DDIS Intelligence Risk Assessment 2013
An intelligence assessment of developments abroad affecting Denmark’s security
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Welcome to the Intelligence Risk Assessment 2013 of the Danish Defence Intelligence Service. Based on classified reporting, it is an intelligence assessment of developments abroad affecting Denmark’s security for the coming decade.

The Intelligence Risk Assessment 2013 has been prepared with publication in mind and is aimed at a wide audience. This affects the way the report is formulated, the number of details and the sharpness of certain analyses.

In this year’s edition we focus on cyber threats, the Arctic development and the conflicts in the Middle East, primarily in Syria, and the Syrian conflict’s impact on the global terror threat.

To facilitate easier reading of the risk assessment, the final chapter includes a description of some of the special language and work methods used in our intelligence analyses.

Additional information on the Danish Defence Intelligence Service can be found on our website: www.fe-ddis.dk.

Information cut-off date is 1 October 2013.

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Director Danish Defence Intelligence Service
Foreign intelligence services, state-sponsored groups and private individuals are increasingly conducting cyber espionage and making attempts at controlling key IT systems and stealing knowledge. This puts demands on security precautions and preparedness. At the same time, there is a growing insider threat posed by employees who negligently or deliberately compromise security in their workplace. Focus is also increasing on the supply chain threat, where malware or remote-controllable components are built into hardware and software during production in order to be activated through the Internet.

The Arctic region will be characterized by cooperation and competition rather than confrontation and military conflict. Russia will likely pursue its objectives within the confines of international law. However, there is a risk that Russia may toughen its strategy, if its claims, which the Russian leadership considers legitimate, are not met. China is interested in utilizing the Arctic sea lanes and sees opportunities in supporting its industrial growth by means of energy and raw materials extracted in the Arctic region.

The risk of major terrorist attacks in the West such as the 11 September 2001 attacks in New York has been reduced significantly, particularly due to the weakening of the al-Qaida leadership. Yet, al-Qaida and its sympathizers will remain a threat. The terror threat will mainly come from militant Islamists returning to the West from areas of conflict such as Syria. Western targets in the Middle East and in parts of Africa and Asia remain threatened by groups affiliated with or inspired by al-Qaida. These groups are capable of conducting major attacks locally as they have shown in Algeria and Kenya in 2013.

The Middle East and North Africa will remain a region characterized by instability and unrest associated with the uprisings in the Arab countries and the mounting tension between Shiites and Sunni Muslims. The Syrian conflict has grown increasingly deadlocked and international, involving both the United States and Russia, and it is not only the object of rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The outcome of the conflict extensively depends on foreign intervention or changes in the support provided to the opposing sides. The Muslim Brotherhood’s loss of power in Egypt will weaken the regional progress made by the Islamist movements in recent years. This loss of power could also initiate growing radicalization as al-Qaida could choose to exploit the armed forces’ assumption of power in its ideological propaganda.

Despite developments in Syria and Egypt, Iran and its nuclear programme remains the predominant regional security policy issue. Iran will not relinquish its right to enrich uranium. The continued build up of its capability to enrich uranium enables Iran to rapidly produce nuclear weapons if it decides to do so. Generally, the threat from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is growing.

Piracy and armed robbery against ships continue to pose a threat to civilian shipping in the waters off East Africa and West Africa. The number of piracy incidents in the waters off East Africa has declined to a very low level due, for instance, to the
pressure from international naval forces. However, a minor number of Somali pirate groups still have the capability and intent to launch attacks. Without assistance, the Somali federal government is incapable of preventing piracy off the Horn of Africa. In West Africa the number of attacks remains at a comparatively stable level compared with previous years.

The will of the Taliban to defeat the Afghan government is unyielding, generating a prospect of years of insurgency in Afghanistan, particularly in eastern and southern Afghanistan. Yet, the Taliban is not winning the insurgency in Afghanistan. Popular opposition and local uprisings bear witness to this. Additionally, the Taliban is confronted by the Afghan security forces, which are continuously improving their capability of defeating the insurgent group. The new Chinese leadership has realized that the country’s economic growth must to a great extent be based on increased domestic demand rather than on intensive investments and export. China’s relationship with the United States is the key aspect of China’s foreign policy. The two countries are engaged in stronger competition for strategic influence in East Asia. A closer relationship between China and Russia is based on a converging strategic interest in countering the global influence of the United States.

Russia is more frequently opposing the United States and is pursuing its interests up to the point where its relations with the United States would suffer irreparably. This is evident in, for instance, Syria which Russia considers a key strategic strongpoint in the Middle East. The stability of the Russian regime may come under pressure due to its inability to renew itself and to reform the Russian economy.
Foreign intelligence services, state-sponsored groups and private individuals are increasingly conducting cyber espionage and making attempts at controlling key IT systems and stealing knowledge. This puts demands on security precautions and preparedness. At the same time, there is a growing insider threat posed by employees who negligently or deliberately compromise security in their workplace. Focus is also increasing on the supply chain threat, where malware or remote-controllable components are built into hardware and software during production in order to be activated through the Internet.

Every day, Danish public authorities, Danish companies and private individuals are exposed to disturbing or harmful activities from various actors, both on or via the Internet. So far in 2013, cyber attacks have disturbed or temporarily prevented the use of Danish Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. Moreover, in recent years cyber attacks have been conducted against vital targets in Denmark, compromising information security. These trends are highly likely to continue.

Foreign intelligence services, state-sponsored private individuals and organizations, and criminal organizations are conducting espionage against Danish companies and public authorities. These companies and public authorities include the Danish Armed Forces, including Danish troops deployed abroad and companies working under defence contracts. Moreover, the espionage is directed against Danish Arctic policies, including the activities of the Danish Armed Forces in the Arctic, as well as NATO and European defence cooperation.

The collection methods of espionage are multifaceted, ranging from cyber espionage to traditional espionage that involves the exploitation of human relations through personal contacts and the recruitment of informants. Cyber espionage constitutes an increasing share of espionage activities compared to more traditional espionage and constitutes a security risk to the Danish society as a whole, the Danish Armed Forces and troops deployed abroad. Internet-based espionage is cheap and the information can be collected over great distances and via third countries. This makes it extremely difficult to uncover who is actually carrying out the espionage.

State actors are the biggest threat
The most serious cyber threats against Denmark come from state actors, who use the Internet to spy on and steal Danish intellectual property and business secrets such as business plans, research results, technical know-how, budget information and agreements. This threat mainly comes from states that use the information to support their own economic, military and social development. Several states have the means to launch extensive espionage intrusions against Danish interests and to launch specific and destructive cyber attacks against Danish ICT infrastructure. Such attacks will not likely be launched against Denmark in the next 10 years; however state-sponsored cyber espionage against the Danish state and Danish interests will continue.

Hackers have comparatively free rein
Politically and economically motivated hackers will continue to disrupt and damage Danish websites and servers, not least due to easy online access to cyber attack kits.

Therefore, the cyber threat also comes from private individuals and small groups, including hacktivists whose motives are often political. Hacktivists need not be particularly technically skilled to disrupt or damage Danish websites and servers as many of the tools of
their trade can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet. Particularly technically skilled private individuals are able to access even major public and private organizations, if these fail to keep their security measures at an optimum level.

Some states use private hackers to conduct harmful activities via the Internet on behalf of the state. In this way, a state can avoid incurring legal and political responsibility as it is often difficult to demonstrate that the state in question is responsible.

Terrorists show interest in cyber attacks
Militant Islamists are showing an interest in using the Internet to launch cyber attacks. Illustrative of this is al-Qaida calling for so-called electronic jihad against Western countries. Individual militant Islamists will likely be capable of launching attacks using so-called distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks or gain access to computer systems with protected data by using software that is available online. However, militant Islamists still regard cyber attacks and hacking as secondary attack methods ranking below traditional terrorists attacks.

Increasing insider threat
The insider threat is posed by individuals who deliberately or negligently compromise security in their workplace. Such breaches may lead to theft of data or introduction of harmful software, so-called malware. They may be the result of poor understanding of security regulations in the organization such as insufficient insight into potential threats to the organization, insufficient focus on computer security as well as inadequate knowledge or understanding of security regulations. Furthermore, the threat can come from a deliberate action aimed at leaking certain information.

As more companies want to use net-based services and as the demand for open online communication increases, the risk of employees negligently compromising security will increase. In general, employees have gained easier access to information as companies are increasingly giving out IT equipment to their employees, such as smartphones, to be used by them privately. Should employees violate company security policies in relation to the use of the IT equipment, the risk of outsiders gaining access to the company’s internal network and thereby its information will increase. At the same time, malicious actors are perfecting their skills at posing as legitimate recipients of sensitive information, thus gaining access to information from restricted networks.

Technological development changes risk pattern
Risk patterns change as the number of online devices and equipment grows by leaps every year. Employees working in the public sector, private companies and other organizations are increasingly dependent on access from mobile equipment to information on the company and organization network. More information will be accessible on the Internet instead of on local servers or computers, resulting in a changed risk pattern, which, in turn, demands new security measures.

In this context, system owners must assess the risk of unwanted activity in their IT systems and increase their focus on the need for monitoring systems, including logging, and their contingency plans in case of attack.

Malware, including viruses, Trojans and worms, is becoming more advanced. Malware, which only a few years back was considered complex and not particularly widespread, can now be downloaded by anyone on the Internet. The complexity of the coding and the infrastructure in some types of malware suggest that they have been developed by actors with in-depth technical know-how and access to significant resources.
There is a rising awareness of the so-called supply chain threat, where malware or remote-controllable components are built into hardware and software during production in order to be activated and exploited by malicious actors through the Internet. This may enable the actors to monitor, terminate or control a process via the Internet. Supply chain threats may come from any link in the production chain. Much hardware and software have become complex to the point where even major international companies and state-owned organizations do not detect the supply chain threats.
The Arctic region will be characterized by cooperation and competition rather than confrontation and military conflict. Russia will likely pursue its objectives within the confines of international law. However, there is a risk that Russia may toughen its strategy, if its claims, which the Russian leadership considers legitimate, are not met. China is interested in utilizing the Arctic sea lanes and sees opportunities in supporting its industrial growth by means of energy and raw materials extracted in the Arctic region.

Climate changes have increased the interest in the Arctic region. The majority of climate experts assess that a considerable part of the Arctic sea ice will melt, providing better access to the area. Consequently, the scope for maritime shipping in the area will grow and so will the possibilities of extracting raw materials, oil and gas in particular, from a larger area. However, with extraction costs in the Arctic being very high, extraction of oil and gas will be determined by high energy prices.

The vast majority of the Arctic subsoil remains unexplored, but preliminary geological examinations indicate the presence of deposits of oil, natural gas and other natural resources. There are numerous indications that only a minor part of the expected, but so far unexplored, Arctic oil and gas reserves are located in the disputed areas of the seabed.

All coastal states poised for cooperation
The Arctic coastal states – the United States, Russia, Canada, Norway and the Kingdom of Denmark – have all intensified their focus on the Arctic and strengthened their efforts to
secure exploitation rights to the Arctic Ocean seabed. As signatories to the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration, all the coastal states have agreed to solve potential future disputes in the Arctic through negotiations, pledging that they will observe the recommendations of the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UN CLCS). The UN CLCS recommendations are intended to serve as guidelines for how the coastal states must divide the right to exploit the Arctic seabed and subsoil.

All of the Arctic coastal states are considering enhancing their military capabilities in the region, albeit to varying degrees. They are primarily preparing for tasks such as maritime surveillance, and search and rescue services. This will prove relevant not least once large merchant and cruise ships start passing through the Arctic waters. In this context, the states are looking to strengthen cooperation. However, the enhancement of military capabilities is also aimed at strengthening the states’ ability to enforce their sovereignty over their Arctic coastal areas and at bolstering their rights to exploit natural resources. Consequently, naval and air force activities in the Arctic region will increase over the coming decade.

The Arctic – a key Russian priority

Russia is the largest Arctic coastal state and has huge economic interests in the region. Since 2008, Russia has pursued a cooperative policy in the Arctic. Basically, Russia is interested in a peaceful development in the region. Also, Russia is dependent on foreign support – financially and technologically – to develop its extensive Arctic oil and gas fields.

Furthermore, Russia has the largest military forces in the Arctic region, and it firmly believes it has a key role to play in that region. High priority is given to its engagement in the Arctic and it is ready to go far in order to find the resources required to promote its interests.

Russia primarily pursues its interests through a wide range of political, economic and security initiatives in the Arctic region. The latter is especially reflected in reinforced border guard capabilities, increased and improved aircraft and helicopter facilities for air planes and helicopters, an updated fleet of ice-breaking vessels and plans to strengthen the military units allocated to operate in the Arctic. It also involves the ground forces’ ability to operate in the polar environment, including the capability to deploy forces by sea in the Arctic region. However, this development will only progress slowly, and it is not likely that Russia has ambitions to engage in any significant military build-up in the Arctic, at least not as long as the other Arctic coastal states or external actors do not take steps in this direction.

Strengthened Chinese interest in the Arctic and Greenland

Over the past few years, China has significantly intensified its focus on the Arctic, in particular on the new possibilities unfolding if the Arctic sea lanes prove to be profitable. First and foremost this applies to the Northeast Passage north of Russia, but the passage across the North Pole and the Northwest Passage will also be of relevance to China.

China’s geographic location means that the shipping route to northern Europe and other North Atlantic destinations will be shorter and thereby cheaper, depending on the additional costs of Russian ice-breaking assistance for instance. The issue at stake is not only reduced freight prices; the access to raw materials from the Arctic region and from other regions using Arctic sea lanes is also highly relevant. China has a considerable demand for energy and minerals to support
its large and growing industrial production, and it seeks to invest in relevant raw material extraction projects in most parts of the world in order to strengthen its security of supply with regard to critical resources. To a wide extend, the Chinese approach to the Arctic must be seen against this backdrop.

A number of Chinese companies have shown an interest in investing in raw material extraction projects in Greenland. Greenland has a great number of important raw materials which the Chinese Ministry of Land and Resources considers strategically important. These include iron, cobber, zinc and uranium but also rare earth elements which constitute key components in the development and production of high-tech products.

China is also interested in gaining influence on the development in the Arctic region in order to avoid the development being controlled by Arctic states only. Just like a number of other countries, China obtained permanent observer status on the Arctic Council in May 2013. For years Russia was particularly sceptical of the Chinese application. However, it is likely that Russia did not want to take unilateral action in opposing Chinese admission, chiefly as a result of Russia’s ambition to strengthen cooperation with China in a number of fields – energy being a key field, not least in the Arctic region. Still, Russia remains highly sceptical of major Chinese political influence on how to develop the Arctic region.

Though the Arctic is not a key focus area for China, China’s interest in the Arctic region, including Greenland, is growing. At the same time, a number of Chinese companies and investment banks have shown an interest in economic involvement. This is not tantamount to Chinese investments being part of a state-controlled plan, though. Currently, China’s interests and involvement do not appear to extend beyond the security of raw materials supply and pure commercial interests on the part of the involved companies.

Traditionally, the commercial and strategic interests of China are, however, intrinsically linked. Therefore, it is likely that China’s role and potential influence in the Arctic region will increase as China’s economic involvement grows. On a number of occasions, China has demonstrated both capability and willingness to use investments and other kinds of economic instruments as a lever to obtain political objectives.

Cooperation rather than conflict
The development in the Arctic region will be characterized by cooperation and competition rather than confrontation and military conflict. Consequently, security challenges will be more related to the enforcement of sovereignty, search and rescue services, and maritime surveillance tasks than to other traditional military tasks.

In line with the other Arctic coastal states, Russia is basically interested in peace in the Arctic region, and it is ready to pursue its Arctic objectives by means of international law. Political tension and conflicts will not serve Russia’s economic interests in the Arctic.

The Russian claim in the Arctic region, including to the continental shelf, could, however, cause problems for the other actors in the Arctic region. This may particularly be the case if Russia finds that its claims are insufficiently met especially in connection with the UN CLCS recommendations once Russia submits further documentation for its claim to expand its rights to major parts of the Arctic Ocean seabed and subsoil outside its exclusive economic zone, probably in 2014.

If Russia feels unjustly treated, it will first and
foremost vent its dissatisfaction politically and diplomatically. It could do so by adopting alternative interpretations of international rules and standards and choosing to select only those that are most suitable for its purposes. Such a scenario could cause increased political tension and the risk of military provocations would increase.

While the United States will retain its global military superiority even in the very long term, Russia will continue to possess the strongest military capabilities locally in the Arctic region even in a 10-15 year perspective. Russia will be able to use the Arctic region to signal its potential non-cooperation stance and its military strength to the United States and US allies. A significant and lasting deterioration of the US-Russian relations could also increase the risk of relations in the Arctic becoming fraught with mutual distrust, political conflict and military tension.
The risk of major terrorist attacks in the West such as the 11 September 2001 attacks in New York has been reduced significantly, particularly due to the weakening of the al-Qaida leadership. Yet, al-Qaida and its sympathizers will remain a threat. The terror threat will mainly come from militant Islamists returning to the West from areas of conflict such as Syria. Western targets in the Middle East and in parts of Africa and Asia remain threatened by groups affiliated with or inspired by al-Qaida. These groups are capable of conducting major attacks locally as they have shown in Algeria and Kenya in 2013.

The threat in the West: Simple attacks launched by al-Qaida and returned westerners

Efforts against terrorism have made it very difficult for terrorist to launch a major attack in the West involving long planning phases and several individuals. Consequently, the risk of attacks such as the ones launched in New York on 11 September 2001 has been reduced significantly. Until now, this type of attack has been initiated by the al-Qaida leadership, which has been weakened. Still, the leadership remains directly involved in the planning of some of the terrorist attacks against the West, and through its propaganda it continues to encourage sympathizers to launch simple and lone-wolf terrorist attacks against targets of symbolic value in Europe and in the United States.

The more complex the attack, the smaller its chance of success. Yet, there is a risk of terrorist attacks that involve a small number of individuals or simple means but which are still capable of harming or killing numerous individuals. Simple attacks can cause major damage.

Westerners who have fought alongside militant Islamist groups in local conflicts primarily pose the biggest terror threat in the West in the short to medium term. When these individuals return, some of them could have the intent and capability to launch an attack in their native Western countries. European terror incidents of the past ten years demonstrate that several of the involved terrorists have trained or fought alongside militant Islamists in local conflicts prior to their launching terrorist activities in Europe.

In North Africa and the Middle East, the armed conflicts in Syria and Mali and the upheavals in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt have provided the militant Islamists with greater freedom of manoeuvre and a possibility to establish a greater presence. The armed conflicts in Syria and Mali are geographically close to Europe, making it both faster and easier to travel to these countries than to countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a result, the number of westerners, including Scandinavians, who have been in training camps or in the combat zones has
increased significantly since 2011. Foreign militant Islamists will travel in great numbers to the new battlefields and terrorist safe havens in Syria, Libya and Mali especially, and less so to Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan. The latter three used to attract the highest numbers of foreign extremists from the West.

The regional threat: Al-Qaida allies pose a threat

Even though the al-Qaida leadership has been weakened, the remaining leaders in Pakistan have succeeded in maintaining a certain organizational structure. These leaders continue to develop a strategic vision for al-Qaida. In the short term, the organization will prioritize insurgencies in conflict areas in the Muslim world. This does not mean, however, that the leadership has abandoned its ambition to launch terrorist attacks in the West.

Al-Qaida has increased its presence in the Middle East and Africa through its official al-Qaida groups and groups inspired by al-Qaida. Additionally, a number of local groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to cooperate and sympathize with al-Qaida. These groups are currently finding their activities hampered by military defeats, special operations against their leaders and internal disagreement. Nevertheless, al-Qaida’s official groups will locally remain a threat to the West in the short to medium term. These groups include:

- Yemen: al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)
- Somalia: al-Shabaab
- North Africa: al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)
- Syria: the al-Nusra Front
- Syria and Iraq: al-Qaida in Iraq and the Levant (formerly AQI, now the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL).

The above groups will increasingly focus their attention on Western targets in the region rather than on targets in the West. Locally, they are capable of conducting major attacks, just as they have been behind numerous kidnappings of westerners in recent years.

Due to counter-terrorism measures, AQAP has lost some of its core members, some of them key advocates of attacks in the West. However, AQAP remains a threat to local Western targets in the region, using propaganda to encourage and mobilize individual militant Islamists in the West to launch lone-wolf attacks. Additionally, it is likely that AQAP is continuously planning attacks on targets in the West as AQAP’s leader has been appointed al-Qaida second-in-command by the al-Qaida senior leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

As a result of al-Shabaab’s military defeats in 2011 and 2012, the group has been divided into nationally focused members and more radical internationally focused members. This division has weakened al-Shabaab, but it is likely that its internationally focused members will now increasingly try to spread their activities to all of East Africa and focus on both African and Western targets in that region. The most recent example being the terrorist attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 September 2013.

The al-Qaida presence in Afghanistan is limited to a couple of hundred individuals in the eastern part of the country who cooperate with local insurgent groups in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Al-Qaida’s scope for operating in Afghanistan will highly likely improve as the Afghan security forces take over the responsibility for the security of the state.

Al-Qaida and al-Qaida-inspired groups are increasingly operating under local names and downscaling their international connections and potential international targets. Already in 2011 and 2012, groups sharing the al-Qaida ideology began naming themselves Ansar al-Sharia, Ansar al-Din or other local names in
Yemen, Syria, Pakistan, North Africa and Mali. Both the al-Qaida leadership and al-Qaida groups have encouraged local sympathizers to operate under local names and not use al-Qaida’s name in order to avoid international reprisals. Thus, local militant Islamists could pose a terrorist threat in their communities, even if they are not declared al-Qaida sympathizers.

Syria attracts Western militant Islamists
So far, the conflict in Syria is the battlefield most popular with militant Islamists from both the Middle East and the West. The Syrian conflict quickly attracted a much higher number of militant Islamists from Scandinavia than the fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia ever did. More than 150 Scandinavians have travelled to Syria since 2012.

The majority of these Scandinavians intend to fight for militant Islamists in Syria. Some fight for the radical al-Nusra Front, which was established in 2011/2012 with the assistance of al-Qaida operatives from Iraq, and who have pledged allegiance to al-Qaida. Others fight for different radical militant Islamist groups in Syria such as Ahrar al-Sham, which is part of the Syrian Islamic Front umbrella organization.

Travelling to Syria is fast, easy and cheap and there are many ways of reaching the militant Islamic groups that fight as part of the armed opposition. The vast majority of the Scandinavian militant Islamists travelling to Syria enter via Turkey where most border checkpoints are controlled by the Syrian opposition. Such a trip can be made without any major planning and individually. Another option is to go through the established militant Islamist networks in North Africa, Lebanon and Iraq, which assist foreign militant Islamist with their entry into Syria.

In the short to medium term, international militant Islamists will give priority to Syria as their primary battlefield, and they will work to further boost their presence through local groups such as the al-Nusra Front, which has specific affiliations with al-Qaida, and al-Qaida-affiliated military leaders who have travelled to Syria since 2012. The military leaders are currently heading combat groups in Syria primarily comprising foreign militant Islamists.

In the future, the al-Qaida leadership will likely continue the efforts to strengthen its influence in Syria. In his official 2012 and 2013 declarations, al-Qaida’s senior leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has several times encouraged sympathizers to travel to Syria to fight, and since 2012 the leadership has been known to send leading individuals to Syria on a few occasions. In the short term, the al-Qaida leadership likely wants its affiliated Syrian networks to focus on attacking targets inside Syria, thus avoiding international reprisals. This hesitant strategy is in line with the leadership’s advice to al-Qaida groups in other parts of the world, and it is an attempt at consolidating the al-Qaida presence locally prior to the potential launch of regional and international attacks.

The short-term focus of the radical militant Islamists in Syria, including the al-Nusra Front and ISIL, will be on the fight against the Assad regime. Consequently, in the short to medium term the biggest threat stems from foreign fighters who have fought for radical Islamist groups in Syria and who have returned to their native countries with combat experience and the intent to launch attacks in the West.

North Africa and Mali: Militant Islamists increase cooperation
The threat from terrorism in a number of North African countries will grow in the short to medium term. Even though the focus of the conflicts is local, the region increasingly functions as an entity unifying militant
Islamists cooperating and travelling across porous borders in the region.

Since the start of the political upheavals in 2011 in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, North and West African terror networks are increasingly cooperating regionally, drawing heavily on their links to cross-regional criminal networks. AQIM and al-Qaida-inspired groups operate across the borders by training fighters and smuggling goods and arms between the countries among other things. It has become easier for militant Islamists from Africa, the Middle East and to a lesser degree also from Europe to travel to North Africa and Mali. Western targets in the region will remain a high priority and accessible to these groups.

In Libya, militant Islamist safe havens have been established in the desert area of southwestern Libya, close to its borders with Algeria and Niger, and in the eastern part of Libya. The militant Islamist groups in Libya, including Ansar al-Sharia, are highly trained, have extensive combat experience and access to arms, and they have the capability to launch attacks on Western interests in the country, an example being the September 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi.

Several militant networks, including a network describing itself as al-Qaida in Egypt (AQE), and several militant groups in the Sinai Peninsula have been established in Egypt following the 2011 revolution. The AQE has been weakened by a number of arrests in the autumn of 2012, but a part of the network remains active in Cairo and in Sinai with contacts in Libya and Mali. Until recently, the militant extremist groups in Sinai primarily directed their attacks against Israel and Egyptian security forces. But since President Morsi was removed from office in July 2013, the groups have begun focusing on Western targets. They are likely to try to attack Western and local targets in Egypt in the short term. Additionally, local Bedouin groups intend to kidnap Western tourists in Sinai. Several militant networks have been established since 2011 in Tunisia. These are involved in activities such as facilitating foreign fighters to Syria and smuggling arms from Libya to countries such as Mali and Algeria. In the short term, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia will likely be transit countries for militant Islamists.

The French-led intervention in Mali, initiated in January 2013, has inflicted significant losses on the militant Islamist groups. Currently, AQIM is keeping a low profile to restore its combat strength and consequently, the highly trained and seasoned AQIM members and their local affiliates are scattered over the region. They will likely try to increase their presence in western and northern Niger, in southern Algeria and in Libya.

Militant Islamist groups likely plan further attacks on Western interests in North and West Africa. Militant groups affiliated with al-Qaida, including Boko Haram in Nigeria, have the capability to launch major attacks in the region and are capable of exploiting the porous borders across the region. This capability has been displayed in the attack in In Amenas, Algeria in January 2013 in which 39 hostages, including five Norwegians, were killed, and in other attacks launched in Niger, Nigeria and Libya.

Terrorist groups in North and West Africa are still not likely to be capable of launching major attacks outside the region in the short to medium term. Growing cooperation and improved interregional connections have, however, strengthened the capabilities of the groups and expanded their areas of operation. The groups are likely capable of attacking Western targets in large parts of the region.
The Middle East and North Africa will remain a region characterized by instability and unrest associated with the uprisings in the Arab countries and the mounting tension between Shiites and Sunni Muslims. The Syrian conflict has grown increasingly deadlocked and international, involving both the United States and Russia, and it is not only the object of rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The outcome of the conflict extensively depends on foreign intervention or changes in the support provided to the opposing sides. The Muslim Brotherhood’s loss of power in Egypt will weaken the regional progress made by the Islamist movements in recent years. This loss of power could also initiate growing radicalization as al-Qaida could choose to exploit the armed forces’ assumption of power in its ideological propaganda. Despite developments in Syria and Egypt, Iran and its nuclear programme remains the predominant regional security policy issue.

The conflict in Syria particularly affects the security situation in the region. Shiite Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah support the Assad regime, while Sunni countries, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, support the armed opposition. At the same time, the conflict is spilling over into Syria’s neighbouring countries of which Lebanon and Jordan are particularly vulnerable to the repercussions of the conflict. Moreover, a deteriorated security situation in Iraq contributes to regional instability as the conflicts in Iraq and Syria are mutually reinforcing. Finally, the region is characterized by continuous political, economic, population and social issues affecting the individual countries and their international relations to varying degrees.

Syria plays a major role as a link between Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah. If the Assad regime were to be further eroded or toppled, it would curb Iran’s scope for influence in the region and weaken its position vis-à-vis Israel, Saudi Arabia and other pro-Western Arab countries in the region. Even though the uprising in the other Arab countries also holds opportunities for Iran, such opportunities cannot offset the potentially lost influence in Syria.

Regardless of the outcome of the Syrian conflict, it will not, however, shift the regional balance of power enough for Israel to lose its dominant position, and in the long term Iran and Saudi Arabia will continue their power struggle and make efforts to limit the regional influence of their opponent.

Iran and its nuclear programme will remain the key regional security policy issue, and to Israel and Saudi Arabia and the other pro-Western Arab countries the Iranian
development of nuclear weapons is the primary threat. An Iran armed with nuclear weapons would not only strengthen Iran, but also its allies.

So far, Syria has formed part of the opposition wing against Israel and the West along with Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas and other minor Palestinian groups. Yet, Israel is concerned about the development in the Syrian conflict.

To Israel, the Assad regime has been a predictable opponent. Prior to the conflict in Syria, Israel's border with Syria was stable, despite Syria, unlike Jordan and Egypt, not having signed a peace agreement with Israel. The conflict and the derived instability make the border with Israel insecure, enabling conditions for terrorism. Instability in Syria could also spur unrest along Israel's borders with Lebanon and Jordan.

The return of the Golan Heights remains the primary objective of the Syrian foreign policy, irrespective of who is in office. A potential new Sunni Muslim regime would also likely re-establish connections with Hamas, causing relations with Israel to remain full of conflict potential.

Turkey’s Middle East policy in trouble
Over the past couple of years, Turkey has pursued an activist foreign policy course in the Middle East in order to boost its regional influence. This strategy has put Turkey on a collision course with numerous countries in the region and its support for the opposition in Syria has complicated relations with Iran. Moreover, the conflict in Syria affects the security situation in Turkey where shootings have occurred across the border and where several terrorist attacks have been carried out. Finally, increasing Kurdish autonomy in Syria is also a source of Turkish concern.

Turkey’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood has temporarily frozen relations with the new regime in Egypt and complicated relations with those states in the Middle East opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Finally, Turkey’s relations with Israel remain chilled. Overall, regional developments of recent years have constituted a setback to Turkey’s regional ambitions.

Egypt focuses on domestic issues
A good two years after the fall of Mubarak, Egypt once again became the scene of societal changes when, in July 2013, the armed forces ousted the nation’s first popularly elected president, Mohammed Morsi. Even though Egypt will maintain its role as an important regional player, particularly in the immediate region and in relation to the Palestinians, it will focus on stabilizing its difficult domestic situation and its ailing economy. Egypt will maintain its ambitions to restore its former leading role in the Arab world, tough the unstable domestic situation and ailing economy will curb its ability to challenge Saudi Arabia’s current lead in the medium to long term.

Weakened Islamist movements
The uprisings in the Middle East improved the moderate Islamic movements’ chances of impacting developments in their respective countries. In this connection, however, many of them have found it a big challenge handling the responsibility of governing their country— which has been particularly evident in Egypt. This development has generally slowed the pace of the Islamist progress.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a wide Islamist popular movement with followers in several Middle Eastern countries. The Brotherhood has an extensive network and significant resources enabling cross-border cooperation. The weakening of the mother organization in Egypt will harm related movements such as
the Islamic Action Front in Jordan, Ennahda in Tunisia, and Hamas in the Palestinian areas and it will damage the movement’s regional cohesion in general.

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are not, however, a uniform entity in each country, one of the reasons being that they have to manoeuvre under very different local conditions. The differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements are considerable, including the stance on certain foreign and security policy issues, women’s rights, the role of religion in society and the degree of cross-border cooperation with other Islamist movements.

Generally, the Muslim Brotherhood and Brotherhood-inspired movements will continue their regional involvement in the political processes. However, some radical members will revert to the use of violence which took place decades ago in mere frustration over their overall weakened regional progress.

While moderate Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood have been weakened, militant Islamists in al-Qaida and affiliated groups have gained greater room for manoeuvre. They have also experienced an influx of new members in several areas, Syria for one. Also, al-Qaida is likely to exploit the armed forces’ assumption of power in its ideological propaganda to generate a breeding ground for growing radicalization.

**Syrian conflict deadlocked**

The Syrian conflict is increasingly deadlocked, and its outcome extensively depends on foreign intervention or changes in the support provided to the opposing sides. The UN agreement on the Syrian chemical weapons has generated renewed international dynamic. Regardless of the outcome of the conflict, Syria will be fraught with unrest and instability in the long term, one of the contributory factors being the radical militant Islamists’ dominant role in the uprising.

The conflict in Syria has developed from an internal Syrian uprising with an ever more hard-pressed Assad regime to a conflict that is extensively determined by external factors. The sustained support provided by Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah and Russia has proved particularly decisive to the development of the conflict and to keeping the regime in power.

A picture is emerging of an increasingly deadlocked Syrian conflict. The regime and the opposition alike depend on foreign support. Both sides would find it difficult to settle the conflict militarily; however, if support for either side were to increase or drop significantly, this would shift the balance and the development of the conflict.

The international agreement on the Syrian chemical weapons signed by the United States and Russia and implemented by means of a UN resolution in September 2013, has generated a new dynamic. It is likely that the agreement will be followed up by a political process intended to result in a negotiated solution to the conflict. However, the conflict has reached a level of violence complicating a political solution. Both the regime and the armed opposition are focusing on a military solution to the conflict. Regardless of the initiation of a negotiation process, the political opposition would likely not be capable of putting an end to the fight of the armed opposition groups in Syria, and the conflict would thus continue.

The agreement on the Syrian chemical weapons makes the Assad regime a necessary partner and is thus contributory in keeping the regime in power. The regime has
accepted the terms of the agreement and is proving cooperative. Still, if the Assad regime were to violate the terms of the agreement, international intervention would become a possibility once again.

Regardless of the outcome of the conflict, Syria will be fraught with unrest and instability in the long term. With a further weakening of the Assad regime and the central power, local war lords of various ethnic or religious backgrounds will fill the power void. This will be the case both for the opposition and the groups allied with the Assad regime. Also, a new regime would find it difficult to extend its power to all of Syria, not least as the opposition is divided and would be incapable of governing the country. The dominant role of radical militant Islamists in the uprising increases the risk of a conflict-ridden sequel to the conflict.

The Syrian state borders are in reality dissolving. Syria’s border with Iraq is becoming blurred due to stronger relations between Sunni Arabs in eastern Syria and in the Anbar province in Iraq caused by the conflicts in both Syria and Iraq and the ensuing weakening of the state power in both countries. The borders with Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan are becoming blurred as a result of increased Kurdish autonomy in relation to Iraq and as a consequence of the prospect of growing Turkish involvement in Syria. The border with Lebanon is already porous due to the involvement of Lebanese groups on both sides of the conflict and as a result of the conflict increasingly spilling over into Lebanon.

The military situation
The military situation reflects the increasingly deadlocked situation in Syria. The regime gives priority to control of coastal areas, the capital of Damascus and the corridor between these, including the area around the city of Homs. The opposition is tightening its grip on the northern and eastern parts of Syria.

The regime forces are still showing cohesion and combat power, but are generally struggling with attrition and reduced mobility. The regime’s military progress over the summer of 2013 is very much a result of the direct involvement of Lebanese Hezbollah in the fighting. In addition, the regime is increasingly using irregular forces to fight the opposition groups and is still exploiting its military superiority, drawing on its air force, tanks and artillery.

It is highly likely that the regime has carried out a number of attacks involving limited amounts of chemical warfare agents. It must be considered confirmed that on 21 August 2013 attacks were launched in the Damascus suburbs involving chemical weapons. Furthermore, it is highly likely that Syrian regime forces were responsible for the attack.

Syrian economy
The Syrian economy is rapidly deteriorating due to the conflict. The sanctions imposed against the oil sector and the regime’s lack of control over the oil fields in eastern Syria have taken the hardest toll on the economy. 2012 alone saw a drop in Syrian GDP of approx. 20 per cent and moreover, large parts of the national infrastructure are in ruins. While the official inflation rate is just below 50 per cent, the de facto inflation rate is between 200 and 300 per cent. Over the past year, the rocketing inflation rate and the very low production level have eroded the value of the Syrian pound in the black market to the point where 1 US dollar is now worth 200 Syrian pounds compared to 70 pounds a year ago. Still, even though the deteriorated economy will make it harder for the regime to fend for itself, the economy in isolation will not cause the regime to collapse.
Opposition divided
The political opposition groups united under the National Coalition are divided by internal rifts and power struggles and only have limited influence on developments in Syria. Even if the National Coalition were to be successful in forming a transition government, it would be torn. The National Coalition also needs to establish formal and de facto control over the armed opposition groups.

The armed opposition has bolstered its organization and combat capability, gaining access to more and increasingly sophisticated weapons. Despite clear military success in the last six months of 2012 and until March 2013, the armed opposition is only capable of challenging the regime asymmetrically, that is by engaging in guerrilla warfare. The military efforts are hampered by the armed opposition being composed of a myriad of groups whose objectives are very different and locally rooted. Internal disputes between the different groups are growing and opposition efforts are hampered by the lack of an effective national command and control structure.

Radical and moderate Islamists alike extend their room for manoeuvre
The conflict has provided radical militant Islamist groups with greater room for manoeuvre and a base. The al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – both official al-Qaida groups – operate in Syria, and the al-Qaida senior leadership has appointed an official representative in the country. The al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant are key actors in the armed opposition fight in northern Syria where they are trying to establish Islamist rule in the conquered territories.

Despite internal rifts among opposition members, the moderate Islamist Muslim Brotherhood is one of the strongest and best organized movements. The Brotherhood will stand a fair chance of a prominent role in Syria, in particular in a post-Assad scenario, as Sunni Muslims make up the bulk of the armed opposition and two thirds of the population.

Lebanon on the brink of increased internal tension
The conflict in Syria has a particularly destabilizing impact on the security situation in Lebanon. Still, none of the leading political groups in Lebanon have an interest in a new civil war. However, involvement by different Lebanese factions in the conflict in Syria, either supporting the regime or the opposition, increases the potential for conflict in Lebanon. The longer the conflict drags on and the more Syria disintegrates, the more Lebanon will be affected.

The potential fall of the Assad regime and the emergence of a new Sunni Muslim-dominated Syria would also cause tension in Lebanon. In a post-Assad situation, political opponents to Hezbollah – a close Assad ally – will try to limit the influence and power of Hezbollah. A regime change in Syria would not, however, curb Hezbollah’s power and influence in Lebanon in the short to medium term, as the organization is not really dependent on Syria.

A disarming of Hezbollah is unlikely, even in the long term, and Hezbollah will continue to use its influence to obstruct any sign of budding Lebanese peace with Israel.

Though relations between Israel and Hezbollah are conflict-ridden, southern Lebanon has been relatively calm since the end of the war in 2006. Neither Israel nor Hezbollah has an interest in armed conflict, but their mutual truce is a reflection of a fragile power balance based on mutual threats of extensive retaliation.
Due to the weak Lebanese government, the country is still attractive to terrorist groups with the intent and capability to launch attacks of a certain complexity. So far, the key targets for these groups have been Israel and the UN peacekeeping forces. However, with the escalation of the conflict in Syria, a number of militant Sunni Muslim groups in Lebanon have become involved in the Syrian conflict, including in Lebanon itself, targeting Shiites, among them Hezbollah, in their attacks.

Iran continues its nuclear programme despite concessions

The election of moderate Hassan Rouhani for president will not introduce fundamental changes in the Iranian stance on the nuclear negotiations. Iran will primarily continue to negotiate in order to achieve a lessening of the sanctions without making substantial concessions, decisively weakening the nuclear programme. Iran will not relinquish its right to enrich uranium. The continued build up of its capability to enrich uranium enables Iran to rapidly produce nuclear weapons if it decides to do so.

The election of Hassan Rouhani for president heralds a new and more accommodating foreign policy approach, but not necessarily a new and more accommodating policy.

Under Rouhani, Iran will thus, as has been the case under former governments, be willing to continue negotiations on its nuclear programme with a view to entering an agreement with the P5+1 countries (the United States, China, Russia, Great Britain, France and Germany).

It is likely, though, that Iran will veer from its previous course and offer a number of concessions that the P5+1 countries have asked for, so far without result. Iranian concessions of this nature would likely not decisively weaken the Iranian nuclear programme. Iran will not relinquish its right to enrich uranium. The continued build up of capability to enrich uranium enables Iran to rapidly produce nuclear weapons if it decides to do so.

Reversely, Iran will make a number of demands for a complete or partial lifting of the economic sanctions. Iran will be particularly focused on entering an agreement with the P5+1 countries involving, initially, the lifting of the economic sanctions imposed by the EU. Iranian demands for a complete or partial lifting of the economic sanctions could potentially challenge solidarity among the P5+1 countries. Russia in particular would try to reward Iranian concessions with an easing of the sanctions.

If the negotiations are not productive, the risk of a military conflict due to Iran’s nuclear programme will increase yet again.

Even though Rouhani has declared that he has the mandate to enter into agreements on the Iranian nuclear programme, Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, will continue to make the key decisions in this field.

President Rouhani up against conservative forces

Despite sanctions and economic weakening, the Islamic rule in Iran remains stable after the peaceful June 2013 presidential election. The election of moderate Hassan Rouhani for president does not herald a fundamental change of power in Iran.

Over the next four years, Rouhani will pursue a balanced policy, satisfying both reformist and conservative wings in Iranian
politics. He will likely introduce minor, symbolic reforms that will accommodate the reformist wing to a certain extent. These changes will not be decisive, and civil rights will remain limited.

Rouhani has to cooperate with a system still dominated by conservative forces. This is the case in both the parliament and in the Council of Guardians that have the authority to reject bills. Moreover, a number of political decisions are ultimately made by the supreme leader who, via his own office, has set up a number of parallel unofficial systems ensuring that his decisions are followed. Finally, the leading officers of the Revolutionary Guard are deeply sceptical of President Rouhani and his rapprochement with the West.

Iranian overtures to the regional Arab countries will be rejected
Under President Rouhani Shiite Iran will try to establish more friendly ties with the Arab countries in the region, in particular the Sunni Muslim kingdoms in the Persian Gulf. However, Iran’s overtures will be rejected partially in response to Iran’s support for Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria and partially as a result of Iran’s nuclear programme.

Iran will work to boost its influence in Shiite-led Iraq, thereby seeking to strengthen Shiite support for the Assad regime in Syria. Moreover, Iran will try to prevent the Syrian conflict from spilling over into Iraq. Finally, Iran will also benefit from a friendly Iraq to counterbalance Saudi Arabia and the other Arab kingdoms in the Persian Gulf.

Armed forces dominate Egypt yet again

Egypt is in the middle of a serious crisis involving widespread violence, political instability and an ailing economy following the July 2013 ousting of the nation’s first democratically elected president. The Egyptian interim government will find it difficult to stabilize the situation in the short term.

The Egyptian technocratic interim government has been unable to stabilize the situation that is characterized by violence, political instability and an ailing economy. The interim government assumed power following the armed forces’ July 2013 dethroning of the nation’s first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi, a mere year after his election.

The interim government is dominated by the armed forces and is met with strong opposition from both the moderate Muslim Brotherhood and radical Islamist groups. It will be difficult for the interim government to carry out a democratic transition process. However, it maintains its objective of reviewing the constitution and holding new parliamentary and presidential elections within a six-month timeframe. In order to implement the plan in such a short time, it is likely that the interim government will resort to authoritarian and violent means, increasing the feeling of distrust among the general public and the groups feeling marginalized.

In the short to medium term, Egypt will be characterized by deep division between moderate and radical Islamists on the one side and secular and liberal groups on the other. This division has existed for a long time, but is has surfaced during President Morsi’s short term in office and it has deepened further with his ousting.
The Egyptians are divided on the issues of Islam’s influence on everyday life and Islam’s role in the national legislation. The current power brokers will likely make efforts to water down Islamist features in the constitution, which was implemented by the dethroned Islamist-dominated government.

Morsi’s ousting has meant the return of the armed forces to their traditional position as the dominant political power in Egypt. This will not change in the short term, but the role of political power broker will now be far more complicated for the armed forces.

The armed forces and the interim government have cracked down hard on the Muslim Brotherhood since the ousting of Morsi. The movement has been significantly weakened and will become increasingly divided ideologically, yet it still enjoys wide support in Egypt. Some radical members will reject a pragmatic approach and choose a return to the former use of violence.

Generally, militant Islamist groups will try to capitalize on the unstable security situation in order to consolidate and extend their presence in Egypt. Efforts to this end will include training fighters en route for the conflict in Syria, and the risk of attacks on both national and international targets, such as the Suez Canal, will increase. The authorities will prioritize the protection of navigation in the canal, but it will be incapable of stabilizing the general security situation in the short term.

Libya struggles with deteriorated security situation

Libya is still struggling with major security and political issues, and it still has to carry out the planned democratic transition process. The lacking capability to generate results renders the government vulnerable to criticism and increases the likelihood of civil unrest and violence.

The security situation in Libya is deteriorating. The situation in eastern Libya with main city Benghazi is particularly unstable, but also the capital city of Tripoli is increasingly characterized by violent clashes as a result of militia fighting. In the southern part of the country, the government is experiencing major problems establishing effective monitoring of the borders which can be crossed relatively undetected by arms and people smugglers as well as militant Islamists.

The deteriorated security situation is primarily the result of the government’s grave problems assembling effective and credible government forces, but also national and regional political fighting and rivalry challenge the authority and vigour of the government. Thus, the government has been unable to complete the planned democratic transition process.

Political governance has become more difficult as an act has been passed excluding almost all government officials serving in the Gaddafi regime from political activity. The law enjoys wide support among the population, but the government’s inability to produce results makes it vulnerable to criticism and increases the risk of civil unrest and violence.

The absence of effective government forces generally weakens the government’s capability to handle the growing terrorist threat stemming from militant Islamist groups and networks such as al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) which is increasing its presence in the country. The Islamic militia Ansar al-Sharia, a key power factor in eastern Libya, is consolidating its power bases and its contact to other Islamist groups in the region.
Iraq dominated by religious tension

**Religious tensions are increasingly testing Iraq’s Shiite-led government, and the country will remain unstable in the short term. Yet, open conflict and a division of the country are not likely in the short term.**

Prior to the scheduled 2014 parliamentary elections, Iraq is characterized by violence between Sunni and Shiite Muslims; tension between the central government and the autonomous Kurdish region; and the risk of the Syrian civil war spreading to Iraq. On top of this, Iran’s influence on Iraq has grown since the United States pulled out in December 2011.

It is possible that violence will escalate and fault lines deepen even further over the coming year, but the central government will remain capable of preventing an open conflict between Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims and Kurds. Thus, Iraq will likely be capable of holding parliamentary elections in 2014, despite the growing violence.

Violence in Iraq has increased drastically since April 2013. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (now the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL) is behind most of the violence that has particularly been directed at the Shiite Muslim community. There are, however, examples of violence conducted by Shiite Muslim militias against Sunni Muslims in Iraq.

The violence is an indication of the Sunni Muslim community feeling overlooked and marginalized by the incumbent government under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his Shiite Muslim Dawa Party.

Religiously motivated violence is but one of several problems facing al-Maliki. Over the past year, the long-standing disagreement between the central government and the Kurds over the oil-rich and ethnically mixed town of Kirkuk and a number of other borderlands in the northern part of the country has caused tensions. Both the Iraqi central government and the autonomous Kurdish region have deployed armed forces to the disputed areas.

Even though the religiously based violence is primarily driven by internal problems and dissatisfaction, the Syrian conflict challenges the Iraqi central government and its armed forces that are trying to prevent the Syrian civil war from spreading to Iraq. The border between the two countries is particularly difficult to control, and both Sunni and Shiite groups use Iraq as a transit country. ISIL has exploited the easy access to Syria in order to establish a major presence in the country, and it now operates both in Iraq and Syria. In the future, the Iraqi security forces will continue to experience difficulties controlling the border with Syria, and there is thus a tangible risk of the Syrian conflict spilling over into Iraq.

Yemen characterized by instability

Caretaker President and former vice-president in Yemen Abd al-Rabuh Mansour al-Hadi approaches the end of his two-year long mandate. Since his inauguration, Hadi has implemented many but minor reforms, gradually weakening former president Ali Abduallah Saleh’s military power. The armed forces of Yemen will, however, remain split into opposing factions lacking effectiveness and representing a potential for armed clashes for years to come.

Politically, President Hadi has been capable of keeping momentum in the negotiations during a national conference for dialogue,
whose mandate has included the preparing of a new constitution, since March 2013. However, the process is slow, and the distrust between the parties deep-seated. The disagreements stem from dividing lines between Shiites and Sunni Muslims; between the central government and the regions, which want autonomy; and from personal ambitions for power. It is not likely that the dialogue conference will be capable of coming up with a compromise acceptable to all parties.

Since 2011, the instability in Yemen has gravely affected the national economy, for example through sabotage of the oil and gas infrastructure, and it has gravely affected the national economy. Yemen depends on considerable foreign support to sustain the positive growth rate seen in 2012. In the medium to long term, the government must implement economic reforms to meet the population’s expectations of a higher standard of living.

Economic, political and particular military challenges impede the Yemeni government’s capability to control domestic territory. Consequently, Shiite al-Houthi insurgents, the South Yemeni separatists, local tribes and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula will maintain their considerable room for manoeuvre, particularly outside the major cities.
Piracy and armed robbery against ships continue to pose a threat to civilian shipping in the waters off East Africa and West Africa. The number of piracy incidents in the waters off East Africa has declined to a very low level due, for instance, to the pressure from international naval forces. However, a minor number of Somali pirate groups still have the capability and intent to launch attacks. Without assistance, the Somali federal government is incapable of preventing piracy off the Horn of Africa. In West Africa the number of attacks remains at a comparatively stable level compared with previous years.

Piracy in East Africa remains a threat to civilian shipping in the waters off the Horn of Africa, even though the number of incidents has declined to a very low level. Under the UN definition, piracy takes place in international waters, while armed robbery against ships takes place in territorial waters.

The low pirate activity level is, among other things, the combined result of the anti-piracy operations launched by the international naval forces and the merchant ships’ adoption of the recommended best management practices, in particular the use of armed security guards. Additionally, earlier on the operations at sea only resulted in the detained pirates being sent back to the Somali coast. Now a great number of countries in the area of operation have entered agreements enabling legal proceedings against the pirates. The current low activity level will highly likely be sustained in the short to medium term, provided that the pressure on the pirates is maintained.

However, the low activity level does not exclude the occurrence of attacks. A few pirate groups still have the capacity and the intent to launch attacks.

The Somalia-based pirates have been involved in kidnappings ashore in both Somalia and Kenya on numerous occasions. It is likely that they will continue to search for suitable targets ashore as an alternative to the international shipping in the short to medium term.

Somali regions: ongoing initiatives to curb piracy
The Somali federal government has not yet gained control over the former piracy-infested areas, including areas in the Puntland and Galmudug regions in particular. The government has no police forces or troops to combat piracy ashore and no navy or coast guard to combat piracy at sea. The government is incapable of effectively preventing piracy attacks in the waters off the Horn of Africa, and the war on piracy will thus continue to require assistance from the international community.

The self-governing region of Puntland in
north-eastern Somalia has set up a naval police force. This initiative has complicated, but not entirely prevented, piracy activities and has resulted in the arrest of several pirates and the release of hijacked crew members. However, the regional authorities are weak and the pirates can bribe their way to release or to continue their activities.

In the Somaliland region in the north-western corner of Somalia, the regional government will continue its capability to prevent piracy attacks emanating from the region’s coasts in the short to medium term.

There are no indications that al-Shabaab is actively fighting piracy even though the group has called piracy unIslamic. On the contrary, the group is likely being paid by pirates for access to al-Shabaab controlled areas north of Mogadishu. Contact between al-Shabaab and the Somali pirates has increased but no direct connections have been found such as actual cooperation on piracy between al-Shabaab and the Somali pirates.

West Africa: attacks are spreading
Similarly, the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa is an area infested with piracy and armed robbery against ships. Civilian shipping is threatened, particularly in the waters off Nigeria. The number of attacks remains at a comparatively stable level compared with previous years. Minor fluctuations may occur, though, depending on the statistics used. The attacks will continue to spread – both along the coast to other states in the Gulf of Guinea and further away from the coast. This situation will remain unchanged in the short term.

The threat against the crew, cargo and ship off East and West Africa differs. In the Gulf of Guinea the attacks are typically launched by well-organized criminal groups, whose objective is to steal the cargo, primarily from tankers. Crew members are occasionally held for ransom for a few weeks, and long-term hostage situations, as the ones seen in Somalia, are, however, not likely.

The piracy-infested countries in the Gulf of Guinea have taken regional as well as multilateral steps to prevent attacks on civilian shipping. Yet, the countries in the region do not have the required basis for establishing regional cooperation capable of fighting piracy and armed robbery at sea or significantly reducing the current threat.
The Syrian chemical weapons have caused major international concern. The completion of the international UN agreement on the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons reduces the risk of non-state actors gaining control with major quantities of these weapons. Yet, the threat from proliferation of the Syrian chemical weapons remains, as long as the agreement has not been fully implemented. Generally, the threat from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is growing and several states will be capable of striking NATO territory with nuclear weapons in the long term. Despite the prospect of new negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme, Iran continues to expand its nuclear facilities.

Syria joined the UN Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013 and signed the international agreement on disarmament and the destruction of its chemical weapons. The agreement must be completed by mid-2014. The time table for the destruction of the chemical weapons is highly ambitious, and the task will demand considerable resources and be very difficult to conduct, one of the reasons being that chemical weapons must be transported through conflict-ridden areas.

If the international agreement is fully implemented, the risk of proliferation of chemical weapons will be reduced, especially as the risk of non-state actors gaining control of major quantities of these weapons will be reduced. See also: Syrian conflict deadlocked, pages 23-25.

General increase in threat from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
Contrary to international agreements, several countries are currently developing weapons of mass destruction. Biological weapons programmes also pose a threat, but generally the capability to produce nuclear weapons in particular is the largest source of international concern.

Some of these countries are also making efforts to develop ballistic missiles particularly suited for delivering nuclear weapons. In the long term, several states will be capable of striking NATO territory with nuclear weapons.

International control bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) still only has limited cooperation with Iran and none at all with North Korea. Consequently, the agency finds it difficult to determine whether or not the purpose of the Iranian nuclear programme is solely peaceful and how advanced the North Korean nuclear programme is.

Iran continues its nuclear programme
Despite mounting international opposition and in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions, Iran continues to expand its nuclear facilities. These facilities are relevant to the production of nuclear weapons and a number of them would be pointless economically if the purpose is exclusively civilian.

In November 2011, the IAEA published a report seriously criticising the Iranian nuclear programme and directly linking activities in Iran with the development of nuclear weapons. At the same time, the IAEA called on Iran to engage in constructive cooperation. The subsequent IAEA reports of 2012 and 2013 have also been highly critical of Iran’s continued uncooperative stance.

A signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Iran is entitled to establish a civilian nuclear programme. But Iran has repeatedly kept activities secret that are relevant to the production of nuclear weapons, both activities which could be relevant to civilian
purposes and activities which are only relevant as part of a military programme.

Iran’s inadequate level of cooperation with the IAEA can be seen in the fact that Iran has long denied the IAEA access to a facility near the town of Parchin where the IAEA suspects that Iran has conducted experiments with explosives that would be highly relevant in connection with the development of nuclear weapons. Iran has thoroughly cleansed and physically changed the area. Such measures make it near impossible for the IAEA to reach a conclusion on whether or not the plant has been used in connection with a possible Iranian nuclear programme.

Iran continues to produce 3.5 percent enriched uranium and continues its production of almost 20 per cent enriched uranium. Having access to the higher enriched uranium, Iran will be capable of reducing the time it takes to produce weapons-grade uranium. Iran claims that the objective of manufacturing higher enriched uranium is for the production of isotopes for medical purposes.

Iran has further increased the number of installed centrifuges for uranium enrichment. These centrifuges have not yet been put into operation, but they represent a reserve capacity which is some 25 per cent higher than the current operating capacity. These centrifuges are likely to be put into operation at some point, significantly increasing the Iranian production of enriched uranium, including uranium enriched to almost 20 per cent. It remains likely that Iran works to obtain a capability to rapidly produce nuclear weapons if the national leadership were to make such a decision.

North Korea close to nuclear weapons capability
It is likely that in the short to medium term, North Korea will conduct further nuclear tests and space rocket launches relevant to the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles. The purpose of these tests and launches is twofold: to meet technical requirements in the development of national nuclear weapons and to strengthen its international position politically.

North Korea was denounced by the international community for its nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and most recently in February 2013. The same happened due to its ambitious programme for the development of ballistic missiles. In December 2012, North Korea launched a satellite by means of a space rocket, showing its progress in the development of space rockets. The progress particularly applies to the technology behind rocket stage separation which can be used both in space rockets and ballistic missiles.

The North Korean nuclear weapons programme is based on plutonium, but it is likely that North Korea has established a facility for uranium enrichment. It is easier to establish uranium enrichment facility than plutonium production facility under ground and consequently it is difficult for the international community to uncover such facilities.

The Six Party Talks between North Korea, South Korea, the United States, China, Russia and Japan on North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme are dormant. North Korea refuses to be put under pressure by either the United States or China to make concessions in relation to its nuclear weapons programme. However, it is a common interest to all parties involved that the six party forum be maintained as an official framework to be used for resuming the dialogue.

Easier access to expertise and technology
Globalization has made access to technology and the products necessary to develop
weapons of mass destruction easier. Relevant technology and relevant products are subject to export control, but it is often circumvented as the countries enforce export control measures to varying degrees. It is likely that the extent of circumventing export control will increase.

Additionally, the knowledge and skills of researchers and students pose a risk as major amounts of relevant knowledge on weapons of mass destruction could quickly be distributed electronically.
The will of the Taliban to defeat the Afghan government is unyielding, generating a prospect of years of insurgency in Afghanistan, particularly in eastern and southern Afghanistan. Yet, the Taliban is not winning the insurgency in Afghanistan. Popular opposition and local uprisings bear witness to this. The Taliban support among Afghanistan's large minorities of Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks is almost non-existent. Additionally, the Taliban is confronted by the Afghan security forces, which are continuously improving their capability of defeating the insurgent group.

The Taliban will only have a chance of winning the insurgency in Afghanistan with strong military support from Pakistan. Such support is not likely. Southern and eastern Afghanistan and the Pashtun enclaves in the northern and western part of the country are scenes of insurgency. The Taliban does not have the economic resources, logistics, combat support in the form of artillery or a command and control system required to initiate a strategic offensive in the northern and western part of Afghanistan.

The insurgents will likely be able to curb the Afghan security forces’ mobility in the southern and eastern provinces in 2014. Occasionally, the insurgents will also be able to threaten access roads to Kabul and other major cities. However, they will not gain control over the major cities or district or province centres, as in 2012 and 2013 the Afghan security forces have demonstrated an improved capability to counter insurgent attacks and give high priority to security around population centres.

Helmand stands its ground against the Taliban
Helmand province is an example of how the Taliban is not facing an immediate victory in Afghanistan. The Afghan security forces are not capable of entirely filling the gap once the international security forces withdraw from Helmand province. But strong local networks are not ready to accept the Taliban gaining control of the province. These networks are expanding their control with local Afghan police forces as it gives them a degree of legitimacy and access to further resources. Such a fusion of, for instance, police forces and local militias does not meet Western standards of police work, yet it will serve as a kind of bulwark against the Taliban towards 2015.
The Afghan security forces make progress
The Afghan National Army has been involved in all major military operations in the country since 2009, and the target set by the international coalition and the Afghan government for the size of the army and the police force has been met.

The capabilities of the Afghan security forces to perform patrol, surveillance and resupply services improve continuously, but the forces are still working on their capabilities in several, more specialized fields. Challenges facing the Afghan security forces include unauthorized non-attendance and growing casualties as a result of fighting the Taliban. Large-scale recruitment, however, remedies the declining number of personnel.

Attacks on the international security forces launched by individuals of the Afghan security forces remain a considerable challenge to cooperation between the international and Afghan security forces. 2013 has seen a marked reduction in the number of this type of attack which is due to improved security procedures and less joint training efforts. Still, the threat remains.

The Afghan security forces will likely be capable of assuming security responsibility in the district centres, major towns and along the main roads before the end of 2014. Yet, they will have to cooperate extensively with local power brokers. In the rural areas, especially in southern and eastern Afghanistan, local agreements with insurgent groups will contribute to security. Sustained results will require international support for the Afghan security forces post-2014 in the form of money, instructors and other types of assistance.

Parties are putting out feelers on negotiations
The parties to the Afghan conflict make efforts to establish mutual contact, the Taliban Qatar office being a good example of this. Despite the fact that the contact between the parties has increased, there are no prospects of actual peace negotiations in 2014. Fundamental differences block the way for the Taliban actually sitting down at the negotiation table. The Taliban does not recognize President Hamid Karzai and his government as a legitimate partner in the negotiations. Moreover, powerful military Taliban leaders believe that the Taliban is capable of securing the victory militarily. Finally, Karzai is hindering a dialogue by insisting on controlling all negotiation initiatives. The Taliban will be more willing to negotiate, if the Afghan security forces prove capable of maintaining the military pressure on the Taliban once the majority of the international forces leave Afghanistan in 2014.

Neighbouring countries do not contribute to peace
Rivalry among Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries impedes peace negotiations. Pakistan maintains its support of the Taliban in order to secure influence on a future Afghanistan, and Iran has become much more explicit in demonstrating that the region will only experience successes if backed by Iran. Meanwhile, China is reluctant to engage in and contribute to a peaceful solution to the conflict. India is playing a low-key role in an attempt not to provoke Pakistan.

Limited al-Qaida presence
The al-Qaida presence in Afghanistan merely numbers a couple of hundred individuals. While the pressure is growing on al-Qaida in north-western Pakistan, it is trying to increase its presence in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida is primarily present in eastern Afghanistan to secure bases from where it can train and plan
external operations and to where it can also retreat if under pressure in Pakistan.

Al-Qaida does not operate independently in Afghanistan but cooperates with local insurgent groups. Its chances of operating in Afghanistan will highly likely improve considerably as the Afghan security forces take over provincial security responsibility. Consequently, it is highly likely that the al-Qaida presence in eastern Afghanistan will grow slightly.

Karzai tries to control the presidential election
The coming Afghan presidential election is set for 5 April 2014. On numerous occasions President Karzai has publicly declared that he will step down after the 2014 presidential election but he is fighting fiercely to be the kingmaker, that is the one who de facto appoints the future president and has decisive influence on the victorious coalition. As a result, Karzai and the government have issued guidelines for voter registration, passed two election laws and formed the Afghan Independent Election Commission and the Election Complaints Commission strengthening Karzai’s grip on the election process.

The Taliban will be an important participant in the election campaign. Taliban leader Mullah Omar denounced the election in August 2013, but the Taliban only enjoys influence in the Pashtun dominated areas. Therefore, the Taliban must adopt a more pragmatic strategy, if it wants to avoid a Tajik, for instance, being elected president.

Elite torn over power and money
The political elite in Afghanistan is split; split between Pashtun and non-Pashtun groupings and between ministers or governors in the Karzai government and individuals in open opposition to President Karzai. The members of the political elite fight over power and not least over positions capable of securing jobs and money for their supporters. There is a risk that extensive election fraud and marginalization of prominent politicians in the presidential election will send the political system into a legitimacy crisis. However, members of the elite do realize that they must reach consensus on the post-election governance of Afghanistan. The elite is united in its opposition against the Taliban assuming power, and it acknowledges that continued international support depends on the maintaining of a legitimate Afghan central government.

By design, the Afghan state is highly centralized, but the central power is still weak and only capable of governing through alliances with strong local powerbrokers. The non-Pashtun population is pressing for decentralization, which will become an unavoidable issue following the presidential election. The Afghan state is assuming responsibility for several basic public services that have so far been performed by the international community. The Afghan state will only succeed if it decentralizes the decision-making authority from the capital to the provinces.
Pakistan

In 2013, the Pakistani political system has become more robust due to the parliamentary elections and the peaceful change of power. Yet, major economic problems and the threat from militant Islamists bear witness to a society filled with deep social and religious tension. Pakistan’s antagonistic relations with India still dominate its foreign policy.

Pakistan’s tense relations with archrival India will continue to dominate the security priorities of the Pakistan military, including the Indian-Pakistani rivalry for influence in Afghanistan. Consequently, the Pakistan military will continue to support the Afghan Taliban in the borderlands with Afghanistan and try to influence the ongoing peace process.

Pakistan’s foreign and security strategies are primarily determined by the military leadership. Afghanistan and India are the cornerstones of Pakistani foreign and security strategies.

Irrespective of who will fill the key position as chief of the army staff and the less important position as chief of defence in the autumn of 2013, it will not result in any significant changes in the priority of the military or in its influence on the foreign and security policies in the short to medium term. According to plan, the current chief of defence and the powerful chief of the army staff will retire in October and November respectively.

During the Afghan conflict, Pakistan has received considerable development aid from the coalition countries, chiefly from the United States. The 2014 military withdrawal from Afghanistan will reduce the Western development aid, and in the short to medium term Pakistan will likely adopt several development and investment agreements with China to offset the dwindling Western aid.

Pakistan headed for greater political stability
Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) became the ruling party in the 2013 election, and party leader Nawaz Sharif won a third term as prime minister. Later this year, the PML-N also secured the presidency. Consequently, the recently held elections have further stabilized the Pakistani political system. This is emphasized by the fact that the previous government was the first to serve a full term in office. The political stability has not correspondingly generated improvements in the standard of living for the general Pakistani population that continues to suffer from daily terrorist attacks, poor economic conditions and the shortage of energy for housekeeping and transport.

In addition to the pronounced changes in the political leadership, replacements will also be made in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which has developed into an independent and powerful player since 2007. This is a positive democratic development as the Supreme Court shows great resolve in its efforts to make the government and the powerful military accountable for corruption, poor governance and violence against the population. A new Supreme Court chief justice will take office in December 2013, and it is likely that the Supreme Court will make efforts to hold the political and military leadership accountable for its wrongdoings and shortcomings.

The economy a key obstacle
The greater political stability and the significant changes in the leadership do not
change the fact that Pakistan will continue to struggle with extensive economic, social and security issues in the short to medium term. Despite the government’s professed key priority to rectify the national economy, it will find it difficult to realize the much-needed economic reforms.

Due to the fragile economy, the government will find it difficult to remedy the extensive shortage of resources and energy. The shortage of energy in particular is a major problem, and Pakistan depends heavily on energy imports, which contributes to a large trade deficit. Consequently, Pakistan will remain dependent on foreign economic support, especially from the United States and the International Monetary Fund. Even though the new Pakistani government has a firm grip on power, the economic growth rate is likely to remain modest for a number of years.

Militant Islamists still present a threat in Pakistan

In the short term, Pakistan’s security situation will be characterized by instability. The Pakistan Armed Forces, and the Army in particular, have on several occasions declared that Pakistan is facing a massive domestic threat from militant Islamists. There is wide political support to negotiate with the militant Islamists, but both the political and military leaders are willing to use force, if the negotiations are not in fact genuine. It is likely that the current attempts at peace negotiations between the state and the militant Islamists will only have a certain curbing effect on the significant level of violence. The security situation will therefore remain unstable in the short to medium term.

The Pakistan Armed Forces have focused on domestic security and stability in response to the noticeable increase in the number of terrorist attacks and incidents of religiously motivated violence of recent years. Still, Pakistan is likely to remain the base of several locally focused militant networks that either operate in Afghanistan or India or fight the Pakistani state and terrorize religious minorities in the country. The influx of westerners to training camps in Pakistan will likely continue, though in smaller numbers. There have been several examples of westerners, who have trained with local groups, trying to launch terrorist attacks in the West.

Local Pakistani insurgent and terrorist groups remain very active all over the country. Several of these groups are affiliated with major organizations with significant economic resources and political influence in Pakistan. In connection with the parliamentary elections, candidates, polling stations and election meetings in nearly all of the Pakistani provinces were the targets of numerous terrorist attacks by the Pakistani Taliban movement. In June 2013, the Pakistani Taliban movement demonstrated its continued capability to hit Western target, as it launched a terrorist attack on a group of foreign tourists in Pakistan’s northernmost province. Moreover, groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have conducted numerous bomb attacks on Shiites in major Pakistani towns, as they consider Shiites Islamic apostates. These organizations will likely remain a threat to local targets all over Pakistan.

It is likely that Pakistani militant groups still operating in Afghanistan will turn on Kashmir after 2014 and that Pakistani jihadi veterans will spread out over Pakistan and the rest of the region, joining either Islamist organizations or criminal networks.

The al-Qaida senior leadership still operates from Pakistan

The al-Qaida senior leadership still resides in Pakistan despite continuous pressure
from drone attacks and Pakistani military operations in the tribal areas. It is from these areas that the al-Qaeda senior leadership tries to exert as much influence as possible on the insurgencies in the Middle East and North Africa. Core al-Qaeda leaders will likely remain in the area, even though a number of al-Qaeda members since 2011 have left Pakistan for Syria in order to join the fighting there.
Most Sub-Saharan African countries are in the process of extensive change – economically, socially, demographically, climatically and technologically. This offers new development and growth potential, but it also creates a breeding ground for social and political unrest or even conflict.

Economic growth rates remain high in many Sub-Saharan African countries despite global economic recession. Several of the world’s fastest growing economies are now located on the African continent. Economic growth in Africa is often created by an increase in the extraction and export of raw materials such as oil, gas and minerals. Dependence on raw materials also makes the African economies vulnerable to fluctuations in world market prices on raw materials.

Extraction of raw materials only rarely generates growth and jobs within other economic sectors. There is thus a significant risk that the economic progress will do little to improve the standard of living for the average African citizen. The fight for resources and political influence will therefore continue to be a source of social unrest and conflict in certain areas of Africa.

It remains unclear whether the economic progress will be capable of matching the rapid increase in population and urbanization. Both trends constitute major challenges to most African countries. Combined with the climate and environmental changes taking place over vast parts of the continent, the increase in population puts pressure on and intensifies the competition for key resources such as water and land. This, in turn, results in increasing social tension that may potentially set off new conflicts.

Weak states still provide potential for conflict
Africa’s many weak states continue to be its gravest political problem. Few governments in the region have proved capable of effectively handling the internal tensions that often result from poverty, inequality and a high increase in population. Many governments have only limited or no physical control over the territory. The inability of the state to provide security and generate progress spurs deep local dissatisfaction. In many countries this provides scope for armed groups to challenge the authority and sovereignty of the state.

Africa is the continent that has the largest concentration of internal armed conflicts in the world. The key internal conflicts are
fought between the government and internal insurgent groups in countries such as Somalia, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. Finally, transnational actors in the shape of organized criminal networks and regional Islamist movements are increasingly part of the pattern of conflict in Africa.

Islamists a threat to weak states
Countries such as Somalia, Mali and Nigeria are the scenes of fighting between armed transnational Islamist groupings and national governments. The militant Islamists justify their actions by global jihad. They are particularly focused on making sharia law an integral and governing part of the state structures in these countries.

Strong states enhance their position
The level of political and economic development varies considerably. Powers such as Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa increasingly wield regional influence in eastern, western and southern Africa, respectively. This influence is exerted through trade agreements, bilateral diplomacy and regional cooperation in the African Union. Compared to their neighbours, these countries are characterized by greater stability and economic progress. They will likely gain an even more prominent role regionally in the medium term – economically, but also politically and militarily.

International support essential
Africa’s numerous conflicts do not only destabilize individual nation states but they also affect regional and, ultimately, international security. The recent African peace and security structures under the auspices of the African Union are increasingly contributing constructively towards the handling of security challenges in the African continent. Still, in the medium term Africa will be in need of international, including Western, support to solve its conflicts and preserve peace.

Somalia

Somalia’s federal government is working to increase national stability but is hampered in its efforts by a number of local administrations that aim for extensive autonomy. The government is also challenged by the al-Shabaab terrorist movement, which, despite being under military pressure and riven by internal disputes, remains capable of launching numerous terrorist attacks inside Somalia, particularly in the capital of Mogadishu. Extending the security apparatus is the key challenge for the federal government in the context of creating security in Somalia.

The contours of a new political system in Somalia are slowly emerging after the formation of a new federal government in the autumn of 2012. Despite good intentions and strong international backing, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the new government are still far from having realized the ambitious plan for political, economic and security reforms presented in September 2012.

Somalia’s most serious political challenge remains the country’s federal structure, including the division of power between the various clans, regional units, self-declared and semi-independent mini-states and the central government. In the short term, the central government will not likely be able to wrest de facto control over large parts of Somalia from the local administrations.
Al-Shabaab still a force to be reckoned with
Outside the capital of Mogadishu, security is handled by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in cooperation with Ethiopian forces and local Somali militias. Over the past year, al-Shabaab has been under significant military pressure from AMISOM forces, driving al-Shabaab to relinquish control over all major cities in southern and central Somalia. In addition, this pressure has caused internal rifts. Over the spring and summer of 2013, however, the leader of al-Shabaab has consolidated his power, imprisoning or killing rival al-Shabaab leaders. Al-Shabaab thus remains an effective terrorist movement, launching attacks in southern and central Somalia, including in Mogadishu, at regular intervals. It is not likely that AMISOM, Ethiopian and Somali forces will be able to completely defeat al-Shabaab in the short term.

Generally, the terrorist threat in Mogadishu grew more severe over the first six months of 2013. The majority of the, comparatively simple, attacks are launched against members of the Somali government administration. However, the attack launched against the UN headquarters in 2013 proves that al-Shabaab has the capacity to launch major coordinated attacks inside Mogadishu. As the foreign presence in Mogadishu is growing, al-Shabaab is increasingly focusing on striking Western institutions and representatives. It is likely that al-Shabaab will attempt to attack the airport in Mogadishu where many representatives of the international community are housed.

In addition to the attacks launched in Mogadishu, al-Shabaab regularly attacks AMISOM and Ethiopian forces as well as forces loyal to the government in southern and central Somalia. Al-Shabaab has also boosted its presence in northern Somalia, including in Somaliland and Puntland.

Government hard-pressed to improve security
The Somali government security forces lack the personnel, equipment and professionalism required to take control over large areas after AMISOM. Expanding the security apparatus is thus the key challenge for the central government in the context of providing security in Somalia. In the short term, despite its good intentions, the government has only limited prospects of introducing major security improvements in and outside Mogadishu.

Mali

Militant Islamist groups present a key threat in Mali, despite improvements to the political and security situation following the French military intervention in January 2013. The crisis is far from over, and the country is facing major military and political challenges.

The general political and security situation in Mali improved with the French military intervention in January 2013 and the July and August 2013 presidential elections. Militant Islamist groups still present a threat despite their general weakening and the loss of their safe haven in northern Mali. The intervention and the ensuing fighting have inflicted severe losses on the groups in terms of personnel, weapons, ammunition and equipment. Many surviving militant Islamists are hiding among the local population, while others have fled to neighbouring countries and other countries in North Africa. Groups such as al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb...
(AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUIAO) have the capacity and the will to launch terrorist attacks and stage kidnappings. These will particularly be directed against the intervention forces, the Malian Army and targets in neighbouring countries.

In the summer of 2013, France started withdrawing its troops, though a contingent will remain deployed in Mali. In future, the Malian Army will be responsible for maintaining and securing peace in northern Mali in cooperation with the new United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In this context, the ability of the Islamist groups to exploit the vast rural areas and the poorly guarded borders constitutes a major military challenge.

Conflict remains unresolved
The Tuareg rebellion that started the crisis back in 2012 is still festering. While the French intervention succeeded in repelling the militant Islamist groups, it also allowed the Tuareg rebel group Mouvement National de Libération de l’Azawad (MNLA) to gain terrain in the Kidal region. The interim peace agreement, entered between the interim government and the Tuareg groups in June 2013, has facilitated presidential elections and allowed the gradual return of the Malian Army to the area. Still, this agreement does not solve the root causes of the conflict. It will continue to destabilize northern Mali in the short term, creating tension between the various ethnic groups as well as between the Tuareg groups and the Malian Army.

New government faces major challenges
Politically, Mali is working its way out of the stalemate that has crippled the country since the March 2012 military coup. The massive turnout in the presidential election secures the newly elected government significant popular legitimacy – at least initially. However, the new government is forced to navigate in a situation rife with political division, and its fledgling legitimacy may soon fade, if the government does not deliver tangible political results.

In a bid to restore public faith in the political leaders, the government must purge the deep-seated culture of corruption and generate tangible improvements in the standard of living. Finally, the government must rebuild a number of the country’s state institutions from scratch, including in particular the local administration and the security apparatus. The government is also tasked with ensuring civilian control with the armed forces. If the government fails to address these challenges, Mali will be facing a new political and security crisis in the short to medium term.

Sudan and South Sudan

Relations between the two countries have grown increasingly tense since the secession of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011. Even though the two countries are still trying to pursue a negotiated solution in solving their disputes, the conflict potential remains significant. Moreover, both countries are facing major internal political, economic and security problems.

The major sources of disagreement between Sudan and South Sudan will continue to be mutual accusations of support by the opponent for rebel groups fighting the two governments as well as disagreement on the issue of border demarcation. However, the conflict is not likely to escalate into full-scale war.

The secession of South Sudan has not calmed
relations between the two countries. Rather, a number of the issues that the 2005 peace agreement failed to address have been the cause of renewed disagreement in the course of 2012 and 2013. The tensions briefly resulted in direct military clashes in the spring of 2012. However, they mainly take the form of protracted diplomatic conflict waged by economic means and by support for rebel groups that fight their opponent’s government.

In March 2013, an interim agreement was forged between the two countries. It was designed, among other things, to pave the way for a security zone along the common border and to permit South Sudan to resume its oil production. This agreement does not, however, solve the issue of the national affiliation of the Abyei area and the rest of the contested border areas. The impetus in the negotiations is also jeopardized by renewed Sudanese threats to block the export flow of South Sudanese oil, citing South Sudan’s support for the rebel groups fighting the government of Sudan.

Sudan struggles with armed rebellion
The Sudanese government’s most serious problem is the armed rebellions in Darfur as well as in the southern border provinces of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The government will likely try to seek military rather than political solutions. The rebel groups do not present a threat to the survival of the government in the short term.

In addition, Sudan is facing major internal problems. The country’s economic crisis has left dissatisfaction simmering among the population, and the government has generally lost its legitimacy, even among its traditional supporters. If President Omar al-Bashir were to stand by his decision not to run in the 2015 presidential election, this would spark major political unrest. He enjoys support and acts as a uniting figure in the ruling party, but strong tensions are festering beneath the surface.

South Sudan weighed down by political and economic crises
The armed rebellions and the increasingly more extensive and violent tribal conflicts will continue to destabilize the security situation in South Sudan in the short to medium term.

In addition, President Salva Kiir’s July 2013 decision to dissolve the government caused renewed political unrest. Among those ousted are the vice-president and the secretary general of the ruling party. Both have expressed their ambitions for the presidency. Kiir’s decision reflects the deep-seated rifts within the ruling party and in the country as a whole and may result in renewed tension between the largest ethnic groups in South Sudan.

In July 2013, South Sudan thus celebrated the two-year anniversary of its independence amidst economic and political crises. The national economic crisis deepened severely in early 2012. At this time, the government introduced a halt in oil production as part of the political conflict with Sudan which controls the oil pipelines and thereby the South Sudanese oil export. Even though South Sudan resumed oil production in April 2013, the economic crisis has rendered it impossible for the government to meet popular expectations of an improved standard of living. The mounting dissatisfaction with the government is likely to result in social and political unrest in the short to medium term.
The economic and military developments cause a gradual change in relations between the world’s great powers. This will in the very long term lead to a multipolar world. The global dominance of the United States will decrease. The most significant shift in the global economy will be towards China and Asia and away from the United States and Europe. However, the United States will remain the strongest military power with China as its closest strategic rival.

The United States is the world’s largest economy and the only military power with a global strategic reach. This will also hold true ten years from now, though the status of the United States as the world’s only superpower will gradually become less pronounced. The United States will slowly lose its so far strong economic edge on China, and over the next decades the United States will be overtaken by China as the world’s largest economy. China’s average per capita income will remain considerably below that of the United States, however, and the country will continue to face major economic and social challenges.

China and the United States find themselves in a process characterized by major strategic competition, chiefly reflected in East Asia. At the same time, the United States and China are carefully balancing their strategies in the region to ensure that relations between the two are not seriously jeopardized.

The relative decline of US power will increasingly be reflected in greater room for manoeuvre for the regional powers. They will not to the same extent as previously be restrained by the United States. In the medium to long term, this entails the risk of regional conflicts, in particular in areas where the United States has played a dominant role. Also, regional powers will increasingly try to strengthen their regional position. This, in turn, also increases the risk that the United States may, in the short to medium term, feel forced to intervene militarily against countries that underestimate the preparedness of the United States to engage in short-term, high-intensity military operations. In this context, the Middle East presents the biggest risk.

The United States and other Western countries will be less inclined to engage in sustained military interventions similar to the stabilization and reconstruction operations that have characterized Western military commitments over the last 10–15 years. Rather, the United States and other Western states will continue to launch short-term high-intensity military interventions and humanitarian operations. This will also be reflected in the structural changes taking place within the military organizations of the Western states.

The emerging great powers, China, Russia and India, all have economies with high growth potential; however, their economic bases are very different. Following decades of steep economic growth, China is strongest among the emerging powers though its foreign policy continues to be cautious and low key. Conversely, Russia is loudly trying to restore its role as a great power; however, the country’s economic development is curbed by insufficient reforms and stagnant prices on raw materials. Russia does not hold the same potential for growth as China or India – the latter having already overtaken Russia in terms of economic size. In the long term, India will use its growing share of the world economy to strengthen its influence abroad.

In the tier just below the emerging great powers, a number of countries, first and foremost Brazil, will manifest themselves as regional powers on a par with, for instance, Japan. Among the other countries that will manifest themselves as regional powers over the next 10–20 years are Turkey, Indonesia and Iran.
The trend towards more great powers and regional powers will result in a broader circle of actors gaining more influence on key international developments and decisions. This will give the rising powers the opportunity to formulate their own political and economic agendas without having to accept Western norms. China and Russia are already, albeit to varying degrees, distancing themselves from Western political norms and standing firm on their own values, traditions and interests. This trend will be reinforced and inspire regional powers and other countries whose relations with the West are conflict-ridden.

New types of energy production

The growing production of energy from shale deposits in the United States and Canada will impact global power relations. The United States and Europe will benefit the most from this development, while Russia’s economy might suffer.

Increasing energy production from shale deposits, especially in the United States and Canada, will ease some of the competition for energy resources towards 2030 and thus have a calming effect on future increases in global energy prices. Import countries will increasingly try to spread their energy imports across more suppliers and different types of energy sources to ensure security of supply. This, in turn, will affect the future global power relations.

The United States will benefit from this development and reduce its dependence on energy import. Already in the short to medium term, the United States will likely become self-sufficient in natural gas and, for a limited number of years, even become a net exporter. Conversely, the new energy production will reduce Europe’s energy dependence on Russia, and uncertainty about Russia’s revenue from energy export to Europe will put a further strain on the Russian economy.

China has the fastest growing energy demand in the world, and China has taken over the role as the world’s number one energy consumer. Faced by declining market shares in the European energy markets, Russia will try to increase its energy export to China. Russia and China are, however, far from agreeing on infrastructure and prices.

China

The new Chinese leadership has realized that the country’s economic growth must to a great extent be based on increased domestic demand rather than on intensive investments and export. China’s relationship with the United States is the key aspect of China’s foreign policy. The two countries are engaged in stronger competition for strategic influence in East Asia. A closer relationship between China and Russia is based on a converging strategic interest in countering the global influence of the United States.

In the medium to long term, China will be facing major domestic challenges. The economic growth is creating deep economic inequality, leaving large segments of society without noticeable progress, regularly causing extensive local protests and unrest to erupt.

China’s leadership has sharpened its focus on domestic security. In collaboration with the
security apparatus, the Chinese leadership closely monitors uprisings in other countries, fearing that they may inspire revolt in China. However, it is not likely that a popular revolt will be able to deprive the Chinese Communist Party of its power monopoly.

More confident Chinese foreign policy
Though the Chinese leadership has grown increasingly assertive in its external relations, it has also downplayed the role of Communist ideology in its foreign policy. However, the Chinese leadership vigorously distances China from the West and Western democratic and liberal ideas in order to avoid an erosion of the legitimacy of the country’s political system.

China’s policy of non-interference is still the core ideology of Chinese foreign policy. This policy is chiefly aimed at preventing other nations from interfering in Chinese domestic affairs. In addition, the principle also forms the basis of China’s argumentation against Western military intervention in other non-Western countries. China’s persistence on its non-interference policy and opposition to Western-supported regime changes will tempt some totalitarian states to seek political protection with China.

Despite tougher rhetoric towards North Korea, China has only a limited possibility of influencing North Korea’s policy towards South Korea and the United States. China is not likely to interrupt vital supplies of energy and food to North Korea in order to put the North Korean leadership under massive pressure.

Relations with the United States are the core aspect of the Chinese foreign policy. China has a large trade surplus with the United States, and very large parts of the Chinese foreign currency reserves are tied up in US government bonds. As long as China continues to reject US demands for a revaluation of the Chinese currency, the trade surplus with the United States will be a source of trade disputes.

However, it is primarily the competition for strategic influence in East Asia that will dominate relations between China and the United States. China regards the United States’ relations with China’s neighbours as a US attempt to encircle China and as a strategic challenge. Consequently, China is more clearly stating its strategic interests in the region, including its territorial demands in the energy-rich South China Sea.

China’s demand for raw materials at the core of its foreign policy
China has a strong demand for most kinds of the world’s natural resources, in particular energy, and the country has become a key player in the raw materials market. Many of China’s foreign-policy commitments are driven by its demand for raw materials. The Chinese leadership also gives top priority to technology transfer from abroad and development of Chinese high-tech know-how. China’s economic strength and heavy demand for raw materials also enable China to buy influence in economically weak states, including governments that are at loggerheads with the West.

In order to optimize the free flow of its foreign trade and oil imports and to secure access to the Indian Ocean, China is engaged in the construction of transport facilities, mainly port facilities, in Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. These port facilities will also improve the power projection capabilities of the Chinese Navy in the Indian Ocean.

China and Russia strengthen relations
China’s relations with Russia are pragmatic. The two states coordinate policies, most notably in the UN Security Council and the
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as well as in multilateral forums such as the BRICS association (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the top 20 industrial countries, G20. A certain division of labour has been established between China and Russia in relation to international issues where their interests converge.

China has taken the initiative in strengthening relations with Russia, and Russia is willing to expand cooperation within a number of fields. Immediately after President Xi Jinping’s coming into office in March 2013, China and Russia forged a wide range of cooperation agreements including, for instance, an oil agreement that has the potential to triple Russian oil exports to China towards 2018. If the agreement delivers on its full potential, China will overtake Germany as Russia’s single largest buyer of oil.

In the context of military technology, China is increasingly engaged with Russia in the joint development of weapons systems and weapons components and is to a lesser degree buying fully developed weapons systems from Russia. It is likely that Russia will accept transfer of technology and the risk that China may copy Russian weapons components if China will place orders of a certain size with the hard-pressed Russian arms industry. The military technological cooperation between China and Russia will thus be strengthened.

Relations between China and Russia are not based on mutual trust but on a shared strategic interest in counterbalancing the global dominance of the United States, and, in particular, on China’s and Russia’s resistance to Western political interference and military intervention in non-Western countries.

China modernizes its armed forces

Based on China’s economic growth, the Chinese leadership has launched a comprehensive modernization programme for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The aim is to transform the PLA from a low-tech people’s army to a modern great power military force.

The primary incentives behind the modernization of the PLA are China’s relations with Taiwan and the ambition to establish a reliable military deterrence against US intervention in East Asia. Consequently, the Navy and the Air Force in particular have been upgraded with new equipment.

To emphasize its military ambitions, China each year, amidst massive media attention, announces strong increases in its official defence budget. Officially, the budget has almost tripled in fixed prices over the past decade.

The PLA gives high priority to cyber war capabilities, and cyber attacks are highly likely part of the Chinese military planning.

In the long to very long term, China will develop a military force with global capabilities, and China will be more inclined to engage directly in international issues, including military intervention in regions of strategic interest to China. China’s economic development is bringing the country still closer to the outside world, making it ever more dependent on other countries. Finally, China’s enhanced economic and military clout will increase its potential to influence other countries, and the declining dominance of the US will increase China’s room for manoeuvre.

The PLA has already started operating out of the area as China in 2009 deployed a naval force to combat piracy at the Horn of Africa. In addition, China is increasingly participating in UN peacekeeping missions and has pledged to contribute approx. 400 troops
to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). This will give China an opportunity to gain operational experience from multinational forces.

Russia

Russia is more frequently opposing the United States and is pursuing its interests up to the point where its relations with the United States would suffer irreparably. This is evident in, for instance, Syria which Russia considers a key strategic strongpoint in the Middle East. The stability of the Russian regime may come under pressure due to its inability to renew itself and to reform the Russian economy.

Russia is ruled by an elite inter-linked by personal networks. The power and influence of individuals in the state leadership and the political structure do not depend exclusively on their formal ranking in the hierarchies but primarily on their loyalty towards President Vladimir Putin. Most elite members serve in the state apparatus, the security and intelligence services, and the major state-owned enterprises, including in the energy sector, and their many branches and subsidiaries.

The political thinking of the ruling elite strongly reflects a Russian tradition according to which the dominant state power is of fundamental importance to the cohesion and development of society. This notion is not limited to the power elite but widespread in the Russian society.

Popular protests in 2011 and 2012 prove that the young urban population and the growing middle class are particularly dissatisfied with the country’s leadership. Since Putin’s resumption of office in May 2012, the Russian leadership has persistently persecuted opposition leaders, who are targets of harassment, arrests, law suits and convictions. The Russian leadership will continue to oppress the most prominent opposition leaders. In addition, the leadership will try to alleviate popular dissatisfaction through a mixture of promises of increased state subsidies on food and energy and by emphasizing the role of national issues and moral and other values in its policy.

In the short to medium term, the divided opposition groups will not likely be able to unite and form a coherent political opposition capable of threatening the leadership’s grip on power. However, regime stability may come under pressure as the regime will prove increasingly incapable of sufficiently renewing itself and reforming the Russian economy.

Consequently, the modernization agenda introduced by former President Dmitriy Medvedev has now de facto been shelved. To protect the power of the ruling elite and its dominant perception of the importance of the state, Putin still gives priority to state control over economic key sectors, economic integration with the other CIS countries and strongly increased public spending on – for instance – pay and pensions as well as the armed forces.

Russia’s economic development will thus continue to be hampered by rampant corruption and bureaucracy, strong state involvement in the economy, opaque legislation and legal practice, as well as the Russian state’s dependence on revenue from stagnant energy exports.

Russia’s economic growth is thus declining, and the economy is vulnerable due to the
country’s dependence on energy export revenue. In addition, the poor investment climate impacts negatively on foreign investments in, for instance, the energy sector which in many ways is run-down.

Putin regime’s foreign policy sharpens relations with the United States
Russia is in the process of restoring its role as a great power determined to promote its own interests in all key international issues. The Russian understanding of the role of state power is reflected in Russia’s foreign-policy thinking as Russia fundamentally understands foreign and security policy as a zero sum game between states, either winning or losing influence, rather than cooperating on reaching consensus on shared goals and interests.

The focus of Russian foreign and security policy is thus to gain influence on the neighbouring states’ foreign and security policy. This applies in particular to the other states in the CIS area; keeping these states free of US influence and preventing their admission into NATO are high-priority objectives to Russia.

Russia mainly defines its status in international politics in the context of its relations with the United States, which Russia regards as its key strategic opponent and a power with which Russia must be on an equal footing. To Russia the possession of strategic nuclear weapons and delivery means on a level equalling that of the United States gives relations with the United States an exclusive status regulated by bilateral treaties.

Also, Russia’s permanent membership of the UN Security Council puts Russia in a key position vis-à-vis the United States. During the Syrian conflict, Russia has vetoed US and Western political initiatives on several occasions. But Russia has also skilfully used its permanent membership of the Security Council to place itself in a prominent position in relation to an agreement about the Syrian chemical weapons without abandoning its support for the Syrian regime.

In order to promote its interests in a wide range of key international issues, Russia is forced to cultivate relations with the United States. However, Russia is increasingly opposing the United States as illustrated by, for instance, Russia’s strong support for the regime in Syria; its rejection of US proposals for new treaty-stipulated reductions in the countries’ nuclear arsenals; and by Russia’s handling of former US intelligence service employee Edward Snowden. Russia is willing to pursue its interests up to the point where its relations with the United States would suffer irreparably.

Russia’s relations with the United States will continue to alternate between cooperation and conflict. As the relative strength between Russia and the United States is unequal, the United States will generally be able to take the initiatives while Russia will formulate its policy in response to the US. Consequently, the Russian response to many international issues will often be attempts to obstruct the policy of the United States and the West in general.

A fundamental and lasting improvement of relations between Russia and the United States is not likely. The strategic interest and outlook of the two powers are too different and bilateral economic relations too negligible to give new substance to the relations, and Russia’s political development is moving the country farther away from US ideals and concepts.

Russia mainly sees its relations with NATO as a reflection of its relations with the
United States, and it regards NATO as a US instrument to contain Russia. Russia demands guarantees that the United States and NATO’s missile defence system in Europe is not directed against Russia. In addition, Russia has made it clear that it regards the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), regulating the conventional relative strength of the NATO countries and Russia in Europe, as irrelevant.

Russia’s relations with NATO thus hold potential for significant political disagreements. However, political relations with NATO continue to be important to Russia, including in the context of protecting Russian interests in Afghanistan post-2014.

Russia supports regime in Syria
To Russia, the Middle East is an international arena in which it is determined to play a role equal to that of the United States and other Western actors in protecting its national interests and interests in conflict management. Generally, Russia is trying to base its policy in the Middle East on principles of non-interference in internal affairs of the states, the preservation of the UN as the key forum for conflict management and limited use of sanctions.

Russia’s policy in the Middle East is thus mainly focused on maintaining the status quo and protecting the regimes in Syria and Iran – both long-time Russian political partners. Russia is putting moderate pressure on the regimes in the two countries to make them show restraint, and it provides a certain protection for them in the UN Security Council.

Russia regards Syria as the key strategic strongpoint in the Middle East. Their close bilateral ties reach far back in time, and Russia has a minor naval strongpoint in the Syrian port of Tartus. Russia still provides the Assad regime with weapons and is interested in maintaining the political status quo in order to cultivate its own interests in the country under a weakened al-Assad regime.

Russia modernizes its armed forces
The Russian political leadership gives strong priority to military development, even at the expense of other political and economic objectives. Rebuilding the country’s armed forces following many years of decline is thus a key objective for the Russian political leadership.

Russia’s economic development has made it possible for the Russian political leadership to increase defence spending considerably. Towards 2020, a considerable part of the budget has been allocated for the state armament programme, providing the Russian armed forces with a long range of sophisticated, high-tech and combat-decisive weapons systems.

The Russian armed forces are generally defensively oriented and will not be capable of conducting major coordinated offensive operations far from the Russian borders. Consequently, the Russian military leadership is focusing its efforts on improving strategic mobility of the conventional forces inside Russia. This will enable the armed forces to concentrate in specific geographic areas and obtain regional superiority for a limited offensive against immediate neighbours. The high priority given to strategic mobility inside Russia is a key reason for Russia’s rejection of the CFE Treaty.

Developments in the Russian armed forces reflect the country’s foreign and security priorities. Russian naval and air force units, however, must be able to operate at great distances in order to demonstrate to the United States and other Western powers that it has the military means required to
support its role as a global great power. By far the majority of Russia's conventional armed forces are now organized and trained as reaction forces to be deployed in crises and local wars along the Russian periphery, which Russia regards as being part of its sphere of interest.

Despite the Russian Navy being in a generally critical situation, several naval units have been deployed to the Mediterranean and the waters off the Horn of Africa in connection with anti-piracy operations in 2012 and 2013. The naval operations in the Mediterranean have also served to flag Russia’s interests in Syria and to demonstrate the country's capability to deploy military power in a major crisis situation.

Increased Russian air activities in the Baltic region, involving strategic bombers and intelligence collection flights, reflect the generally improved training status in the Russian armed forces. These activities are likely not a reflection of aggressive intentions against Denmark or other countries in the Baltic region, but a sign of Russia’s general desire to demonstrate its great power ambitions with military means.

Despite progress, Russia’s future military development is still subject to many factors of uncertainty. Should energy prices drop markedly, the Russian political leadership may be caught in a dilemma, facing a critical choice between continued high defence spending and a political need to secure political stability with increased non-military spending.

The military procurement programme will not likely be fully implemented ahead of 2020. The Russian arms industry is worn-out and lagging behind technologically on many levels. Finally, the reforms of the Russian armed forces will be vulnerable to political attempts at returning to more traditional Russian military thinking.
In order to facilitate the reading of this risk assessment, we have prepared a brief outline of our special language usage and work methods:

Once the analysts receive information, it must be validated; that is, the reliability and the access of the source must be determined. Then the information must be assessed in order to determine its credibility and probability. We thus assess our sources and information on the basis of four criteria:

**Reliability**: How reliable has the source proved in the past? To what extent is the source familiar with the subject to which the information is related?

**Accessibility**: How close has the source been to events – first-hand or second-hand information?

**Credibility**: Has the information been provided by a normally reliable source with good access? Does the information fit with our general knowledge?

**Probability**: What is the probability of what the source describes happening or having happened? This depends on the reliability of the source, the access of the source, the credibility of the information and on how the information fits with what the analyst already knows.

Once we have determined all these factors, we have transformed the raw information into a validated piece of information that can form part of our further analysis and the final production of intelligence.

Normally, we protect the identity of our sources. As a main rule, however, we give our assessment of the credibility of the information as well as its probability. Though it might strengthen our credibility in the eyes of our readers if we mention the origin of our information, the need for credibility must be carefully balanced against the potential consequences of disclosing the source.

We rarely produce assessments which do not contain an element of doubt. Therefore, it is important to make it clear to our readers just how certain we are in our assessments. In order for our readers to understand our intelligence assessments correctly, we must express ourselves in a standardized way, using the same phrases for instance when expressing identical source evaluations or the same level of probability.

We thus exclusively use standardized language in the intelligence risk assessment. As regards probability, we use probability levels ranging from 0 over 25, 50 and 75 to 100 per cent. The extremes at either end are the easiest to deal with but are not the most commonly used. In practice, the analysts often have to assess a probability as fifty-fifty or between this and zero or 100 respectively.

We use a fixed terminology for the five degrees of probability:

- Highly likely
- Likely
- Possible
- Not likely
- Unlikely

The probability levels do not express precise numeric differences as would a metric rule. It merely informs the reader whether something is more or less probable than something else. In other words: This scale shows whether we assess the probability to be closer to 25 per cent than to 50 per cent. In this way we aim at guiding our readers to better understand our assessments.
Definitions

Probability

Unlikely
We do not expect a certain development. Such a development is (almost) not a possibility.

Not likely
It is more likely that something will not happen than vice versa. The degree of probability is approx. 25 per cent.

Possible
It is a likely possibility; however, we do not have the basis to assess whether it is more or less possible that something will happen. The degree of probability is approx. 50 per cent.

Likely
It is more likely that something will happen than vice versa. The degree of probability is approx. 75 per cent.

Highly likely
We expect a certain development. It has (almost) been confirmed.

Time frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years:</td>
<td>short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years:</td>
<td>medium term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years:</td>
<td>long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives</td>
<td>exceeding ten years (very long term) are subject to great uncertainty and are thus only seldom used.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Terrorist attacks

We assess the complexity of an attack based on the capabilities of the attackers as regards recruiting, reconnaissance, coordination, financing, logistics, technical know-how, special skills and operational security. The capacity to launch simultaneous attacks reflects a certain capability within more of these areas. We divide attacks into four categories:

Simple terrorist attacks may consist of a single individual or a few individuals obtaining, for instance, a handgun or a simple homemade bomb to launch an attack against unprotected targets.

Terrorist attacks of a certain complexity may consist of a smaller number of coordinated bomb explosions or a single large car bomb against unprotected or poorly protected targets.

Complex terrorist attacks may consist of a larger number of coordinated bomb explosions or more than one large car bomb.

Highly complex terrorist attacks such as, for instance, the 11 September 2001 attacks against the USA and the planned attacks against transatlantic flights from London in August 2006.