



# RESEARCH PAPER

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### Research Paper

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## Editorial

**D**oes the NATO Alliance need a revised Strategic Concept? The answer to this question largely depends on how you view the document itself. For those who define it as a strategy document, the Concept has obvious limitations that need both elaboration and repair. For those who believe its primary purpose is broader – i.e., to provide a binding political framework for an increasingly diverse Alliance – the current version continues to meet NATO's needs.

NATO Heads of State and Government approved the current Strategic Concept in April 1999. The purpose of the document was fourfold: 1) to express "NATO's enduring purpose and nature, and its fundamental security tasks," 2) to identify the "central features of the new security environment," 3) to specify "the elements of the Alliance's broad approach to security," and 4) to provide guidelines for the further adaptation of its military forces. The Strategic Concept certainly made good on these goals, its critics admitted, but they also claimed it was just too comprehensive. It threw all NATO-related strategy considerations "into the kitchen sink" – i.e., if there was a threat, risk, challenge, or option to take into account, the Concept did so. The document therefore remains undeniably comprehensive, but it has no "hills and valleys." Since everything within the text is equally important, nothing is important, or so its critics claim. Additionally, since the text's publication preceded 9-11, terrorist-related threats and realities do not receive pride-of-place; they remain buried within the document. They are, in short, just a part of a lengthy "laundry list" of possible contingencies and challenges the Alliance might have to address in the future. Nor are all potential NATO responses properly highlighted, including anticipatory self-defense and the still politically toxic concept of preemption. So, its detractors argue, the Strategic Concept is a "flat" document that tries to be all things to all people. It fails to do what truly effective strategies do – i.e., prioritize threats and the capabilities needed to combat them. Effective strategies, in other words, are a functioning collection of biases and working propositions that largely determine the force structures nations ultimately field. The Strategic Concept fails to accomplish these ends, or so its detractors believe, especially in the wake of 9-11.

Defenders of the Concept argue that such complaints are both unfair and unfounded, primarily because NATO members should see the text as a political rather than strategy document. It exists to create Alliance-level solidarity; any other functions it performs are merely secondary. The Alliance's strategy, the defenders further note, actually comes from second-tier publications (MC161, MC400, etc.) and ministerial guidance. It is these back-up sources, when kludged together that provide a coherent NATO strategy. And in doing so, they permit the Strategic Concept to serve as a broad tent that covers (and politically unifies) a large number of nations. The current system, its defenders conclude, is a flexible one, and therefore worth preserving.

Obviously, the jury remains out on this issue. Defenders and opponents of the current Concept continue to argue their case. As the following Research Paper shows, Pavel Necas is a member of the opposition. In his opinion, post 9-11 realities require the Alliance to update its leading document and give it a strategy-oriented caste. Otherwise, NATO will not be able to respond to future threats in timely, nimble-footed ways.

Peter FABER, Research Advisor

## Introduction

Jean DUFOURCQ<sup>1</sup>

I highly recommend this research work by Colonel Pavel Necas.

This Slovakian researcher provides us with a valuable insight into why the Atlantic Alliance should continue to give serious thought to its future. Even if this is what it has been doing on a regular basis since the end of the cold war (the Rome Summit at the end of 1991 and then the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit in Spring 1999), and notwithstanding the adaptation of its Strategic Concept to meet the new global challenges, the Alliance may very well need to change its methods.

As the pace of strategic change continues to accelerate, the major Western players are upgrading their strategies (the US National Security Strategy in September 2002 and the European Security Strategy in December 2003). We, too, probably have to brace for a similar effort in the not too distant future, and Colonel Necas' research work, which updates the 1999 concept by incorporating current thinking, is the first step in this direction.

But is it not time to change our way of thinking?

For instance, does the Atlantic Alliance, which is a strategic alliance between North America and continental Europe, still warrant a military organization such as NATO? Does it not need something else, a sort of "super European-American Commission" to manage American and European interests and responsibilities wherever they converge?

Has the Alliance now reached its final outer limits following its most recent enlargement and current membership of 26 countries? Should we not be thinking differently, for example, in terms of other members (e.g. Mexico and Ukraine)? Or what about more creative formulae, such as cloning the Atlantic Alliance South-east of Europe, which would enable its major strategic players, like Russia, Turkey, and Iran, to bring stability and security to the Caucasus, or South of Europe with Egypt and a Union of the Maghreb countries which would have the same effect on North Africa ... and something similar in Central America ... What about an alliance network with a common strategic superstructure?

Rethinking the Alliance does not just involve thinking about the constant transformation of its military organization but also entails envisaging changes to our political structures.

## Beyond Tradition: A New Strategic Concept for NATO?<sup>2</sup>

Pavel NECAS<sup>3</sup>

Despite the widespread expectations of a decade ago, the world has not become a more rational, moral or even safer place. As a result, NATO must now respond to a broader spectrum of risks and threats than it did before. It needs residual capabilities to carry out Article 5 missions for

collective defense, but it also requires expanded expeditionary capabilities to carry out non-Article 5 missions outside of member-state zones.

In theory, the Alliance's *Strategic Concept* of 1999 should provide a workable roadmap for what these

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<sup>2</sup> The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NATO Defense College or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Les opinions exprimées dans cette publication sont celles de l'auteur et ne peuvent être attribuées au Collège de Défense de l'OTAN ou à l'Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord.

<sup>3</sup> Colonel Pavel Necas (Slovakian Air Force) was a Partnership for Peace (PfP) Research Fellow at the NATO Defense College from February to June 2004.



specific capabilities should be, and what particular threats and risks they most likely will have to deal with. Unfortunately, this pre-9-11 document does not provide a genuine threat and risks assessment, and therefore does not provide an adequately prioritized roadmap for expected NATO missions and objectives, and the possible ways of militarily meeting them. In other words, it is a highly generic document; it drifts too far away from discussions of “hard” military power towards largely political discussions of “soft” power. Now this tendency is either good or bad, depending on what you believe the ultimate purpose of the document should be. The argument here is that the *Strategic Concept* should be a document that better balances its military role with its political role; that it should be specifically strategy-centered; and that it should spell out ways to streamline and improve NATO capabilities, both political and military. Without having this void-filling guidance readily available in the *Concept*, NATO members will not transform themselves sufficiently; they will just not be responsive enough to deal effectively, as an Alliance, with a growing number of post-9-11 asymmetric threats.

An improved *Strategic Concept* can obviously take many forms. *This Research Paper argues that, at a minimum, it should reflect four contextual changes in how NATO approaches collective defense and three adjustments to actual Alliance strategy.* By taking these steps, NATO members will stop and partially reverse a decade-long evolution away from being a military alliance to being a political body that has concentrated on pacifying Eastern and Central Europe, primarily through dialogue and democratization. This latter project has certainly been a good thing, but the Alliance now needs a rebalanced *Strategic Concept* to deal better with unexpected attacks, in unexpected forms, from unexpected sources, and to significantly improve NATO’s offensive military capabilities for out-of-area operations.

### ***Contextual Change No.1: Formalized NATO-EU Cooperation***

Today’s military operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia are not strictly NATO or EU-led, but include members of both organizations and partner nations. The operations are therefore, at least to a

partial degree, ad hoc coalitions of the willing. Such coalitions have obvious benefits, including flexibility, but they also have negatives, including needless duplication of effort. NATO and the EU have made good overall progress in dealing with these types of problems, including the formal sharing of capabilities and planning functions. More needs to be done, however. NATO should add a *European Security Committee* to its organizational structure.

This formal link would permit NATO-EU members and their partners to discuss, decide, and act upon transatlantic security issues more effectively. (As a matter of fact, this innovation would merely institutionalize what is already being done informally.) However, the discussants could also recuse themselves from grappling with particular issues if they felt it was politically necessary. Such an arrangement would thus permit closer NAT-EU cooperation, particularly in shaping and supporting each other’s strategic visions, while also preserving everyone’s freedom of action.

### ***Contextual Change No.2: A European-Level Approach to Defense Force Structures***

If formal and expanded NATO-EU cooperation is a necessary starting point for a revised NATO *Strategic Concept*, so is a *common European-level approach to defense force structures.*

Reforms in this area already include establishing professional, all-volunteer militaries; the increased out-sourcing of non-military activities; and the possible disbanding of military unions. These reforms, however, only represent half steps towards the ultimate question – Will there ever exist a Composite European Army? Some say “never,” given the national sovereignty issues involved, and some say “without a doubt.” The latter cite the incremental steps that have either occurred or are presently underway, including the European Air Group (which includes the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium and others), a Czech-Slovak-Polish multinational brigade, which is fully operational and has a headquarters located in Slovakia, and a possible joint training school for Tiger helicopter pilots.<sup>4</sup>

The next logical step after such functional clustering would be to replace several national armies with

<sup>4</sup> See Daniel Bastien and Klaus Becher, “Transforming NATO Forces: Spending More Wisely,” in *Transforming NATO Force from European Perspectives*, eds. C. Richard Nelson and Jason S. Purcell, (The Atlantic Council of the United States, 2003), p. 56.

pan-European military capabilities, and finally to field a European Army as a key pillar of the North Atlantic Treaty.<sup>5</sup>

Again, the political costs of this type of contextual change may seem exorbitant, but the financial and operational costs of not pursuing it may be even worse.

### ***Contextual Change No.3: Adequately Funded Alliance Transformation***

The political will in Europe to increase post-9-11 defense spending simply is not there.

Most European countries continue to spend under 2% of their GDP on defense, which has led to major capabilities shortfalls over time. To begin rectifying this state of affairs, NATO members need to do three things.

First, *they need to develop a well-defined and commonly understood end-state for Alliance transformation.* Without this particular vision, nations may be tempted to cut antiquated force structures without redirecting resources into needed transformational capabilities.

Second, *they should understand the true costs of transformation.* The savings from cutting in-place forces will not be enough to pay for new (and needed) capabilities. These costs should therefore be identified and articulated up front, thus allowing national governments to plan for them in budgetary terms and to manage their political consequences more effectively.

Finally, *transformation requires the willing acceptance of risk* on a number of fronts. These risks should be defined, articulated and accepted from the beginning, including the drawing down of large land armies that are no longer required for national territorial defense.

### ***Contextual Change No.4: Modify NATO Decision-Making Processes***

Finally, if NATO is to develop a *Strategic Concept* that provides substantive strategy-centered guidance, it needs to reflect a final contextual change – i.e., the Alliance needs to modify its decision-making processes so that they will

help minimize the political impasses or outright paralysis brought about by increased member numbers.

Basically, deliberately awkward decision-making that willingly sacrifices timeliness for comprehensiveness is not necessarily an advantage now. In a world of asymmetric intra-state conflicts, quick decisions and actions have become key political and military requirements, especially against terrorists and other fluid, rapid, and flexible sub-state actors.

Therefore, a judicious balance needs to be found within NATO between the desire for efficient military action in response to common threats and the need to ensure that all allied members have a chance to exercise consensus. Needed variants to current NATO decision-making could include the following.

- The “Threatened Ally” Rule, whereby any member nation (or combination of nations) has the right to request the preparation of operational planning options – without prior NAC political guidance and direction – if it sees a threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security.
- The “SACEUR Discretion” Rule, whereby the NAC delegates broad discretionary authority to SACEUR to prepare and update, as necessary, contingency operational plans for a broad range of possible NATO military missions.
- The “Coalitions within NATO” Rule, which would require unanimous approval for a “Committee of Contributors,” chaired by the Secretary General, to carry out operations on behalf of the Alliance as a whole.
- The “Voting System” Rule, whereby the NAC might break an impasse by authorizing a weighted voting process similar to the EU’s Qualified Majority Vote System (which currently applies only to non-military decision-making).
- And the “Membership Suspension” Rule, whereby members who violate common Alliance values and principles could be suspended, either temporarily or permanently, from the Alliance.

In closing this section, it is important to restate the obvious — context matters. A genuinely utilitarian *Strategic Concept* should both embody and reflect

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Mroziewicz, “Enlargement and the Capabilities Gap,” in *Transforming NATO Forces*, p. 89.





an improved context, at least in the above four areas. With these contextual changes and improvements properly in place, the *Concept* might then include the following three adjustments to Alliance strategy, at a minimum.

### **Strategy Adjustment No.1: Adopt Preemption as a Possible NATO Option**

There are four necessary components to winning the fight against terrorism and other asymmetric risks: leadership, persistence, focus and lethality.<sup>6</sup> However, these needed attributes for success require tools – as many tools as possible, including military preemption. The concept of preemption has obvious advantages – it helps define threats, thresholds, and boundaries; it provides strategic focus; it potentially changes strategic mindsets; and it can coordinate differing approaches under one galvanized will, among many other things. But to embrace preemption as a possible security option for NATO, member nations will have to ensure 1) it is legally and morally defensible, 2) it has clear objectives, 3) it has a high probability of success, and 4) it is proportional. Most importantly, though, preemption must be part of a larger, more comprehensive strategy that includes all the elements of national and international power. It must support political, financial, information, legal, and law enforcement activities. It should not be an option of first resort or of last resort, but should be used according to well-defined thresholds and criteria.

Meeting all the conditions for preemptive action will therefore be difficult for the Alliance; the risk of acting against a direct and imminent threat should always outweigh the risk of doing nothing.

However, in the case of terrorist groups willing to use WMD, preemption may be the only option available for Alliance members, and therefore should be a highlighted element in a revised *Strategic Concept*.

### **Strategy Adjustment No.2: Refine the NATO Response Force (NRF) Concept**

Preemption, prevention, active self-defense, *et al*, will require a wide range of military capabilities if they are to succeed, including a far-reaching NRF.

A revised *Strategic Concept* should highlight the following points vis-à-vis the NATO Response Force.

- The overarching goal of the NRF is to provide the common intelligence, targeting, planning, and command and control capabilities that currently distinguish U.S. military capabilities from European capabilities.
- The NRF should be used for shows of force, non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian relief/disaster relief functions, initial or even forced entry operations, stand-alone offensive or defensive joint operations, and perhaps “new” missions like theater missile defense, consequence management, and preemption.
- NATO members need to develop niche capabilities to contribute to the NRF. Acquiring these capabilities will be easier for those countries that are building their militaries from the ground up than for those who are trying to adapt inherited Warsaw Pact force structures.
- If the NRF is to succeed, it will require international-level training support (especially for counter-terrorism operations), new multinational formations, an Alliance-level planning system, and a new system of NATO-level financing.

The answer to “will the NRF work?” is a resounding “maybe.” Many look to the Response Force as a last chance for NATO to transform itself into the relevant organization that keeps both sides of the Atlantic interested in the Alliance. Its success or failure will be determined by the nations that ultimately provide not only the funding for such a force, but also the personnel needed to make the NRF a reality. The *Strategic Concept* should reflect the above realities.

### **Strategy Adjustment No.3: Adopt Combination Warfare as a Formal NATO Strategy**

Finally, there is the question of a formal strategy for NATO itself. There are those who believe that any strategy would be an unneeded encumbrance; it would deprive Alliance leaders of the necessary “wobble room” they need to improvise their way through assorted crises.

This unfortunately is “old think.” It refuses to account

<sup>6</sup> See Anthony H. Cordesman and Arleigh A. Burke, “Defending America, Redefining the Conceptual Borders of Homeland Defense”, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 19 September 2001.

for an inconvenient fact – the NATO Alliance will increasingly confront faceless, modular, unpredictable and asymmetric foes. They are borderless and transnational. They prefer to employ hybrid, multi-dimensional means, including Industrial Age or late-Cold War military equipment, ballistic and cruise missiles, weapons of mass destruction (and disruption), limited stocks of precision weapons, growing anti-access capabilities, and an expanding capability to conduct global-level cyber warfare.

To combat these troublesome new realities, NATO needs to embed a relevant and overarching security strategy within its *Strategic Concept* – Combination Warfare.<sup>7</sup>

Combination Warfare assumes conflicts have become increasingly “civilianized.” As a result, they can potentially feature – on an interchangeable and “horizontal” level – at least 29 different types (or tools) of “war,” as illustrated below.

The above tools or types of conflict may or may not be already familiar to us, but what is certainly new is the potential ability of NATO commanders, while working in concert with EU and national-level agencies or organizations, to mix and match them in unprecedented ways. In short, Combination Warfare may provide NATO with a viable overarching strategy for the future. As a strategy, it can operate in

virtually all significant spheres of human activity, and as just illustrated, it can rely on *above-military*, *military*, and *non-military* means to prevent, localize, or neutralize asymmetric threats. (By *above-military* forms of war we mean conducting “combat” in broad and militarily unfamiliar domains of human activity. By *non-military* forms of war we mean more narrowly defined domains where we have conducted “military” operations before, even if in abbreviated ways.)

As the above paragraph hints at, the key to Combination Warfare is bundling – i.e., to defeat or de-fang shadowy foes, those who practice Combination Warfare should mix and match various types of war in modular fashion. These 29 types of war are basically Lego pieces that commanders can use to construct any type of operation that they see fit. (In this sense then, Combination Warfare truly is “Lego Warfare.”)

Additionally, the level of emphasis given to each piece could (and should) change over time. A particular combination of pieces may be vital in an anti-terror campaign for X amount of time, but their importance may wane given new intelligence or developments.

Therefore, as circumstances change, so should the pieces of the “jigsaw puzzle” or “mosaic” that make

### Combination Warfare: “10,000 Methods Combined as One”

| Above-Military Forms of War  | Military Forms of War  | Non-Military Forms of War  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural warfare</li> <li>Ideological warfare</li> <li>Psychological warfare</li> <li>Resources warfare</li> <li>Social Networks warfare</li> <li>Technological warfare</li> <li>Fictitious/fabrication warfare</li> <li>Agricultural warfare</li> <li>Black market warfare</li> <li>Global-level drug warfare</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nuclear warfare</li> <li>Conventional warfare</li> <li>Bio/chemical warfare</li> <li>Ecological warfare</li> <li>Space warfare</li> <li>Electronic/information/<br/>ISR warfare</li> <li>Guerrilla warfare</li> <li>Terrorist warfare</li> <li>Air exclusion zones</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diplomatic warfare</li> <li>Economic/economic aid or<br/>Policy warfare</li> <li>Financial warfare</li> <li>Trade warfare</li> <li>Legal/moral warfare</li> <li>Sanctions warfare</li> <li>Religious/holy warfare</li> <li>Media/propaganda/Internet<br/>warfare</li> <li>Intelligence warfare</li> <li>Forced population shifts/<br/>migrations</li> </ul> |

<sup>7</sup> Peter Faber, *et al*, “Combination Warfare: A New NATO Strategy for the Asymmetric Risks and Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, *Essays by Senior Courses 100 and 101*, eds. Dieter Ose and Peter Faber, NATO Defense College Essay Series No. 4, Rome, 2003, pp. 13-47. See [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/essays\\_100\\_101.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/essays_100_101.pdf).



up Combination Warfare, and so should the relative weight of the pieces themselves.

Now all concepts are attractive on paper. It's their actual implementation that makes or breaks them, and Combination Warfare is no exception. If NATO ultimately decides to adopt a flexible strategy that truly reflects the unprecedented interpenetration of civil and military activities in modern conflicts, then it should implement the following reforms, as argued in *Combination Warfare: A New NATO Strategy for the Asymmetric Risks and Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

- Designate an Assistant Secretary General for Combination Warfare. He or she should be directly answerable to the Secretary General for the codification and adaptation of this concept into NATO strategic planning.
- Adjust the focus and mandate of the current Political-Military Integration Group and task it to develop a NATO Combination Warfare strategy that is populated with specific principles and details.
- Integrate at least portion of the International Staff and the Military Committee Staff together so they can seamlessly and holistically guide and support the work being done by the Pol-Mil Integration Group.
- Modify and update current NATO documents to reflect the seminal importance of Combination Warfare in shaping and directing the development of a comprehensive set of capabilities for future NATO use.
- Create a Combination Warfare Global Strike Task Force manned both by military and civilian personnel. The civilian contributors to this task force would come from foreign and financial ministries, externally and internally-focused law enforcement organizations, academic institutions and other fields, agencies, and organizations.

- Establish Combination Warfare Operations Centers (CWOCs) for specific regions of NATO. Alliance planners could pattern them after current Combined Air Operations Centers, but obviously with a wider population of civilian and military analysts who would conduct significantly broader operations, both *vertically* and *horizontally*, than NATO has ever done before.
- Organize, fund, and man a Combination Warfare Development Center (CWDC) that would build generic, pre-existing targeting kits, simulation tools, software programs, etc., needed to conduct a Combination Warfare campaign. Members of this center could also provide initial training for those who join the cadre of Combination Warriors assigned to the new Task Force(s) and Operation Centers.

By not adopting Combination Warfare into the Alliance's *Strategic Concept*, NATO members may or may not restrict their ability to conduct successful offensive and defensive operations in the future. But there is one thing they can count on – asymmetric adversaries are themselves preparing for this form of warfare at this time.

### **Conclusion**

The overall argument behind this *Research Paper* is quite simple – in an era of burgeoning asymmetric threats, NATO's *Strategic Concept* should be updated – i.e., it should become a strategy-centered document that provides practical and prioritized guidance for Alliance members.

If the *Concept* is to accomplish this overall goal, however, it should further reflect four contextual changes in how NATO approaches collective defense, and include three adjustments to actual Alliance strategy.

In accomplishing these steps, the *Concept* should help check recent tendencies towards organizational entropy within the Alliance.

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