

Should Defense Spending Be Cut to Help Bring Down Budget Deficits?

Defense cuts not seen as an overly bad thing; nuclear weapons are in top place for these cuts

New York, N.Y. — November 3, 2010 — A new *Financial Times/Harris Poll* in the United States and the five largest European countries looks at the impact of defense spending on budget deficits and finds some mixed attitudes. Half of Germans (49%), more than two in five Spaniards (45%) and two in five Italians (41%) believe cutting defense budgets to further bring down budget deficits is mostly a good thing. Two in five Britons (39%) believe doing this is mostly a bad thing and more than two in five French (44%) say it is neither a good nor a bad thing. Americans are most divided with more than one-third saying cutting defense spending to bring down the budget deficit is mostly a bad thing (36%) or neither a good nor bad thing (36%).

These are some of the findings of a **Financial Times/Harris Poll** conducted online by [Harris Interactive](#)® among 6,181 adults aged 16-64 within France (1,082), Germany (1,021), Great Britain (1,016), Spain (990), U.S. (1,057) and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,015) between October 12 and 19, 2010.

In terms of where to cut, the top choice for majorities in Germany (79%), Spain (76%), Italy (69%), France (58%), and the U.S. (54%) is nuclear weapons. While just under half of Britons (47%) also say nuclear weapons should be cut, a majority (57%) believes the cuts should come from Civil Servants.

Hawks tend to argue that if defense spending is cut, national security is put at risk, but people in these 6 countries do not all see that happening. More than two in five Germans (48%), French (46%) and Spaniards (44%), and two in five Italians (39%) are not at all concerned that making these defense cuts would weaken their country's ability to protect itself. However, one-quarter of Britons (25%) and three in ten Americans (30%) are very or extremely concerned.

Other interesting findings of this survey include:

- Over half of French (54%) and Germans (51%) and just under half of Spaniards (48%) and Italians (47%) are not at all concerned that defense cuts will damage their country's reputation in the international arena. While one-quarter of Americans (23%) and one in five Britons (18%) are very or extremely concerned about this, one-third of Americans (33%) and over one-quarter of Britons (28%) say they are not at all concerned;
- One thing most agree on is the preparedness of their country's military. Majorities in the U.S. (74%), Great Britain (68%), France (62%), Spain (62%) and Germany (51%) believe their military is mostly fit for the challenges of the 21st century. Italy disagrees, as over half (53%) say their military is mostly unfit for the challenges;
- Three in five French (60%), almost half of Italians (48%) and Germans (48%), over two in five Spaniards (44%) and almost two in five Americans (38%) support the idea of their country sharing military resources with another country. Britons are extremely divided with just over one-third (35%) opposing this idea, one-third supporting it (33%) and one-third neither supporting nor opposing it;

- If it was certain that Iran was on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons and all diplomatic options were exhausted, almost half of Italians (47%) and more than two in five Spaniards (45%) and French (43%) would oppose military action. However, more than half of Americans (54%) and just under half of Britons (46%) would support military action. Germans are split – 37% would support it and 36% would oppose military action.

NATO Summit

This month, there is a NATO summit. One of the topics is NATO’s role in Afghanistan. Each country has a slightly different viewpoint as to what their country’s troops should do in Afghanistan. In the U.S., 36% believe troops should withdraw immediately while 30% say they should stay as long as necessary. Just over two in five Britons (42%), French (44%) and Germans (44%) believe their troops should withdraw immediately, while one-quarter of Britons (25%) and Germans (26%) and one-third of French (32%) say they should stay as long as necessary. About one in five French (20%), German (21%) and British (22%) adults and one-quarter of Americans (26%) say the troops should stay one more year and then withdraw. Almost half of Italians (49%) and Spaniards (47%) say troops should withdraw from Afghanistan immediately, yet almost three in ten Spaniards (28%) and one on five Italians (22%) believe they should stay as long as necessary.

In terms of what NATO should prioritize, half of Americans (51%), just under half of Britons (48%), French (48%), Italians (48%) and Spaniards (46%) and two in five Germans (41%) say it should be fighting terrorism. Over two in five Americans (45%) and over one-third of Germans (37%) and Britons (36%) say NATO should look at making sure Iran does not acquire the atomic bomb. Two in five Italians (39%) and one-third of French (33%) say it should be pre-empting the food crisis while over two in five Spaniards (43%) say it should be pre-empting the natural resource crisis.

So What?

In these days of international terrorism and bombs on cargo planes, the issue of defense cuts has the possibility of causing concern. But, when coupled with huge deficits and times of economic turmoil, there needs to be a careful balance. As long as people feel their country’s military is equipped properly and mostly fit for modern warfare and that fighting terrorism is still a top priority, defense cuts are not going to get much argument from these citizens.

TABLE 1
BUDGET DEFICIT AND DEFENSE CUTS

“Defense budgets in many countries including [INSERT COUNTRY] are being cut in order to further bring down national budget deficits. Do you see these cuts as mostly a good thing or mostly a bad thing for your country?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Mostly a good thing	29	25	40	41	45	49
Neither a good nor bad thing	36	36	44	35	35	37
Mostly a bad thing	36	39	16	23	20	14

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 2
DEFENSE CUTS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

“How concerned are you, if at all, that these defense cuts will weaken [INSERT COUNTRY]’s ability to protect itself?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very/Extremely concerned (NET)	30	25	11	12	12	8
Extremely concerned	15	11	5	5	5	2
Very concerned	16	13	6	7	7	6
Concerned	17	22	20	18	20	13
Somewhat concerned	28	34	23	31	24	31
Not at all concerned	24	19	46	39	44	48

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 3
DEFENSE CUTS AND INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

“How concerned are you, if at all, that these defense cuts will damage [INSERT COUNTRY]’s reputation in the international arena?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very/Extremely concerned (NET)	23	18	12	10	10	7
Extremely concerned	11	9	4	3	4	2
Very concerned	12	9	8	7	6	5
Concerned	20	26	15	16	19	15
Somewhat concerned	25	28	19	27	22	26
Not at all concerned	33	28	54	47	48	51

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 4
THE DEFENSE BUDGET AND WHERE TO MAKE CUTS

“If you had to say, which of the following defense areas do you think should be affected by the cuts?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Troop numbers	22	12	15	32	23	37
Nuclear weapons	54	47	58	69	76	79
Conventional weapons	14	9	21	28	33	28
Troop salaries	8	6	16	15	24	11
Large scale equipment such as aircrafts and aircraft carriers	23	14	27	30	36	43
MOD Civil Servants (GB only)/Civilian personnel	35	57	20	28	21	19
Other	18	17	16	16	27	11

Note: Multiple responses accepted

TABLE 5
AN ARMY FIT FOR THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

“Some argue that there should be a complete rethink of the role of the military in [INSERT COUNTRY] and elsewhere. To what extent do you believe that the [INSERT COUNTRY] army is fit for the challenges of the 21st century?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Mostly fit for purpose	74	68	62	47	62	51
Mostly unfit for purpose	26	32	38	53	38	49

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 6
MILITARY AND SENSE OF SECURITY

“Thinking of all you know about the military in your country, do you feel...?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very/Extremely safe (NET)	43	25	14	9	20	19
Extremely safe	13	7	3	3	8	6
Very safe	30	19	11	7	12	13
Safe	35	41	38	48	44	48
Somewhat safe	19	30	37	33	24	24
Not at all safe	3	4	11	10	12	9

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 7
ON SHARING MILITARY RESOURCES

“Some also argue for closer co-operation between countries on military issues, as being discussed by the UK and France. How much would you support or oppose [INSERT COUNTRY] sharing military resources with another country?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Support (NET)	38	33	60	48	44	48
Very much support	13	8	20	16	22	21
Somewhat support	26	25	40	32	22	27
Neither support nor oppose	31	32	28	37	42	36
Oppose (NET)	31	35	13	15	14	16
Somewhat oppose	19	22	8	10	6	9
Very much oppose	12	13	5	5	9	7

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 8
MILITARY ACTION ON IRAN

“How much would you support or oppose military action on Iran if it was certain that Iran was on verge of acquiring a nuclear weapon and diplomatic options were exhausted?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Support (NET)	54	46	28	29	28	37
Very much support	30	14	9	10	11	18
Somewhat support	24	31	19	19	17	19
Neither support nor oppose	25	26	29	24	27	27
Oppose (NET)	22	28	43	47	45	36
Somewhat oppose	10	16	27	23	17	11
Very much oppose	11	13	16	24	27	25

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 9
NATO SUMMIT AND AFGHANISTAN

“NATO's role in Afghanistan will be discussed at a NATO summit in November. In your opinion, [INSERT COUNTRY] troops in Afghanistan should...”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Stay (NET)	64	58	56	51	53	56
Stay as long as necessary	30	25	32	22	28	26
Stay 2 to 5 more years	8	11	5	5	8	9
Stay one more year and then withdraw	26	22	20	24	18	21
Withdraw immediately	36	42	44	49	47	44

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 10
NATO SUMMIT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

“During the upcoming summit, NATO’s political leaders will also discuss matters of international security. Which two of the following issues do you think should be prioritized?”

Base: All EU and US adults

	U.S.	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Building a stable nation in Iraq	12	13	13	9	8	11
Building a stable nation in Afghanistan	15	21	17	16	13	17
Preventing Iran from acquiring the atomic bomb	45	36	31	34	28	37
Reducing the military threat of North Korea	20	15	6	8	11	13
Fighting terrorism	51	48	48	48	46	41
Pre-empting the natural resource crisis	17	18	32	30	43	28
Pre-empting the food crisis	14	18	33	39	29	34
Other	4	4	4	3	4	5
Not sure	11	14	8	6	9	7

Note: Multiple responses accepted

Methodology

This **FT/Harris Poll** was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,181 adults aged 16-64 within France (1,082), Germany (1,021), Great Britain (1,016), Spain (990), U.S. (1,057) and adults aged 18-64 in Italy (1,015) between October 12 and 19, 2010. Figures for age, sex, education, region and Internet usage were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult populations of the respective countries. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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The Harris Poll® #134, November 3, 2010

By Regina A. Corso, SVP, Harris Poll, Public Relations and Youth Research, Harris Interactive

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