 and 250 troops in MINUSMA, including with rapid reaction and robust capacity. In parallel, a few European countries – including The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Finland and Estonia – contribute personnel to an intelligence fusion cell integrated into the MINUSMA. In late 2015, Germany also indicated it would deploy up to 600 troops in the MINUSMA, while the UK promised 250-300 engineers for UNMISS and up to 70 troops for UNSOS in Somalia.

This being said, the French position towards UN peacekeeping remains extremely prudent and does not suggest a policy shift in the coming years. Not only does mistrust towards the UN remain important, but operational and financial constraints (mainly budget reductions) are such that the prospect of new French military deployments in UN-led operations does not appear very likely. In the aftermath of the November 2015 Paris attacks, France will probably concentrate on the most robust engagements and if UN operations form part of a broad response, this will be without any significant French contribution.

In parallel to these developments, recent evolutions in UN peacekeeping have produced configurations that better suit French requirements. In particular, the scenario where a rapid reaction force operates in support of a UN operation but remains operationally distinct is a

model that receives attention in France. Be it in the DRC in 2006 with the EU-led operation EUFOR DRC in support of the MONUC, in Côte d'Ivoire with Operation *Licorne* providing operational support to UNOCI, in CAR with Operation *Sangaris* and EUFOR RCA in support of MINUSCA, or even *Serval* supporting MINUSMA in Mali, France has developed an alternative model of cooperation that suits its requirements better. Rather than having French units within UN operations, French policy-makers argue that the best use of those units is in smaller but more robust missions that can deploy in support of the longer-term UN engagement. Behind this is the idea of division of tasks among different types of forces that need to be employed for what they do best.

Through operations that can be national, NATO- or EU-led, or run by a coalition of states, France can simultaneously contribute to stabilization imperatives under its own conditions while also supporting UN missions. In practical terms, national operations also offer the flexibility of increasing or decreasing the size of the French deployment as needed (as France has done with operations *Licorne*, *Serval/Barkhane* and *Sangaris*) while such fluctuations are not possible within the more rigid UN framework. Often though, the French presence finds itself dependent on the performance of the UN parallel or forthcoming operations, which then become central aspects of the French exit strategy.

This template is also to a large extent how France approaches the EU-UN partnership – as a substitute for direct EU (member states') participation in UN operations but with the idea that Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions could support the UN's broader role in maintaining international peace and security. Finally, the French support to UN peacekeeping has lately taken the form of getting a few key positions in some missions (about 35 in MINUSMA in Mali) or having a French officer as Force Commander (as is the case in UNOCI since 2015). In the future, France is more likely to favour these different types of support than it is to contemplate the deployment of units in a UN-led mission.

#### **Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents**

France's UN policy is not backed by any sustained debate among French think tanks or the academic community. None of the main Paris-based think tanks have real expertise or interest in UN security affairs. French officials and scholars have a low profile in the various policy and academic conferences dealing with peacekeeping. Furthermore, France's active role in official debates (at the Security Council) contrasts with a relatively small presence in DPKO, where France has put its weight on keeping the position of Under Secretary-General (USG) rather than on "placing" French citizens at intermediary levels (P5 to D2 positions). Also, none of the main political parties have a strong opinion on France's policy towards UN peace operations, and the debates are more on where to deploy troops and why rather than through which institutional framework. The absence of debate makes evident that current perceptions are still to a large degree determined by experiences of the early 1990s.

#### **Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats**

Despite budgetary cuts and downsizing of its forces – both suspended following the November 2015 Paris attacks – France still retains relatively large projection capabilities, with high-technology equipment, logistical and command, control and communications assets. France also has police forces with a military status (Gendarmerie forces) that are in high demand in UN operations.

In terms of caveats, France insists that its forces remain under national or allied command, although the cases of Lebanon, Côte d'Ivoire and Chad of a decade ago showed that French

forces could also be placed under UN command (yet in the Lebanon case in 2006 this was initially made possible by the establishment of the Strategic Military Cell within DPKO). Most importantly, France is eager to define Rules of Engagement (RoE) and to equip its forces so as to give them sufficient leeway to face any type of situation.

France is a “Level 3” participant of the UN Standby Arrangement System (MOU signed in 1999), with pledges including air services, civilian police, headquarters, infantry and logistics. At the September 2015 “Obama summit” on peacekeeping operations, France’s pledges were rather modest and centred on providing French language training to 25,000 troops and training 80,000 African troops.

### **Part 8: Further Reading**

[\*Winning the Battle. Building Peace. Land forces in Present and Future Conflicts\*](#), FT-01, Centre de Doctrine d’Emploi des Forces, Paris, January 2007.

[\*French White Paper on Defence and National Security\*](#), Paris, 2008.

*French White Paper on Defence and National Security*, Direction de l’information légale et administrative, Paris, 2013.

[\*France-UK Non-Paper on UN Peacekeeping\*](#), January 2009.

[\*Capstone Concept on the Employment of Armed Forces\*](#), Joint Concept JC-01, CICDE, French Ministry of Defence, Paris, 2010.

*Comprehensive Approach to External Crisis Management (Military Contribution)*, Joint Centre for Concepts, Doctrine and Experimentation (CICDE), Joint Headquarters, Paris, 2011.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from the IISS, *The Military Balance 2016* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Armed Forces Spending is a country’s annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of *active* armed forces. Using 2015 figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016*.

<sup>3</sup> See Franco-British non-paper on Peacekeeping, January 2009, listed above; and Statement by the President of the Security Council, S/PRST/2009/24, 5 August 2009.

<sup>4</sup> See speech by the Permanent Representative of France at the Security Council, New York, 20 June 2012.

<sup>5</sup> *White Paper on Defence and National Security* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2008), pp.114-116.

<sup>6</sup> *French White Paper on Defence and National Security* (Direction de l’information légale et administrative, Paris, 2013), p.31.

<sup>7</sup> [\*Report on the 2015 Budgetary Law\*](#), French Senate, Paris, October 2014.