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## A Strategic Odyssey: Constancy of Purpose and Strategy-Making in NATO, 1949-2019

by  
Diego A. Ruiz Palmer



Research Division

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The views expressed in this *Research Paper* are the author’s own and should not be taken to reflect those of the NATO Defense College, NATO or Allies.

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This *Research Paper* is dedicated to the memory of Andrew W. Marshall, Director of Net Assessment, United States Department of Defense, 1973-2015.



# Foreword

Literature on NATO often alludes to Thucydides and his chronicle of the Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens, five centuries before Christ. Classical scholars and modern-day political analysts often see in Thucydides the founder of political realism, captured by the phrase “the strong do what they want, the weak suffer what they must”.

Three centuries earlier, another Greek – Homer – wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which are just as relevant to understanding the nature of NATO. To an extent, steering the NATO ship through the waters of the Cold War and on to the post-Cold War era has been an odyssey of a strategic nature.

Seventy years after its inception in 1949, NATO is arguably still the most powerful military alliance and has assets that make it a credible defence and security actor in the face of the many tangible threats confronting its members.

Yet, the current narrative claims that the Alliance suffers from a number of flaws: weak internal cohesion, a loosening of the transatlantic link, the East-South divide, diminished relevance, unequal burden-sharing, and a questionable ability to meet future challenges, such as uncontrolled migration, home-grown terrorism, or China. The crisis appears to be profound, and the literature published on NATO’s achievements and limitations for its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is often harsh about the state of the Alliance.

In this context, however, a long-term analysis of what NATO has been about since 1949 paints a picture that depicts NATO as an extraordinary instrument of cohesion-building between its member states.

In this *Research Paper*, Diego Ruiz Palmer argues, that in spite of the many crises over seven decades, NATO has been a forum in which Allies were able to stand together, build a common purpose, most notably through a process of strategy-making.

What is strategy-making and why is it important? Strategy-making is mainly about building a shared sense of strategic thinking and doing within the Alliance; it is about making the Alliance a cohesive and credible defence actor that draws on a solid and Alliance-wide political and military posture. This is achieved through a

process of constant consultation, planning, policy-making, shared threat assessment and buy-in by all member states.

Strategy-making is important because it determines the long-term success of the project. This was true in the past, but still holds today, at a time when the Alliance is re-embracing a deterrence and defence agenda. If, as Diego Ruiz Palmer puts it, strategy-making has been the “key ingredient in sustaining a constancy of purpose in often turbulent times”, then it must continue to be so, as external and internal challenges – in the post-Cold War era more than ever – question the relevance of the Alliance.

Diego Ruiz Palmer recounts the strategic odyssey in systematic and meticulous detail: from the very first steps of the Alliance’s establishment, to the post-Cold War adaptation, through the doctrinal evolutions of the 1960s, to NATO’s strategic and operational renaissance in the ‘70s and ‘80s. Throughout, Diego draws on a rich mix of NATO’s archives and declassified documents, secondary sources, and his own expertise of the institution’s life. The result is inspiring, and will no doubt become a reference document on NATO’s nature and ability to navigate through turbulent strategic waters. One may simply hope that the fate of the Alliance does not resemble that of the *Odyssey*’s hero.

**Thierry Tardy**

Series Editor

Director, NDC Research Division

## List of abbreviations

AAFCE	Allied Air Forces, Central Europe
ACE	Allied Command Europe
AFCENT	Allied Forces, Central Europe
AFMED	Allied Forces, Mediterranean
AMF	Allied Mobile Force
ARFPS	ACE Reaction Forces' Planning Staff
ARRC	ACE Rapid Reaction Corps
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
BALTAP	Baltic Approaches
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
CAST	Canadian Air-Sea Transportable brigade Group
CENTAG	Central Army Group, Central Europe
CFI	Connected Forces Initiative
CINCFMED	Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Mediterranean
CINCEASTLANT	Commander in Chief, Eastern Atlantic Area
CINCENT	Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Central Europe
CINCHAN	Allied Commander in Chief, Channel
CINCIBERLANT	Commander-in-Chief, Iberian Atlantic Area
CINCNORTH	Commander in Chief, Allied Forces, Northern Europe
CINC SOUTH	Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Southern Europe
CINC UKAIR	Commander-in-Chief, United Kingdom Air Forces
CJPS	Combined Joint Planning Staff
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CLO	Commander, Live Oak
COMAO	Composite Air Operations
COMNORTHAG	Commander, Northern Army Group, Central Europe
CONMAROPS	Concept of Maritime Operations
CSPMP	Comprehensive, Strategic Political-Military Plan
DC	Defence Committee
DIP	Defense Investment Pledge
DPC	Defence Planning Committee
EDI	European Deterrence Initiative
EDP	Emergency Defence Plan
EEAW	European Expeditionary Air Wing
ERI	European Readiness Initiative
EU	European Union
EUROMARFOR	European Maritime Force
FALLEX	Fall Exercise
FOFA	Follow-On Forces Attack
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FTX	Field Training Exercise
GIUK	Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom
IFOR	(Peace) Implementation Force
IMS	International Military Staff
IMSM	IMS Memorandum

IMSWM	IMS Working Group Memorandum
IRBM	Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LANDJUT	Land Forces Jutland and Schleswig-Holstein
LTDP	Long-Term Defence Programme
MARCONFORLANT	Maritime Contingency Force, Atlantic
MC	Military Committee
MCM	MC Memoranda
MNC	Major NATO Commander
MRBM	Medium-Range Ballistic Missile
MSC	Major Subordinate Commander
NA	NATO Archives
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATINADS	NATO Integrated Air Defence System
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDC	NATO Defense College
NFS	NATO Force Structure
NORTHAG	Northern Army Group, Central Europe
NRF	NATO Response Force
OPLAN	Operation Plan
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
POMCUS	Prepositioning Overseas of Materiel Configured in Unit Sets
PSC	Principal Subordinate Commander
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAP	Readiness Action Plan
REFORGER	Return of Forces to Germany
RRP	Rapid Reinforcement Plan
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SACT	Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
SACLANT	Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SETAF	Southern European Task Force
SG	Standing Group
SGM	SG Memorandum
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SSBN	Nuclear-powered ballistic missile-launching submarine
STANAVFORLANT	Standing Naval Force, Atlantic
STRIKFORNATO	Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO
TACET	Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training
TLP	Tactical Leadership Programme
TVD	Theatre of Military Operations (in Russian)
UK	United Kingdom
UKAIR	United Kingdom Air Forces
UN	United Nations
US	United States

## Executive summary

A transformed, enlarged and constantly adapting NATO is turning 70. A decade from now, its post-Cold War performance will match in durability its Cold War record, putting to rest already now any notion that the Alliance was not fit for strategic circumstances other than those that prompted its creation in 1949. At the same time, turmoil and uncertainty in international relations on a scale seemingly unprecedented since the end of World War 2 have shaken confidence in the West in the resilience of the new, enlightened and benevolent international order established in the early post-war era. Inevitably, such crises of confidence are seen to threaten the most those institutions, such as NATO, and relationships, such as the transatlantic link, that sit at the core, and are most representative, of resilient Western purpose, strength and influence. The resulting paradox is to see everywhere a weakening of purpose and a diminished relevance, rather than look for the available evidence of, and draw strength from, enduring resolve and persistent cooperation.

As the Atlantic Alliance commemorates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation, this *NDC Research Paper* addresses the Alliance's seven decade-long historical record to demonstrate and document how and why NATO's high level of political and strategic resilience, as well as its strong institutional capacity for adaptation to changing circumstances and evolving requirements, should help inspire confidence in its durability and continuing relevance. This record indicates unmistakably, that, despite often contrarian winds, the Allies have remained faithful to NATO's underlying core principle – standing together. They have done so, in particular, by maintaining a remarkable constancy of purpose and engaging in a continuous, mostly consensual, sometimes conflicting, process of strategy-making. Together, constancy of purpose and strategy-making helped achieve a melding of the necessarily different, often disparate, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives and interests of an increasingly larger number of Allies. They helped translate the undertakings embedded in the North Atlantic Treaty – a shared commitment to purpose and a mutual pledge to protect and defend against attack – into tangible and reliable institutional and operational arrangements. Lastly, they helped ensure that the common legacy of standing together during the Cold War could be converted into a shared readiness to address together the often very different and

diverse security challenges of the post-Cold War era. Constancy of purpose and strategy-making have involved deploying troops together to faraway countries, such as Afghanistan, to help prevent the return of terrorist havens, cooperating with NATO's partners to reduce the sources of persistent instability on the Alliance's southern periphery and, more recently, strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence posture comprehensively to counter Russia's new belligerence. As a result of these enduring patterns of common endeavour, this *Research Paper* contends that NATO's seventy year-long record can best be described as a unique "strategic odyssey".

This report is structured into four parts. It addresses first strategy-making, as the looking glass for assessing and understanding NATO's strategic odyssey, and the resulting insights regarding a constant attention by the Allies to preserving the primacy of strategic and operational coherence, and the persistent challenge of matching political intent and military capability. Strategy-making has been, first and foremost, about pursuing and delivering coherent plans and operational arrangements that meet the aims of assurance, deterrence and defence, while also ensuring the provision of advice and training, as well as the execution of varied peace enforcement and security assistance missions. Yet, as the record shows, a perfect alignment between political ends and military ways and means can never be taken for granted. Strategy-making is also about helping ensure that consistency.

In the second and third parts, the *Research Paper* examines NATO's historical record from 1949 through 2014, through the lens of the Cold War's long haul and the post-Cold War "out-of-area" pivot, before turning, in the last part, to the post-2014 strategic "reset" following Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. For each period, the report highlights the attendant objectives, constraints and trade-offs in fulfilling the purposes and core tasks set out in the Treaty and successive Strategic Concepts. In each case, strategy-making has involved aligning complementary, but sometimes competing, strategic, geographic and resource considerations – for instance, nuclear deterrence and conventional forces; the Alliance's various regions and "flanks"; and the Allies' diverse assets and contributions – and, in so doing, securing an indispensable constancy of purpose.

The report concludes by drawing attention to NATO's historical legacy, in order to strengthen further the operational coherence of the activities and arrangements that bind the Allies together, as well as optimize the contributions of each Ally. NATO's historical record since 1949 sheds light on the benefits to be derived from:

(i) cementing a NATO that is operationally and visibly “in-being” in peacetime; (ii) giving larger Allies a stronger federating role in the strengthening of NATO’s deterrence and defence posture; and (iii) leveraging innovation and technology more forcefully to strengthen the contribution of Communications and Information Systems to NATO’s cohesion, effectiveness and resilience.





# Introduction

On 3-4 April, 2019, NATO Foreign Ministers met in Washington to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949. Notwithstanding a more adverse security environment than a decade ago and concerns expressed over the resilience of the transatlantic link, there was much to celebrate: the Alliance founded by the original twelve Allies<sup>1</sup> will soon include 30 members, with the incorporation of the Republic of North Macedonia.

In the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in 2014, Allies had also demonstrated their steadfastness in the strengthening of NATO's deterrence and defence posture and of its capacity to project stability beyond the Alliance's boundaries. The measures taken at the Wales, Warsaw and Brussels Summits in 2014, 2016 and 2018 had set the core tasks of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security set out in the 2010 Strategic Concept on a new trajectory, in order to deter and counter a diverse and complex spectrum of hybrid, cyber, conventional, nuclear and terrorist threats, while intensifying cooperation with, and assistance, to Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan and several other partners. The Alliance had entered yet a new stage in its evolution, and this further adaptation was now an important part of this 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration.

During the Cold War, the Alliance's strategic role as a deterrent to war was uncontested, which meant that NATO never had to defend. Having contributed in no small measure to the peaceful end of the Cold War and to the emergence of a Europe whole and free, NATO became after 1990 a more proactive strategic actor, assuming new tasks that its "founding fathers" could not have foreseen and leading over 40 operations and missions in and beyond Europe.<sup>2</sup> It has also established political partnerships and military and non-military cooperation with 41 countries

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1 The process that led to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty is addressed in A. de Staercke, *NATO's anxious birth: the prophetic vision of the 1940s*, London, C. Hurst & Company, 1985, and D. Cook, *Forging the Alliance*, New York, Arbor House, 1989. Early national perspectives of Allies are surveyed in N. Wiggershaus and W. Heine-mann (eds.), *Nationale Aussen- und Bündnispolitik der NATO-Mitgliedstaaten*, Munich, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000.

2 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "Two decades of operations: taking stock, looking ahead", *NATO Review*, Chicago Summit special edition, Spring 2012. The electronic version of this article includes a list of all NATO and NATO-led operations and missions up to 2012.

in Europe and around the world, as well as with other international organisations, notably the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU).<sup>3</sup>

Since 2014, following Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, NATO has resumed performing more deliberately its deterrence and defence core task. It has done so while remaining engaged in projecting stability, notably through the initiation of the "train, advise and assist" Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, following the disbandment, in December of that year, of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).<sup>4</sup>

Throughout its history, NATO has been confronted with a succession of existential threats and external challenges – from the Soviet Union during the Cold War and now from Russia; from violent extremist groups operating in theatres where NATO is deployed; and from international terrorism networks and hybrid adversaries targeting Allies. The Alliance has also had to contend with more than a few internal crises, involving one or more Allies, that challenged its political cohesion and the coherence of its military arrangements (e.g., Suez, 1956; France's gradual withdrawal from military integration, 1959-1966; Cyprus, 1964 and 1974, and Greece's own withdrawal from military integration between 1974 and 1980; Portugal's "Carnation Revolution", 1974; the North Atlantic "cod wars", 1958, 1973 and 1976; domestic tensions over the deployment of NATO long-range theatre nuclear forces in 1979-1983; transatlantic tension in 1981-1982 over the extension of the Soviet Trans-Siberian gas pipeline to Western Europe, and the "near death" moment over the 2003 campaign against Iraq). Yet, the Alliance has endured, the Allies' constancy of purpose strengthened by their shared view that NATO – transformed, enlarged, and constantly adapting – remains indispensable for their common defence and for the security of the wider Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>5</sup>

NATO's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, however, is not merely an occasion for celebration; it should also be an opportunity to take stock and reflect on the deeper significance

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3 D. S. Yost, *NATO transformed*, US Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 1998, and D. S. Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act*, US Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 2014.

4 I. Hope (ed.), "Projecting stability: elixir or snake oil?", *NDC Research Paper* No.1, NDC, Rome, December 2018.

5 NATO's enduring value is addressed persuasively in K. A. Dunn, *In defense of NATO: the Alliance's enduring value*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1990; J. Lindley-French, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization: the enduring Alliance*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006; and W. J. Thies, *Why NATO endures*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

of the collective endeavour embodied in the Alliance and on the many ways – strategies, concepts, structures, arrangements, operations, partnerships – that NATO’s central precept – Allies standing together – has taken shape over several generations. It must also be an occasion to consider the path forward.<sup>6</sup>

Against this background, this *NDC Research Paper* examines the Alliance’s strategic evolution and operational and institutional development over seventy years of *strategy-making*. The starting point for this assessment is the notion that NATO is a “strategic” alliance, because of the high ambition of its security and deterrence and defence mandate, its powerful membership, and the ambitious nature of the resulting tasks, and that strategy-making is the unifying process that ties together the Alliance’s political purposes, institutional procedures and military arrangements. Strategy-making engages the Allies in a continuous, inclusive process of collective consideration, negotiation and agreement over weighty issues – security, stability, deterrence and defence, execution of operational engagements and assistance missions, partnerships, enlargement, arms control – where the consensus rule acts like a magnet. In reaching for consensus, Allies are all the more motivated to express their free will – *Animus in Consulendo Liber*, according to the NATO motto – that they feel secure in the knowledge that the consensus-building process can and has accommodated dissent and, on more than one occasion, strong and enduring disagreement.<sup>7</sup> A failure to reach consensus, however, is in the end, a loss for all.

This *Research Paper’s* aim and ambition is to provide a record of that seven decade-long “strategic odyssey” from a NATO, rather than a national, standpoint. To this end, its drafting has relied extensively on formerly classified NATO Cold War documents that have been declassified and disclosed to the public and that shed new light on particular Cold War challenges and initiatives.<sup>8</sup> Declassified and disclosed NATO Military Committee documents,<sup>9</sup> in particular, are a dependable and continuous source of insights on Cold War strategic challenges and operational

6 S. Rynning, ‘NATO’s futures: the Atlantic Alliance between power and purpose’, *NDC Research Paper* No.2, NDC, Rome, March 2019.

7 Unlike a *multilateral* organisation, where decisions are taken by changing majorities, in a *collective* alliance, such as NATO, the consensus rule ensures that every Ally is party to, and assumes responsibility for, every decision. A failure to reach consensus is, therefore, a collective failure as much as an expression of individual dissent.

8 NATO’s declassified and disclosed holdings reside in the NATO Archives (NA) and are accessible, in part, on-line, as well as in a Reading Room at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. In the applicable footnotes in this *Research Paper*, the reference to NA should be read as indicating a document that has been declassified and disclosed to the public.

9 See Annex A to this *Research Paper* for a brief guide to NATO’s archival resources.

decisions up to the late 1960s and, more sparingly, the mid-1980s. Understandably, no such authoritative source of information is yet available for the post-Cold War period, with the exception of a single volume of documents related to the deployment of the NATO-led (Peace) Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995 and published by the NATO Archives in January 2016, on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IFOR's activation.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, this post-Cold War period is examined in this *Research Paper* in less detail than the Cold War period.

The Paper's first part addresses strategy-making as the looking glass to identify the key strategic challenges and operational issues that have driven NATO's policies and shaped the associated military posture. The next two parts describe NATO's strategic evolution during the Cold War (1949-1989) and post-Cold War (1990-2014) eras, identifying turning points in how Allies sought the best alignment possible between the evolving requirements of the security environment, policy preferences and concerted responses. The final part addresses the Alliance's post-2014 "strategic reset" and adaptation, presents topics for future NATO strategy-making, against the backdrop of a new age of geopolitical competition and tension, and reflects on the legacy of seven decades of Allies having stood together.

By doing this, this Paper aims to document and demonstrate how NATO's evolving policies and missions and deterrence and defence posture since 1949 are the result of a determined and constant strategy-making process in pursuit of the Alliance's higher purposes – to protect and defend its members and to contribute to wider international security and stability. It is from the mutual engagement of Allies in this process of collective consultation, peer review and agreement that NATO's policies and military arrangements derive their political legitimacy and operational credibility. Ultimately, this is where NATO's core strength resides.

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10 IFOR: 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 5 January 2016.

## NATO as a strategy-making Alliance

### *Strategy-making as the looking glass*

Nowhere is the Alliance's constancy of purpose more evident than in the process of strategy-making that has underpinned NATO's commitments and arrangements, in changing circumstances, over seven decades. In this *Research Paper*, the terms "strategy-making" should be understood in an expansive meaning. They cover the "ends, ways and means" construct: (i) the design of strategies and underpinning military postures that conform to the purposes set out in the North Atlantic Treaty and successive NATO Strategic Concepts; (ii) the consultation process and associated planning procedures to develop and agree the strategies and postures being sought; and (iii) the establishment and refinement of a large spectrum of agreements and arrangements, as well as plans and exercises, aimed at setting in place the agreed undertakings, collectively within NATO and multilaterally among the Allies (including, after the end of the Cold War, with partner nations as well).

Strategy-making is the political and institutional genetic code that enables NATO to attain three overriding objectives concurrently: deter potential adversaries; assure individual Allies; and not least, in pursuing the first two objectives, ensure a shared awareness and understanding of the *strategic intent* underpinning a concept, a plan, a cooperative undertaking or an exercise. Such an awareness and understanding are essential for effective deterrence and reliable assurance. Furthermore, strategy-making is the common endeavour that allows the larger Allies to involve the other Allies in a collective enterprise that is dependent, for its political legitimacy and operational success, on their participation and contributions. The role of Iceland in relation to antisubmarine warfare and rapid reinforcement comes to mind. In this endeavour, the remarkably persistent role of NATO's European and North American "middle-size" Allies, as a "glue" between the United States and the larger European Allies, on the one hand, and the many smaller Allies, on the other, cannot be over-stated. Time and again, their political instincts and military contributions helped ensure a broad Alliance approach to strategy-making and

engagement in operations and missions that was critical to helping ensure political solidarity, equitable burden-sharing and operational effectiveness. Strategy-making also enables the smaller Allies to share ownership of, and have an influence over, decisions regarding European security and Western strategy that, in the absence of NATO, would likely have involved only the larger Allies, thereby contributing to the legitimacy and reality of the notion and the aim of an “Atlantic community”.<sup>11</sup>

This collective strategy-making has been an essential enabler in generating buy-in through successive generations of political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic – the notion that membership confers a right to partake in the governance of the Atlantic enterprise, as well as a *freely-accepted obligation* to make contributions across the board; a failure to do so by any Ally risks a loss of standing and marginalisation. NATO’s participatory nature is its fail-safe mechanism, and all of its arrangements depend for their effectiveness on all Allies’ enduring readiness to contribute their fair share. In this exceptional enterprise, the contribution of the United States has been exemplary, in its scope as well as durability, thereby setting a standard of ambition and achievement for all other Allies to emulate on a mutual basis.

Illustrative examples of the strategy-making impulse underpinning NATO that are addressed in this *Research Paper* include the extension of US and UK nuclear deterrence to the Alliance as a whole; the standing up of a common air defence system across Europe; the extension of NATO’s air defences to encompass missile defence against ballistic missile threats originating from beyond Europe; and the conduct of multinational operations to help prevent a crisis from escalating into a wider conflict or bring hostilities to a close and enforce a fragile peace.

In each case, strategy-making involved approving a common strategic goal, for instance, during the Cold War, defending Alliance territory as far East as possible; agreeing an operational concept – Forward Defence – to translate that intent into a collective endeavour; and, lastly, setting in place the operational arrangements and force contributions to implement that undertaking. Or, after the end of the Cold War, approving the operational extension of ISAF’s footprint across the whole of Afghanistan; agreeing on the broadest possible participation by Allies in

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11 Portugal illustrates this point well. In the 1950s, in order to break its geographic isolation from the rest of the Alliance, at a time when Spain was not yet a member, Portugal made the commitment to reinforce Central Europe in wartime. In 1956, Portuguese jet fighters deployed to France to take part in a NATO exercise. In the 1970s, Portugal renewed and updated its reinforcement commitment by regularly deploying on NATO exercises a mechanized infantry brigade and fighter squadrons to Italy.

taking that intent forward, in successive phases; and, finally, using framework nation arrangements in the standing up of ISAF regional commands, borrowing from the experience with multinational divisions in IFOR and multinational brigades in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). Almost without exception, this strategy-making process involves successive rounds of consultation and planning, in a spiral dynamic, that helps generate awareness, buy-in and, ultimately, adherence and support by Allies. The results of this strategy-making dynamic were readily apparent during the 2014 Wales, 2016 Warsaw and 2018 Brussels Summit meetings, which agreed NATO's post-2014 strategic adaptation.

Strategic Concepts are high-level statements of purpose that translate the Allies' evolving political ambitions for the Alliance and NATO's updated military requirements, against the background of the Treaty's enduring aims and a changed security landscape. As will be seen, changes in operational concepts, structures and arrangements have often anticipated, rather than coincided with, the approval of a new Strategic Concept, because important strategic and operational developments have often taken place between Strategic Concepts. For instance, the agreement in 1963 of a revised model of extended deterrence and, that same year, the movement to a full Forward Defence posture in Central Europe, were tied more directly to political developments, such as the 1961 Berlin crisis, that set the scene for approval of the Strategic Concept (Military Committee (MC) 14/3) in December 1967, than to implementation of the earlier MC 14/2 Concept of May 1957 (see Figure 1 on the next page for a summary description of NATO's evolving Cold War posture).<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept set out a strong NATO role in crisis management, building on the experience of leading peace enforcement operations in the Balkans, but could not foresee, in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, that in 2002 Heads of State and Government meeting at Prague would issue guidance that NATO must be able to act in a way that is no longer constrained geographically to Europe. Lastly, the reorientation towards

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12 NATO's first strategic concept, *Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Area*, was promulgated as a document of NATO's Defence Committee (DC 6/1) on 1 December 1949. The Defence Committee brought together NATO Defence Ministers. Military Committee guidance for the implementation of DC 6/1 took the form of document MC 14 *Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning*, issued on 28 March 1950. Following the Defence Committee's dissolution in May 1951 and the assumption of its responsibilities by the North Atlantic Council itself, successive Cold War strategic concepts were promulgated in the Military Committee's MC 14 document series. Evolving military guidance for the implementation of the MC 14/2 and MC 14/3 strategic concepts was issued in the MC 48/2 and MC 48/3 documents. See G. W. Pedlow, *The evolution of NATO strategy, 1949-1969*, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Brussels, 1999.

a stronger posture of collective defence in Europe after 2014 was undertaken despite Russia's new belligerence not having been anticipated in the 2010 Strategic Concept, which remains the Alliance's current higher guidance below the North Atlantic Treaty. NATO's post-2014 reaction to Russia's belligerence underscored NATO's capacity to reach consensus and adapt to strategic circumstances that do not conform to earlier anticipation and guidance.

Arguably, it is the compelling logic of this constancy of purpose in meeting the aims of the Treaty, rather than, merely, external dangers, that has sustained NATO, and will likely continue to do so in the years ahead notwithstanding the threats from potential adversaries or the challenges from within the Alliance.

**Figure 1. NATO's Cold War deterrence and defense posture, 1949-1989**

Strategic Concept	MC 14 March 1950	MC 14/1 December 1952	MC 14/2 May 1957	MC 14/3 December 1967
<b>Conventional defense posture in Central Europe</b>	Piecemeal force deployments	Initial, structured force deployments	Allied Forces deployed in structured Army Corps sectors ("layered cake")	"Winning the first battle" (as of 1977) and Conventional Follow-on Force Attack (1984)
<b>"Forward defense" concept in Central Europe</b>	"Retardation" operations and firm defence on Rhine Ijssel line	"Retardation" operations and firm defence on Rhine Ijssel line	Firm defence on Lech and Weser Rivers (as of 1958); nuclear support "from the outset" of conflict	Firm defence at FRG's eastern borders (as of September 1963); no "early" first use (as of early 1970s)
<b>Non-strategic nuclear deterrence posture in Europe</b>		Initial US Air Force (USAF) nuclear-capable fighter-bombers stationed in the United Kingdom and US Army surface-to-surface missiles in the FRG (as of 1952-1953)	Nuclear capacity with US and other Allied forces in Europe (fighter-bombers; surface-to-surface missiles; surface-to-air missiles). RAF <i>Canberra</i> and <i>Valiant</i> bombers	US LRTNF ( <i>Pershing</i> 2 ballistic missiles and Gryphon-ground-launched cruise missiles), starting in 1983.
<b>Strategic nuclear deterrence support to NATO</b>		Royal Air Force (RAF) and USAF bombers deployed in the United Kingdom	RAF and USAF bombers; UK <i>Thor</i> and Italian and Turkish <i>Jupiter</i> IRBMs. <i>Thor</i> missiles replaced by RAF "V" bombers and <i>Jupiter</i> missiles by US <i>Polaris</i> SSBNs/SLBMs <sup>2</sup> as of 1963	UK and US <i>Polaris</i> SSBNs/SLBMs (US <i>Polaris</i> replaced by <i>Poseidon</i> as of 1972).

\* SSBN: Nuclear-powered ballistic missile-launching submarine. SLBM: Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile



## *The primacy of strategic and operational coherence*

Even a recognition that changes in operational arrangements or national contributions do not coincide necessarily with the approval of a new Strategic Concept cannot always capture the impulses and complexity of NATO strategy-making. On occasion, seemingly divergent operational concepts had to be reconciled within the same strategic framework. In the late 1970s, the US Navy's new "Maritime Strategy", with its emphasis on operating aircraft-carriers and other naval forces, from inside Norwegian fjords and from behind the Greek island of Crete<sup>13</sup> to deter and counter a Soviet attack on NATO's northern and southern flanks, was seen by some observers as undermining the necessary focus on deterring a Warsaw Pact theatre strategic operation in the Alliance's critical Central Region.<sup>14</sup>

Eventually, NATO's new Concept of Maritime Operations in the early 1980s, with its balanced focus on complementary maritime campaigns, set out how the prospect of powerful Allied maritime operations in the Norwegian Sea and in the eastern Mediterranean could help deter the Soviet Union and, if deterrence failed, divert Soviet forces from being engaged in the Western strategic direction towards Central Europe.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the focus of the US Army's 1982 "Air Land Battle" doctrine on mobile operations and "deep attack", aimed at "out-manoeuving" the Soviet Army, was sometimes perceived as contradicting the political commitment to defending forward and not yielding Allied territory. SACEUR's 1984 Follow-On Forces Attack (FOFA) sub-concept sought to reconcile the requirement to defend forward with the need to survive and prevail in any "follow-on battle", as the Soviet Army developed its capacity to commit additional echelons of fresh forces.

After the end of the Cold War, the enduring focus on making the NATO Command Structure deployable, through the adoption of successive constructs (Combined Joint Task Force headquarters; Deployable Joint Staff Element; etc.), had to contend with the distinct command and control requirements of different NATO-led expeditionary operations and a widening range of command and control options offered by an increasingly strong and diverse NATO Force Structure. NATO's adaptation of the Command Structure in 2018 aims, *inter alia*, at command

13 J. Lehman, *Oceans ventured*, New York, NY, WW Norton & Company, 2018, pp.169-170.

14 R. W. Komer, "Maritime Strategy versus Continental Defense", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.60, No.5, Summer 1982, pp.1124-1144.

15 IMSM-CBX-226-80, *Statement Regarding TRI-MNC Concept of Maritime Operations*, NATO Confidential, 21 May 1980, NA.

arrangements that balance the strengths of both structures and leverage 25 years of operational experience.

At the same time, key aspects of NATO's posture were often the subject of extended consideration and effort, and their implementation seldom realised fully, as a result of evolving strategic conditions, changing operational perspectives and persistent resource constraints. In the conventional field, forward defence at the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) eastern borders was agreed upon in 1963, but the operational capacity to "win the first battle, while outnumbered" was not rehearsed regularly until the second half of the 1970s, with the Autumn Forge exercise series. Likewise, NATO initiated an effort in 1967 to ensure that Europe's northern and southern flanks would be properly reinforced in times of tension<sup>16</sup>, responding to concerns expressed several years earlier, but a comprehensive Rapid Reinforcement Plan for the whole of Western Europe came into being only in 1983, after a build-up process started in 1975.<sup>17</sup>

In the nuclear domain, the extended deterrence arrangements agreed upon in 1963 and subsequently updated in 1971 and 1976 were challenged by the replacement of older generation Soviet intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) by the new SS-20 Saber IRBM in the late 1970s. This development triggered a countervailing NATO response to strengthen deterrence, in the form of Pershing 2 ballistic missiles and Gryphon ground-launched cruise missiles. Lastly, the provision of dual-capable US delivery systems to the Allies in the early 1960s formed the backdrop to the approval of *Provisional Political Guidelines for the Initial Defensive Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons by NATO* in 1969.<sup>18</sup> Those guidelines, however, were placed at risk by the deployment by Warsaw Pact forces of modern nuclear-capable field artillery and short-range ballistic missiles, such as the SS-21 Scarab, in the early 1980s. The combination of the SS-21 and SS-20 at the lower and higher ends of the non-strategic nuclear spectrum translated, effectively, into a new Soviet capacity to intimidate NATO, by attempting to deny the Alliance the prospect of being able to restore deterrence successfully in a hypothetical conflict. That episode was a compelling example of the Soviet Union removing the prospect of nuclear weapon

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16 DPWG/D(67)4, *Study on External Reinforcements for the Flanks*, NATO Secret, 9 March 1967, NA.

17 DPC/D(82)23, *SACEUR's Rapid Reinforcement Plan (OPLAN 10002)*, NATO Confidential, 24 November 1982, NA.

18 D. S. Yost, "The history of NATO theater nuclear force policy: key findings from the Sandia Conference", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.15, No.2, June 1992, p.231.

employment by either side, in order to exploit fully its conventional advantage over NATO.

By comparison with the extended debates that shaped Cold War strategy-making, the strengthening of NATO's deterrence and defence posture since 2014 has been remarkably swift and enduring. This outcome can be attributed to three key factors: the deep, adverse impact of Russia's behaviour since 2014 on the perceptions of Allies; the Alliance's enlargement, which has contributed to restoring the pre-eminence of collective defence in conditions of Russian belligerence; and the shared experience of the Allies having stood together, shoulder-to-shoulder, and sustained losses in a succession of NATO-led operations in and beyond Europe. NATO strategy-making transitioned with remarkable agility from preparing the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan to planning the Readiness Action Plan.

Both considerations above illustrate how strategy-making transcends distinct strategic stages in NATO's evolution and provides a record of how aims, concepts and arrangements have combined to underpin the evolving consensus at critical junctures in its history. This trail is the key that unlocks the paramount strategic and operational issues that stood the test of time and became NATO's core principles:

- a persistent attention to the concern that a potential adversary might initiate large-scale aggression, or a limited attack, out of a miscalculation that the Allies would not display the political cohesion and determination, or not have the military capacity, necessary to defend successfully;<sup>19</sup>
- an enduring reliance, if much diminished after the end of the Cold War, on nuclear deterrence, and on the associated extended deterrence and nuclear-sharing arrangements, as the most persuasive and effective deterrent to war;<sup>20</sup>
- an obligation, resulting from the two principles above, to ensure that a potential adversary would be prevented from attaining a position of non-

19 This concern that a potential adversary might misjudge NATO's resolve to respond to aggression is addressed explicitly in MC 14/2, *Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area*, 23 May 1957, para. 19, in Pedlow, *The evolution of NATO strategy, 1949-1969, op. cit.*, p.291; as well as in guidance to the NATO Military Authorities issued a decade later, at the same time that NATO was adopting the MC 14/3 Strategic Concept ("Flexible Response"), *Guidance to the NATO Military Authorities*, under the cover of DPC/D(67)23, *Decisions of the Defence Planning Committee in Ministerial Session*, NATO Secret, 11 May 1967, NA, p.6, para. 9.

20 For a presentation of the logic behind nuclear deterrence, see M. Rühle, "NATO's nuclear deterrence: more important, yet more contested", *NDC Policy Brief 2*, NDC, Rome, January 2019.

strategic nuclear advantage in Europe, such that, when combined with conventional preponderance, NATO would be vulnerable in a conflict to a conventional invasion, under the threat of nuclear devastation, and, therefore, could find itself at risk of losing the strategic initiative and be left with few response options;

- a commitment to defending NATO at, and all along, the Alliance's periphery, in order to deny a potential adversary the self-confidence that would accrue from the early and easy conquest of Allied territory in a conflict;
- an enforced inter-dependence among Allies, with each Ally entitled to the benefits of standing assurance, deterrence and defence arrangements, as well as being prepared to extend those benefits to all others, within means and capabilities;
- Alliance arrangements that entrench multinational approaches and embed a strong transatlantic component, notably a robust and salient US contribution, wherever possible;
- a strong complementarity between forward defence and external reinforcement, the latter being an augmentation to, but, importantly, not a substitute for, the former, in conformity with the lead national responsibility for self-defence; and
- a balance between firm political control and broad delegation of authority to the Supreme Allied Commanders, each contributing to the credibility of the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture, the former by committing the Allies to effective common action, if warranted by circumstances, and the latter by requiring that all necessary preparatory measures be taken in peacetime to that end. This balance has been essential to ensuring that the Treaty is backed-up by a tangible and visible "NATO-in-being".

After the end of the Cold War, these enduring principles were supplemented by additional key tenets, to reflect the assumption by NATO of two additional core tasks beyond collective defence: assistance to broader crisis management efforts, and distinct contributions to cooperative security. Accordingly, NATO developed internal arrangements aimed at facilitating broad participation in NATO-led operations and missions by Allies, as well as by partners and other non-NATO

troop contributors. From operations and missions, that undertaking was extended to partner contributions to exercises, a NATO-certified pool of partner forces, and the NATO Response Force. NATO also set in place a diverse spectrum of cooperative programmes with its 41 partners, aimed at leveraging their cooperation with NATO or strengthening their own defence capacity, each tailored to their individual wishes and needs. Following the post-2014 strategic “reset”, several of the Cold War practices underpinning Allies’ enduring commitment to standing together have assumed renewed currency, but in a form tailored to current circumstances and requirements, such as a persistent, multinational forward presence, equipment prepositioning, rapid reinforcement and high-end training and exercising.

### *Matching political intent and military capability*

Experience, however, has pointed to the difficulty of always matching satisfactorily political resolve and military capacity in the complex and rapidly changing circumstances of crisis response operations, where the unifying impetus of collective defence does not apply to the same extent. In spring 1999, for example, the Allies were remarkably united in supporting the conduct of an air operation to counter Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic’s policies of repression and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The air campaign, however, was under-resourced by many Allies and its extended duration, over several months, did not match the urgency of the political intent to stop the bloodshed rapidly and, at times, strained the Allied consensus.

In Afghanistan, the scale and persistence of force commitments to the ISAF by Allies other than the United States and by partners (numbering, at their peak, some 40,000 troops deployed at once), alongside US forces (numbering, at their peak, some 90,000 troops), were remarkable. NATO confirmed successfully its capacity as an alliance to be the core of a much wider coalition. The depth of political engagement in Kabul, at the United Nations and in Allied capitals in sustaining that exceptional military commitment, however, was often erratic and inadequate, given the stakes for the Alliance involved in stabilising Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup>

Strategy-making during two decades of post-Cold War operations, in the Balkans and in Afghanistan, as well as in relation to NATO’s contribution to counter-piracy

<sup>21</sup> A. Mattelaer, *The political-military dynamics of European crisis response operations: planning, friction, strategy*, London, Palgrave-MacMillan, 2013; and D. P. Auerswald and S. M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: fighting together, fighting alone*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014.

operations in the Indian Ocean and NATO's engagement in Libya in 2011, illustrated, even more starkly than the Cold War record, NATO's preeminent political purpose, which is essential to unlocking its military component. At the same time, NATO's reorientation, in part, towards deterrence and defence in Europe since 2014 has underscored the necessity of restoring the practices of a mutual defence alliance, notably a standing NATO with commands, forces and infrastructure that are in-being.

Restoring NATO's collective defence capacity since 2014 is a good starting point to review the Alliance's "strategic odyssey", starting with NATO's Cold War years.

## The Cold War's long haul (1949-1989)

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of strategic experimentation, as well as upheaval, for NATO, as Allies strove to come to terms with the implications of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles for deterrence and defence, as well as explored the scope for *détente* and arms control with the USSR. The period extending from 1969 to 1989 was characterized by the gradual setting of a widening strategic consensus, in the face of a rising Soviet military challenge and despite the political misgivings generated by an erosion of *détente*. Starting at the Ottawa ministerial meeting in 1974, that consensus gradually included France, after it had left the Alliance's Integrated Military Structure in 1966.<sup>22</sup> NATO's post-Vietnam revival started in earnest in 1975, following a so-called "lost decade"<sup>23</sup>, with the implementation of initiatives aimed at strengthening durably the Alliance's conventional, as well as nuclear, posture, in the face of a relentless Warsaw Pact build-up in all categories of military power and a deteriorating military balance for NATO.<sup>24</sup> NATO's strengthened deterrence and defence posture in the 1980s undoubtedly induced Soviet restraint at a time of considerable East-West tension, by reflecting the image of a resolute, as well as increasingly capable, Alliance. That process of renewal extended through 1987; by this time it had become clear to the new Soviet leadership that the policy, dating back to Leonid Brezhnev's assumption of power in 1964, of seeking to attain a position of uncontested military pre-eminence in Europe had been counter-productive politically.<sup>25</sup> NATO's competitive stance, by defeating Soviet attempts to

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22 At the Ottawa ministerial meeting in June 1974, NATO acknowledged formally the contribution of France's independent nuclear deterrent to the overall strengthening of the Alliance's deterrence posture. See *Declaration on Atlantic Relations*, Ottawa Ministerial meeting, 19 June 1974.

23 J. Galen, "NATO's lost decade: restoring the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance: the art of the impossible", *Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1978, pp.30-40.

24 IMSWM-189-77, *SACEUR's 1976 Combat Effectiveness Report*, NATO Secret, 16 August 1977, NA; IMSWM-45-78, *1977 Supplement to SACEUR's 1976 Combat Effectiveness Report*, NATO Secret, 20 February 1978, NA.

25 The internal dynamics that drove Soviet defence decision-making during the Brezhnev era are addressed in J. C. Hines, E. M. Mishulovich and J. F. Shull, "Factors in Soviet force building and strategic decision-

achieve a position of uncontested military dominance in Europe, also exerted an increasingly unbearable burden on the Soviet economy, which, when combined with the costs of the USSR's large military engagement in Afghanistan, also contributed to bankrupting the Soviet Union.

This second part of the *Research Paper* illustrates how NATO was able to sustain a four decade-long competition with the Soviet Union, through a continuous process of strategy-making and operational adaptation to the changing strategic circumstances and operational conditions of Cold War deterrence and defence. Strategy-making had to encompass, at once, the on-setting of the nuclear age; the evolution of technology and the expanding availability of missiles as delivery vehicles for nuclear weapon employment; the rapid and extensive mechanisation of land forces; the growing speed and range of jet-powered combat aircraft; and the increasing role of aircraft carriers and submarines. Strategy-making, through the continuous interaction between the North Atlantic Council and the NATO Military Authorities, and among the Allies, sought to generate common and adapted responses to the strategic and operational implications of these developments for the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture.

As will be seen, NATO endeavoured, in this challenging environment, to keep up with a generally unfavourable balance of forces with the Warsaw Pact, reduce its dependence on the first, early, tactical use of nuclear weapons as an increasingly problematic way to compensate for conventional weakness, while increasing the overall credibility of its nuclear extended deterrence posture, and ensure equal protection for all Allies, across the whole of Western Europe, irrespective of their geographic position, through robust forward defence and rapid reinforcement.

### ***First steps (1949-1954)***

NATO's first five years witnessed several processes: the evolution of the Alliance into a highly institutionalised standing organisation, including an Integrated Military Structure of unprecedented scale in peacetime; the transformation in West Germany of the former occupation forces from a disparate assortment of weak and operationally disconnected contingents into an increasingly coherent whole; and agreement of initial coordination arrangements to extend US nuclear deterrence

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making", *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985: Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, vol.II, report prepared by BDM Federal for the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 22 September 1995, pp.48-67.



to Western Europe. This evolution responded to the imperative of reacting to the growing perception of an increased Soviet threat prompted by the Soviet blockade of Western Berlin initiated in June 1948, the USSR's acquisition of the atom bomb and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, in September and October 1949 respectively, and by the North Korean invasion of the Republic of Korea in June 1950. It also reflected the political requirement for the Alliance to assume responsibility, on a transatlantic basis, for the collective defence of Western Europe that, since the conclusion of the Brussels Treaty in March 1948, had been exercised by the Western Union Defence Organisation (WUDO). In many ways, NATO's first steps helped define the Alliance's key features, institutionally (the "machinery" of NATO), as well as operationally (conventional defence underpinned by a nuclear deterrent), for decades to come. Early on, the practices of consultation, planning and decision-making set a standing procedure that has helped foster consensus and that has endured to this day.

### *Taking over from WUDO*

Within months of the signature of the Brussels Treaty by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, a highly developed structure of civil and military bodies came into place, including a ministerial Council, a Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee (WUCOS) and a Commanders-in-Chief Committee. While the higher political and military bodies met in London, the Commanders-in-Chief Committee, chaired by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, was located at Fontainebleau, to the southeast of Paris. The committee included commanders-in-chief for land and air forces, a flag officer for naval forces, and a multinational staff structure known as Uniforce.<sup>26</sup>

Defending West Germany with the few forces available at that time became the main focus of WUDO's planning during the two-and-a-half years, between autumn 1948 and spring 1951, when it was in charge. That mission could not have been undertaken without US involvement, including the promise of reinforcement from the United States. To that end, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff appointed Major General Lyman Lemnitzer as their liaison to WUCOS in London.<sup>27</sup> Concurrently, Uniforce

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed description of WUDO and its legacy, see L. S. Kaplan, *NATO 1948: the birth of the transatlantic Alliance*, Lanham, Maryland, Roman & Littlefield, 2007, pp.139-164.

<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, *NATO 1948: the birth of the transatlantic Alliance*, *op. cit.*, pp.144-148. Subsequently, Lemnitzer served as Chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff (1960-1962) and SACEUR (1962-1969).

in Fontainebleau entered into a process of collective planning with the American, British and French military governors in Germany, through their combined planning staff located at the headquarters of the US Military Governor, General Lucius Clay, in Wiesbaden. However, following the end of World War 2, US forces had been withdrawn almost entirely from Europe. The US Army presence in Germany had fallen from some 3.1 million troops in May 1945 to less than 400,000 a year later and, in 1948, it was limited to a single infantry division and a constabulary force.<sup>28</sup>

WUDO was Western Europe's first collective military organisation. Its significance in NATO's early history lies in the initial measures that were taken to bring together British forces and those of its Western Union allies. They included:

- plans for delaying operations in West Germany against advancing Soviet forces and a firm defence on the Rhine-Ijssel Rivers, in case of war;
- multinational exercises;
- the nucleus of a collective air defence system; and
- a commonly-funded infrastructure programme.

These measures laid the ground for NATO taking over from WUDO in a quicker and smoother way that might have been the case otherwise.<sup>29</sup>

### *Strengthening NATO's nascent institutions*

In parallel with the taking over from WUDO, and in response to the outbreak of the Korean War, NATO strengthened its institutions beyond the initial bodies that had been created in 1949: NATO's governing body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC); the Defence Committee (DC) bringing together defence ministers; the Military Committee (MC); the MC's executive agency, the Standing Group (SG); and five Regional Planning Groups established to take over and expand the focus of WUDO planning beyond Central Europe.<sup>30</sup> Between August and December 1950, NATO agreed to the:

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28 D. A. Carter, *Forging the shield: the US Army in Europe, 1951-1962*, Washington, DC, United States Army Center of Military History, 2015, pp.7-8.

29 DC 10/1, *Relations Between the North Atlantic Defense Organization and the Brussels Treaty Defense Organization*, NATO Secret, 12 December 1949, NA.

30 Once NATO established a permanent headquarters, the North Atlantic Council was located in Paris. The Military Committee and the Standing Group were located at the Pentagon in Washington.

- establishment of a standing Council of Deputies and a standing Military Representatives Committee, acting on behalf of the NAC and the Military Committee, respectively, between their periodic meetings;
- strengthening of the role of the Standing Group, as the military body providing strategic direction, by delegation from the Military Committee, initially to the five Regional Planning Groups for Northern, Central and Southern Europe, the North Atlantic Ocean, and North America, and, following the activation of the Integrated Military Structure, the Major NATO Commanders;
- appointment of General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower as NATO's first SACEUR<sup>31</sup> and of a Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (SACLANT);
- promulgation of guiding principles for defence, notably “defence as far to the East as possible, including western Germany”;
- development of tailored military preparations for the defence of Denmark and Norway in the north and of Italy in the south, as well as command arrangements for the Mediterranean Sea;<sup>32</sup> and
- the desirability of a strong German military contribution to the common defence,<sup>33</sup> and the possible implications for NATO of the establishment of a multinational “European Army” (the ill-fated European Defence Community).<sup>34</sup>

31 Eisenhower assigned special importance to the education of a cadre of NATO-minded officers from across the Alliance and in December 1951 he activated the NATO Defense College in Paris.

32 DC 24/1 *Reorganization of the NATO Military Structure*, Cosmic Top Secret, 26 October 1950, NA, pp.7-8. The initial idea that NATO might include a Middle East Command was made mute by the creation of the Baghdad Pact Organisation, renamed Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), and the establishment of bilateral information exchange links between NATO and CENTO that extended through the latter's dissolution in 1979. SG 80/4, *Command in the Mediterranean and Middle East*, Cosmic Top Secret, 22 August 1951, NA; PO(59)123, *Military Liaison Between NATO and the Baghdad Pact Organization*, NATO Secret, 26 January 1959, NA; and MCM-50-72 Attendance of CENTO Observers at NATO *Exercise Deep Furrow 72*, NATO Confidential, 20 July 1972, NA.

33 DC 29, *German Contributions to the Defence of Western Europe*, Cosmic Top Secret, 26 October 1950, NA.

34 DC 29/1, *German Contributions to the Defence of Western Europe*, Cosmic Top Secret, 13 December 1950, NA, p.6. It is important to note that the European Defence Community (EDC) was not conceived as an alternative to NATO and the EDC Treaty foresaw EDC multinational contingents being placed under the command of SACEUR.

Without doubt, the key decisions were the creation of a NATO Integrated Military Structure and the appointment of a US general officer as SACEUR.<sup>35</sup>

*Assuming command throughout the North Atlantic Treaty area*

The Integrated Military Structure came into being, in steps, between 1951 and 1953, with the successive appointments of SACEUR, SACLANT and, as the third Major NATO Commander (MNC), the Allied Commander-in-Chief, Channel (CINCHAN).<sup>36</sup> The structure included four levels of command: at the top, the three MNCs; and, below, their Major Subordinate Commanders (MSC) and their own Principal Subordinate Commanders (PSC) and sub-PSC commanders.<sup>37</sup> During the Cold War, the Integrated Military Structure did not include distinct command and force structures as has been the case since the 1990s: national land, air and naval formations belonging to the Allies were directly subordinated to the various NATO military headquarters, at each level of command. That practice had the advantage, in a context of high tension, when transition to war could have happened in a matter of days, of creating strong bonds in peacetime between NATO commanders and the national forces that they would have led into combat. In 1954, the North Atlantic Council amplified considerably SACEUR's authorities – in the fields of force dispositions, force effectiveness, training, and logistics, to help ensure that he could discharge his responsibilities fully in the post-EDC circumstances of West Germany becoming a member of NATO.<sup>38</sup>

Once fully activated, the Integrated Military Structure underwent many small revisions, but remained essentially unchanged during the rest of the Cold

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35 DC 24/3, *The Creation of an Integrated European Defense Force, the establishment of a Supreme Headquarters in Europe and the Reorganization of the NATO Military Structure*, NATO Confidential, 12 December 1950, NA.

36 The last two major military headquarters completing the Integrated Military Structure – Allied Forces, Mediterranean, at Valetta, Malta, and Allied Forces, Central Europe, at Fontainebleau, France, were activated in March and August, 1953, respectively. See G. W. Pedlow, “The Evolution of Allied Command Europe, 1951-2001”, *NATO & Nations*, iss. 1/2001, p.110.

37 For example, for Southern Europe, SACEUR's MSC was the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH); one of CINCSOUTH's PSCs was the Commander, Allied Air Forces, Southern Europe (COMAIRSOUTH), and one of COMAIRSOUTH's sub-PSC commanders was the Commander, 5<sup>th</sup> Allied Tactical Air Force (COMFIVEATAF).

38 C-M(54)85, *Draft Resolution to Implement Section IV of the Final Act of the London Conference*, NATO Confidential, 19 October 1954, NA, pp.3-6. On the occasion of the accession of Germany and Italy to the 1948 Brussels Treaty, the original Western Union was renamed Western European Union (WEU). The WEU was disbanded in 2011.

War, until the first, post-Cold War reforms in 1994. SACEUR had three Major Subordinate Commanders – CINCNORTH, CINCENT and CINCSOUTH, responsible for northern, central and southern Europe, respectively – and, during limited periods of time, four: CINCAFMED was a NATO maritime commander for the Mediterranean between 1953 and 1967 and CINCUKPAIR was a NATO air commander between 1975 and the end of the Cold War overseeing Royal Air Force units stationed in the United Kingdom and committed to NATO. SACLANT initially had Major Subordinate Commanders for the western and eastern Atlantic; a third MSC for the south-eastern part of the North Atlantic area of operations, designated Commander-in-Chief, Iberian Atlantic (CINCIBERLANT), was activated after much delay in 1968.<sup>39</sup>

Allocation of command positions, a practice labelled “flag-to-post”, followed the principle that higher international command should be exercised by those nations that had the most immediate strategic interest in a particular region of the North Atlantic Treaty area or in a particular mission, were willing to assume a leadership responsibility on behalf of the Alliance, and had the military capacity to make a substantial or, even unrivalled, contribution. This is why American officers assumed command for Southern Europe and for the Western Atlantic, and British officers for the English Channel area, the Eastern Atlantic, Northern Europe, and the Mediterranean Sea, although command over the North Atlantic Ocean and over the Mediterranean Sea was hotly contested between London and Washington initially.<sup>40</sup> France assumed command of the all-important Central Region. France’s military engagements in Indochina until 1954 and Algeria until 1962 limited, however, the scale of its force contributions to NATO and undermined its ability to claim a larger command role. When combined with General de Gaulle’s quest for assuring France’s strategic autonomy, that experience contributed to dissipating at the time its interest in remaining a part of the Integrated Military Structure.

39 MCM-47-65, *Activation of IBERLANT Command*, NATO Secret, 25 March 1965, NA.

40 A. P. Dobson and S. Mash, “Churchill at the Summit: SACLANT and the tone of Anglo-American relations in January 1952”, *The International History Review*, Vol.32, No.2, June 2010, pp.211-228; and S. Marsh, “Churchill, SACLANT and the politics of opposition”, *Contemporary British History*, Vol.27, Iss. 4, 2013, pp.445-465.

### *Starting nearly from scratch*

The task facing the Allies and SACEUR in the early 1950s was of a scope and scale unprecedented for a peacetime alliance: NATO had to be prepared to defend against attack and invasion of a vast treaty area extending from north Norway to, after the accession of Greece and Turkey to the Alliance in 1952,<sup>41</sup> the Black and eastern Mediterranean Seas and eastern Turkey, and from Portugal to North America. To that end, peacetime arrangements had to be set in place of an ambition sufficient to enable forces scattered across Europe to sustain together a credible deterrence posture and, should deterrence fail, fight and prevail over a formidable potential adversary with a very large standing army.

The starting line was a devastated Europe, still recovering economically and socially from a highly destructive war, with very limited resources for defence, few forces in being, virtually no modern military equipment, and an austere infrastructure of obsolescent airfields, barracks and harbours. Doctrine and force structures reflected largely the legacy of Allied operations in 1943-1945.<sup>42</sup> Awareness of the effects of the use of nuclear weapons on a large scale and of their implications for strategy and tactics was virtually non-existent. Most West European forces had some experience fighting alongside American, British and Canadian forces, but only a limited familiarity with the concept of operating together as an Allied team and using common tactics.

While strengthening NATO militarily required initiating many engineering projects to build command bunkers, microwave relay stations and pipelines, NATO's most critical contribution to the collective effort had more in common with the skill set of an architect than that of an engineer: a broad perspective that transcends national boundaries and helps motivate the individual nations to work together for a higher level of collective ambition. In this sense, starting seven decades ago, NATO has been a transformation "elevator" that challenges Allies'

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41 General A. M. Gruenther, SACEUR, 1953-1956, "I am charged with defending all of Western Europe, not just the easy portions", cited in *SHAPE History: The New Approach, 1953-1956*.

42 The first generation of senior NATO commanders were all veterans of World War II allied operations in North Africa, Italy and France and in the Pacific. NATO's first SACEUR and Deputy SACEUR were Eisenhower and Montgomery, respectively. The first Commanders-in-Chief of Allied Land and Air Forces, Central Europe, were Generals Alphonse Juin and Lauris Norstad. The first Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces, Mediterranean, was Admiral Lord Mountbatten. At the same time, NATO's first guidance for planning cautioned that "the North Atlantic Treaty nations should not be misled into planning in the frame of mind prevailing at the end of World War II". MC 14, *Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning*, Cosmic Top Secret, 3 March 1950, NA, p.4.

military establishments and helps lift them to higher levels of performance.<sup>43</sup>

Several examples, at both the strategic and tactical levels, illustrate the far-reaching impact, which often extends to today, of that original impulse to build a collective military capacity:

- development of Emergency Defence Plans that set out the conventional defence missions to be executed in wartime and provided a single, multinational framework of reference for preparing and training the forces and for commanding them as a single, combined force;
- activation under SACLANT of the Striking Fleet, Atlantic, to which over half of NATO's Cold War member nations contributed ships and aircraft. When assembled once a year for a major exercise, it was the world's most powerful Fleet ever, until its disbandment in 2005;<sup>44</sup>
- formulation of a blueprint for the coordinated air defence of Western Europe, which set the stage for the activation under SACEUR of the NATO Integrated Air Defence System (NATINADS), and for a tropospheric communications network – the ACE High system – linking SHAPE to all of its subordinated headquarters across Europe; and
- expansion of the number of airfields in Western Europe meeting exacting NATO criteria and commonly funded by the Allies.<sup>45</sup>

These developments were underpinned by an increasingly ambitious and demanding exercise programme aimed at training forces and staffs, refining operational skills, and evaluating formations and headquarters against agreed NATO force standards.

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43 NATO uses the notion of “reasonable challenge” to challenge Allies to pursue and deliver military capabilities that are necessary to meet collectively the agreed, aggregate NATO military requirement.

44 The Striking Fleet, Atlantic was composed of a carrier strike force bringing together UK and US aircraft-carriers and their surface escorts; a UK-led anti-submarine warfare force; and an amphibious landing force comprising a combined UK-Netherlands component and a US Marine Corps component.

45 The lasting impact of the practice, initiated in the 1950s, of financing collectively, through the NATO Infrastructure Programme, the development of modern airfields capable of handling state-of-the-art combat aircraft was underscored by the extensive use of many air bases in France, Greece and Italy to support the NATO air campaign in Libya in 2011. That operation prompted a rediscovery of the neglected importance of NATO's infrastructure, as a strategic enabler, and of the need to fund commonly its proper maintenance and modernization.

### *Building up the conventional “shield”*

The outbreak of the Korean War altered fundamentally the West’s strategic calculus. It triggered fears that North Korea’s attack could foreshadow Soviet aggression in Europe and prompted a rapid increase of NATO, notably US, military strength in West Germany. In September 1950, President Harry Truman decided on a major build up of US forces in Europe.<sup>46</sup> Within a year, the US Army strength in Europe had expanded considerably, from a single division to four infantry divisions and an armoured division, setting a baseline of five divisions for the remainder of the Cold War. In the Federal Republic of Germany’s southern half, the new 7<sup>th</sup> US Army joined the 1<sup>st</sup> French Army in forming NATO’s Central Army Group (CENTAG). In West Germany’s northern half, the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and a Canadian brigade joined a Belgian and a Dutch corps to form NATO’s Northern Army Group (NORTHAG). By the time that SHAPE was activated in April 1951, the number of corps-size fighting formations had almost doubled, from four to seven. The number of divisions increased to about a dozen, although many were poorly equipped, supported by a growing tactical air component. Canada alone based twelve fighter squadrons in France and Germany. Initiation of the US Mutual Defense Assistance Program resulted in a steady stream of deliveries of armoured vehicles and jet fighter aircraft. By June 1951, a year into the war in Korea, the United States had delivered 1.6 million tons of materiel to allies worldwide, of which nearly two thirds was to NATO Allies in Western Europe alone.<sup>47</sup> Canada also initiated its own security assistance programme to the European Allies.

Strengthening of Allied interoperability was facilitated by the transfer by, or the procurement from, the United States of major items of equipment, such as the M-47 tank, the M-75 and M-113 armoured personnel carriers, the M-107, M-108, M-109 and M-110 self-propelled howitzers, the Honest John and Corporal surface-to-surface rockets and missiles, the Nike-Hercules and Hawk surface-to-air missiles, the F-84 and RF-84 fighter-bomber and reconnaissance aircraft, the F-86 fighter and the C-130 transport aircraft. Canada and some European Allies also procured equipment from the United Kingdom, such as the Centurion tank and the Hunter fighter. In the 1960s and 1970s, several European Allies and Canada entered into

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46 H. Zimmermann, “The improbable permanence of a commitment: America’s troop presence in Europe during the Cold War”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol.11, No.1, 2009, p.7.

47 J. A. Huston, *One for all: NATO strategy and logistics through the formative period, 1949-1969*, Newark, Delaware, University of Delaware Press, 1984, p.50.



co-production programmes with the United States, with manufacturing taking place under license at various assembly plants in Europe and Canada. These programmes included the F-86, F-104 and F-16 fighters, which for decades were the main combat aircraft of many European air forces. Aircraft produced in one country were also supplied to other Allies, for instance Italian-built F-86Ks to France and Germany and Canadian-built CF-104s to Denmark and Norway. Such cooperation contributed to broad interoperability as well as to helping develop a post-war defence industrial base. Concurrently, in the 1950s and 1960s larger European Allies started to design and often co-develop several major items of equipment, which also facilitated materiel interoperability, notably the Leopard 1 tank, the Milan antitank missile, the Tornado fighter-bomber and the Exocet anti-ship missile. NATO helped developed a culture of armaments cooperation through the establishment of procedures to agree common requirements, such as the NATO Staff Target, and manage multilateral programmes, for instance in the form of the Phased Armaments Programming System.

The concept of a conventional “Shield” force was gradually taking shape, built on a mutual commitment by Allies to station forces in West Germany and stand firm together, and assurance to the nascent Federal Republic of Germany that NATO would defend as far to the East as possible. Strategy-making was the political and institutional process that linked seemingly remote operational arrangements to the higher aim of strengthening deterrence, by giving substance, visibly, to NATO’s “all for one, one for all” pledge. Despite these steps, however, the European Allies continued to struggle economically to fulfil the ambitious force goals that were approved at the Lisbon ministerial meeting in February 1952, notably the goal of building up to 90 divisions, including 30 ready divisions in Central Europe.<sup>48</sup> Without a substantial West German contribution, the prospects of a successful defence against the 20 Soviet divisions stationed in East Germany alone were dim.<sup>49</sup>

48 A January 1951 report commissioned by the US Government reported that “there was strong American support for Europe, but that Americans perceived Europeans as being ‘laggard’ in their own defence and that these countries ‘are not doing all they should to build up their own defense’”. Cited in A. M. Bielakowski, “Eisenhower: the First NATO SACEUR”, *War & Society*, Vol.22, No.2, October 2004, p.98.

49 The figure of 30 ready divisions seemingly reflected the number necessary to defend West Germany, from the Baltic Sea to the Alps, in the light of the frontage that a division could be expected to be able to defend. That requirement was never entirely met during the Cold War, despite a growing Warsaw Pact front-line offensive capability. In reality, the figure of 30 divisions reflected roughly the number of in-place, high readiness divisions made available by the Allies – 12 by Germany, 5 by the United States, 3 by the United Kingdom, (3 by France, if it is included after its withdrawal from integration in 1966), and 2 each by The Netherlands and by Belgium – for a total of approximately 27 (24) divisions, which puts to rest the assumption that NATO force

### *Developing the nuclear “sword”*

Building up NATO’s conventional force posture was challenging enough, given the scale of the task, the limited resources available, and the lack of experience in undertaking such an ambitious enterprise among sovereign nations in peacetime. Nowhere, however, was the build-up process more fraught with uncertainty than in the nuclear domain. NATO’s second Strategic Concept of December 1952, MC 14/1, had envisaged a conventional defence of Western Europe of sufficient strength to hold out successfully against Soviet aggression in Europe, until a planned US nuclear counter-offensive against the USSR had destroyed the Soviet Union’s war-making capacity. Initially, there was no direct connection between the two.<sup>50</sup> The Strategic Air Command’s (SAC) early plans, however, included nuclear “retardation” strikes by bombers deployed in the United Kingdom intended to slow down or stop the westward progression of Soviet forces into Western Europe.<sup>51</sup> Upon assuming command as SACEUR, Eisenhower took upon himself to assert his role as a “nuclear commander”, even though at that time he had no US nuclear weapons under his command.<sup>52</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that he could exercise his authority over the identification of priority retardation targets for SAC. To that end, Eisenhower designated General Lauris Norstad<sup>53</sup> to initiate the necessary liaison arrangements with SAC headquarters at Offutt Air Force, Nebraska.<sup>54</sup> These early steps set the stage for an established practice of coordination between SHAPE and

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planning during the Cold War was strictly threat-based. It was, in many respects, resource-based, and NATO commanders devoted much effort to, and exhibited considerable imagination in, developing operational concepts that made the best use of the assets made available by member nations.

50 Brigadier General R. C. Richardson III, USAF (Retd.), “NATO nuclear strategy: a look back”, *Strategic Review*, Spring 1981, p.38.

51 R. A. Wampler, *NATO strategic planning and nuclear weapons, 1950-1957*, Nuclear History Program, Occasional Paper 6, 1990, pp.4-7; P. J. Roman, “Curtis LeMay and the origins of NATO atomic targeting”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, March 1993, pp.56-62; and P. E. Murray, “An initial response to the Cold War: the buildup of the US Air Force in the United Kingdom 1948-1956”, in R. G. Miller (ed.), *Seeing off the bear: Anglo-American air power cooperation during the Cold War*, Washington, DC, Air Force History and Museums Program, 1995, pp.15-24.

52 As SACEUR, General Eisenhower was a NATO commander only. All of his successors, starting with General Matthew Ridgway, have also held the national position of Commander-in-Chief, US European Command (USCINCEUR during the Cold War, CDRUSEUCOM, currently), following the activation of Headquarters, USEUCOM in 1952. G. C. Mitchell, *Matthew B. Ridgway: soldier, statesman, scholar, citizen*, Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania, Stackpole Books, 2002, pp.115-116.

53 Norstad was dual-hatted as Commander-in-Chief of the US Air Forces in Europe at Wiesbaden and, in a NATO capacity, as Commander-in-Chief of Allied Air Forces, Central Europe, at Fontainebleau.

54 Wampler, *op. cit.*, pp.6-9; and Roman, *op. cit.*, pp.63-67.

the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and, later, the United Kingdom, in support of NATO's extended deterrence requirements.

In 1953, Norstad was appointed by the third SACEUR, General Alfred Gruenther, as his Air Deputy and given responsibility for the coordination of: all external nuclear support to NATO by the US Air Force; air defence among the individual NATO member nations<sup>55</sup>; and tactical air operations across Western Europe. Norstad's appointment – a stepping stone to succeeding Gruenther as SACEUR in 1956<sup>56</sup> – embodied NATO's growing institutional standing and operational autonomy.

Increasingly, strategy-making in the 1950s reflected a distinct, collective NATO perspective – embodied in the international responsibilities and advice of SACEUR and SACLANT – not simply the strategic preferences of the larger Allies. To an ever growing extent, strategy-making also involved all of the Allies in shaping force requirements, for instance, regarding the balance of force allocations between NATO's Central Region and the northern and southern flank regions or between air defence and offensive air support.<sup>57</sup> Norstad assumed particular salience as Air Deputy to SACEUR because the increasing speed, range and payload of jet aircraft were rapidly transforming the impact of air power on operations and making the concept of enclosed airspace and air defence systems, along national borders, largely obsolete. In many ways, the notions of airpower as an operational “force multiplier”, as well as, in an alliance, as an instrument to unify Allies strategically, under the cover of a common air defence umbrella, emerged in those early years.

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55 MRC 17, *Command Organization, Allied Command Europe*, Cosmic Top Secret, 30 June 1953, NA, 4-5. At Norstad's behest, *coordination* of individual air defence systems and operations was agreed by the Military Committee in December 1955, in the form of document MC 54 (Final), *Air Defence Command and Control in NATO Europe*, NATO Secret, 12 December 1955, NA, opening the way to a NAC agreement in December 1960 to their *integration* with document MC 54/1, *The Integration of Air Defence in NATO Europe*, cited in MC 5/16, *The Military Activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 11 December 1961, NA, p.17.

56 Norstad served in 4-star command positions in Europe continuously for 12 years (1950-1962).

57 Until collective defence planning assumed greater institutional salience in 1963, with the establishment of the Defence Planning Committee (DPC), and the formulation of military requirements by the Major NATO Commanders was thereby integrated into the NATO Defence Planning Process, these requirements were submitted to the North Atlantic Council independently. See MC 48, *Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Five Years*, Cosmic Top Secret, 17 December 1954, NA; MC 70, *The Minimum Essential Force Requirements, 1958-1963*, Cosmic Top Secret, 29 January 1958, NA; and, lastly, MC 100/1, *Appreciation of the Military Situation as it Affects NATO up to 1970*, NATO Secret, 11 September 1963, NA.

## *Strengthening NATO (1954-1957)*

The Eisenhower Administration's decision to expand considerably reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence and defence, through a strategy of "massive retaliation" under its "New Look" policy aimed to enhance deterrence, while reducing the defence burden on the economy and on society. During President Eisenhower's two-term presidency (1952-1960), defence expenditures fell from 64 to 47 percent of aggregate federal spending, while the size of the standing forces was reduced by a million servicemen, from 3.5 to less than 2.5 million. The "New Look" had a profound and immediate impact on the Alliance.<sup>58</sup> NATO responded to it with its own "New Approach", an initiative by Gruenther to explore, with the assistance of a special nuclear planning staff at SHAPE named *Able*, the implications for Allied forces of relying heavily on nuclear weapons.<sup>59</sup>

### *Building NATO into a nuclear Alliance*

In parallel with the evolution of nuclear capabilities at the strategic level, NATO's transition to a "massive retaliation" posture left an even bigger mark at the tactical level. In 1952, the US Air Force stationed in the United Kingdom its first wing of dual-capable fighter-bombers.<sup>60</sup> In 1953, the US Army deployed in West Germany atomic cannons and, in 1955, nuclear-armed Corporal surface-to-surface missiles. In addition, the US Army activated a dedicated headquarters in Italy, the Southern European Task Force (SETAF), to provide tactical nuclear support to the Italian, Hellenic and Turkish armies. For the first time, the US Army and Air Force in Europe had a tactical capability to interdict Soviet forces with nuclear weapons. Several field training exercises in West Germany led by the British, French and US armies rehearsed counteroffensive operations supported by the simulated use of tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>61</sup> In June 1955, a NATO air exercise, *Carte Blanche*,

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58 NSC 162/2, *Basic National Security Policy*, National Security Council, Washington, DC, 30 October 1953. The terminology "massive retaliation" can be traced back to the reference to the "deterrent of massive retaliatory power" made by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City in January 1954.

59 *SHAPE History: The New Approach, 1953-1956*.

60 R. Grant, "20<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing first tactical nuclear unit in 50s", *Air Force Magazine*, March 2011.

61 Lessons learned from these exercises, as well as experiments in the United States, prompted the US Army to adopt a *Pentomic* model for its divisions. A. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The US Army between Korea and Vietnam*, National Defense University, Washington, DC, 1986.

involved the simulated employment of air-delivered nuclear weapons on a large scale, with unforeseen, but predictable, negative public opinion repercussions.<sup>62</sup>

In May 1957, the Allies approved a new Strategic Concept, MC 14/2, which centred on the large-scale use of nuclear weapons from the outset of hostilities, to deter and defend against a large Soviet attack, whether the USSR employed nuclear weapons or not. By adopting expressly a policy of immediate nuclear use in meeting a large attack and rejecting the notion of limited war in Europe, the Concept reflected the widening view that nuclear weapons deployed with Allied forces were the most credible deterrent to potential Soviet aggression. In December of that year, Allied Heads of State and Government meeting in Paris for the first time since the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949 followed up by agreeing an offer by the United States to create a “NATO Atomic Stockpile”. It involved making available to Allies nuclear weapons held in peacetime in US custody for their employment in wartime by Allied forces properly trained, as well as equipped with the appropriate delivery systems.<sup>63</sup> As these delivery systems became operational, they were placed on Quick Reaction Alert and their readiness evaluated by SACEUR through the scheduling of new Quick Train no-notice alert exercises.<sup>64</sup> NATO as a nuclear alliance was rapidly taking shape.

This first variant of “extended deterrence” had the following characteristics:

- external nuclear support by the United States to NATO through the coordination of retardation targets between SHAPE and SAC;
- close partnership with the United Kingdom, including through the availability of US nuclear warheads kept under US custody to arm half of the Royal Air Force’s “V” bombers; provision to the RAF of Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM); and close targeting

62 “3,000 Planes to Join Maneuvers”, *The Herald Tribune*, 24 June 1955; Jean Planchais, “Les forces aériennes Centre-Europe et la défense aérienne territoriale française sont en pleines manœuvres ‘atomiques’”, *Le Monde*, 25 June 1955; R. T. Davis II, “Cold War Infamy: NATO Exercise Carte Blanche”, *Military Exercises: Political Messaging and Strategic Impact*, *op. cit.*

63 MC 80, *Implementation of the Atomic Stockpile Project*, Cosmic Top Secret, 22 May 1958, NA. The number of combat aircraft and surface-to-surface missiles certified for Quick Reaction Alert grew quickly in the early 1960s, once Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands and Turkey joined the United Kingdom and the United States in contributing tactical, nuclear-capable delivery vehicles to NATO.

64 RDC/59/349 *Exercise Quick Train 2/59*, NATO Confidential, 27 November 1959, NA; and RDC/60/45, *Exercise Quick Train 1-60*, NATO Confidential, 29 February 1960, NA.

coordination between SAC and the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command.<sup>65</sup> In addition, in 1956 the United Kingdom assigned to SACEUR Canberra nuclear-capable light bombers in the tactical role stationed in West Germany and Britain;<sup>66</sup>

- provision of Jupiter IRBMs to Italy and Turkey<sup>67</sup>; and
- provision of US-designed tactical, nuclear-capable delivery vehicles to the Allies, in the form of artillery howitzers, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, and fighter-bomber aircraft.

These components conformed to President Eisenhower's design to empower European Allies, within the constraints set by the 1954 and 1958 amendments to the 1946 Atomic Energy (MacMahon) Act, as a means to reduce their excessive reliance on the United States for their defence and to rebalance NATO in a way commensurate with Europe's political and economic ascendancy.<sup>68</sup> The Jupiter missiles also anticipated the concept championed by Norstad later in his tenure as SACEUR of NATO becoming a "fourth nuclear power"<sup>69</sup>, through ownership by European Allies of medium-range ballistic missiles,<sup>70</sup> equipped with US nuclear warheads, commanded by SACEUR, and placed under NATO's collective authority.<sup>71</sup>

65 J. Boyes, *Project Emily: Thor IRBM and the RAF*, The History Press, 2008; and Justin Bronk, "Britain's 'Independent' V Bomber Force and US Nuclear weapons, 1957-1962", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.37, Iss. 6-7, 2014, pp.974-997.

66 SG 184/7, *SACEUR's Emergency Defense Plan 1957*, Cosmic Top Secret, 14 January 1957, NA, p.5.

67 P. Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters, 1957-1963*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

68 M. Trachtenberg, "A military coalition in time of peace: America, Europe and the NATO Alliance, 1949-1962", in D. Showalter (ed.), *Future Wars: Coalition Operations in Global Strategy*, Chicago, Imprint Publications, 2002.

69 "Norstad asks NATO be 4<sup>th</sup> A-Power", *Stars and Stripes*, European edition, 13 October 1960; J. Melissen, "Nuclearizing NATO, 1957-1959: the 'Anglo-Saxons', nuclear sharing and the fourth country problem", *Review of International Studies*, Vol.20, No.3, July 1994, pp.253-275.

70 MC 79, *Implementation of the NATO Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile Project*, Cosmic Top Secret, 22 May 1958, NA. The total Alliance MRBM requirement was estimated by SACEUR and SACLANC at 1,087 land-based and submarine-launched missiles. SGM-259-61, *Military Aspects of Long-Range Planning*, Enclosure 1/TYP(61)3, NATO Secret, 16 May 1961, NA, p.3-4. In the end, only 45 Jupiter land-based missiles were deployed by Italy and Turkey between 1961 and 1963.

71 Norstad contested that the 60 British Thor missiles contributed to meeting NATO's MRBM requirement, because they were not assigned to SACEUR. MCM-72-62, *Comments by SACEUR on Military Aspects of the Introduction of MRBMs into NATO*, NATO Secret, 18 May 1962, NA.

### *The Bundeswehr joins the shield*

1957 also marked a turning point in building NATO's conventional strength. On 1 April of that year, Germany assigned its first divisions and corps headquarters to NATO. Germany's contribution allowed Norstad to order the movement of NATO's main defence line in West Germany forward of the Rhine river for the first time, up to the Weser and Lech rivers. This "intermediate" Forward Defence posture became effective a little over a year later, on 1 July 1958.<sup>72</sup> Prospects for NATO being able to hold the new line in case of conflict were tempered, however, by a major contraction of BAOR's strength from 77,000 to 55,000 troops to reduce the financial burden of Britain's overseas deployments, continuing withdrawals of French forces from Germany to meet a growing rebellion in Algeria, and uncertainty over the capability of other Allied forces.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, by 1957, the key building blocks of NATO's initial Cold War strategic posture – a completed Integrated Military Structure; a military posture that was rapidly acquiring the attributes associated with a nuclear alliance; and a conventional force deployment in Central Europe that was no longer anchored on the Rhine river but on defence further forward – had fallen into place.

NATO could not control the economic policy preferences of Allies, nor their sovereign decisions regarding the engagement of their forces overseas. Strategy-making, however, helped keep a common focus on current commitments and future requirements for deterrence and defence in Europe. In so doing, it was the essential compass to guide the Alliance through the turbulence in domestic politics often associated with post-WW2 economic recovery, the accession of former colonies and possessions to independence, and other international developments outside of Europe. Persistent balance of payment concerns, as well as the autumn 1956 Suez crisis – during the course of which the United States expressed its strong reservations concerning the joint British-French military operation to

72 The 2/58 edition of CINCENT's Emergency Defence Plan (EDP), dated 1 July 1958, reflected this "intermediate" forward defence posture. A driving force behind the decision to translate the gradual assignment of a widening body of German forces to NATO into a phased movement – first in 1958 and then in 1963 – of NATO's forward defence commitment to West Germany's eastern borders was General Dr. Hans Speidel, who, between 1957 and 1963, was the Commander, Allied Land Forces, Central Europe (COMLANDCENT) at Fontainebleau and West Germany's first general officer to assume a NATO command position following the FRG's accession in May 1955. I. Trauschweizer, *The Cold War US Army: building deterrence for limited war*, Lawrence, Kansas, University Press of Kansas, 2008, pp.90-94.

73 PO/57/340, *Combat Effectiveness Report, Allied Command Europe 1956*, Cosmic Top Secret, 26 March 1957, NA, p.1; and "Nervous Alliance", *Time*, 7 December 1959.

contest the nationalisation of the Suez Canal – crystallised the adverse impact that events beyond NATO’s field or geographic area of competence could have on the Alliance’s military coherence and political cohesion.

France and the United Kingdom drew opposite conclusions from the Suez crisis for their respective NATO policies and defence postures. While France intensified its pursuit of an independent nuclear deterrent, the United Kingdom strengthened its nuclear cooperation with the United States, notably through the procurement, successively, of Thor land-based and Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missiles at the Bermuda and Nassau bilateral meetings in March 1957 and December 1962, respectively. Furthermore, following the failure of the expedition to Suez, France shifted its attention away from NATO’s defence of Central Europe to focus on the western Mediterranean and North Africa – a shift marked by the withdrawal of France’s Mediterranean naval squadron from NATO command in 1959<sup>74</sup> and the activation of a new national command, the *Théâtre d’Opérations Métropole-Méditerranée*.<sup>75</sup> This north-south axis became an enduring aspect of French security policy. By contrast, over the next two decades, the United Kingdom gradually thinned out and eventually stood-down most of its considerable military presence along a southeast axis extending from Gibraltar eastwards to Hong Kong and underpinned by bases in Malta, Cyprus, Aden and Singapore.<sup>76</sup> From the late 1960s onwards, Britain concentrated its military resources instead on the defence of a northeast axis extending from the United Kingdom northwards to Iceland and Norway and eastwards across the North Sea to Denmark and West Germany. At the same time, the Suez crisis triggered persistent NATO interest in following more closely developments in the Middle East and their implications for Allied security, as well as a flurry of assessments and Council discussions.<sup>77</sup>

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74 MC 5/14, *The Military Progress of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Cosmic Top Secret, 10 November 1959, NA, pp.12.

75 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “France’s military command structures in the 1990s”, in T.-D. Young (ed.), *Command in NATO after the Cold War: Alliance, multinational, and national considerations*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1997, p.96.

76 The British military draw down east of Gibraltar from the late 1960s onwards is addressed by Air Chief Marshall Sir David Lee, RAF (retd.) in three volumes published by Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, London, *Flight from the Middle East*, 1980; *Eastward*, 1984; and *Wings in the Sun*, 1989.

77 See, for instance, C-M(57)63, *The Middle East*, NATO Secret, 16 April 1957, NA; MCM-104-58, *Strategic Estimate on the Middle East*, NATO Confidential, 7 August 1958, NA; and PO(59)394, *Discussions of the Council on the Middle East*, NATO Secret, 11 March 1959, NA.



Strategy-making was also the conduit that enabled the United States to engage the other Allies in thinking through the implications of agreeing an extended deterrence posture for NATO for the sharing of nuclear responsibilities among nuclear and non-nuclear members. As will be seen, the approaches to extending deterrence to the Alliance as a whole pursued by the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations had a common goal of sharing responsibility for it among all Allies, but the means for achieving this outcome differed. Collective engagement in developing strategy, however – including occasionally strong dissent – is the silver lining that explains how a constancy of purpose, in this area of nuclear policy as in others, ultimately prevailed.

### **The Berlin crisis: transition to Flexible Response (1957-1967)**

Adoption of the MC 14/2 Strategic Concept, agreement to the creation of a NATO Atomic Stockpile and deployment of nuclear-capable delivery vehicles with Allied forces had brought NATO firmly into the nuclear age. Allies without their own nuclear weapon capability could continue to benefit from the nuclear deterrence commitment extended by the United States, but they would now be able to assume operationally and share politically the responsibilities associated with this commitment. Extended deterrence became, at once, politically tangible, by allowing the Allies to benefit from mutual nuclear protection, and operationally credible, by conveying to a potential adversary the message that individual member nations could not be targeted for intimidation or aggression, by discriminating between nuclear and non-nuclear Allies.

However, in recognition of Soviet advances towards acquiring a ballistic missile capacity to devastate Western Europe and to target North America, as well as of the risk, in these new circumstances, of Warsaw Pact attacks on a scale smaller than general war, such as “infiltrations, incursions or hostile local actions”, the Concept had opened the door to planning conventional operations “without necessarily having recourse to nuclear weapons”.<sup>78</sup> In effect, contrary to conventional wisdom, approval of MC 14/2, rather than committing the Allies exclusively to a strategy of immediate “Massive Retaliation” with nuclear weapons, set the stage for the development of a planning mindset and panoply of measures that anticipated and

<sup>78</sup> Pedlow, *The evolution of NATO strategy, 1949-1969*, *op. cit.*, p.xx.

conformed more closely to the strategy of “Flexible Response” agreed in 1967.<sup>79</sup> Henceforth, nuclear weapons would increasingly be seen as an instrument of war prevention and, if deterrence failed, as a means to terminate hostilities quickly and at the lowest possible level of intensity, through their limited and discriminate use. Norstad referred to this alternative to immediate large-scale nuclear use as a “pause”, aimed at giving a would-be aggressor time to reconsider its course of action and desist from further attack.<sup>80</sup>

NATO strategy-making was now moving towards a second stage, beyond the initial requirement of the early 1950s to build a modicum of an Allied defence posture forward of the Rhine river and to establish a link to US planning for a nuclear counter-offensive in case of war. NATO strategy now had to reconcile a strengthening, if still insufficient, of Alliance conventional defence capability, with the prospect of increased vulnerability to Soviet ballistic missile developments. With an ever growing military contribution and a NATO forward defence posture moving, in phases, towards its eastern borders, West Germany had become an Ally with a distinct strategic perspective and a stronger voice in shaping common positions. The emerging crisis over Berlin would bring West Berlin’s and West Germany’s security into the focus of NATO strategy-making like no other international development since the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950.<sup>81</sup>

### *Norstad’s third hat, as Commander, Live Oak*

Nikita Khrushchev’s threat in December 1958 to change unilaterally the status of Berlin, unless the three Western Allies agreed to the city’s demilitarisation and to a withdrawal of their contingents, gave unexpected urgency to the task of preparing to counter limited operations set out in the 1957 Strategic Concept. In response to rising tension over Berlin, in April 1959 Norstad, in his capacity of Commander-in-Chief, US European Command (USCINCEUR), stood up a new, trilateral staff,

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79 The enlightening insight that MC 14/2 was mistakenly characterized for decades as strictly a strategy of “massive retaliation” was first made by John Duffield in his seminal article “The Evolution of NATO’s Strategy of Flexible Response: A Reinterpretation”, *Security Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, 1991, p.133, and elaborated upon by B. Heuser in *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: nuclear strategies and forces for Europe, 1949-2000*, London, MacMillan, 1997, p.40.

80 L. S. Kaplan, R. D. Landa and E. J. Drea, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: the McNamara ascendancy, 1961-1965*, Vol.V, Washington, DC, 2006, p.358.

81 S. M. Maloney, “Berlin contingency planning: prelude to flexible response, 1958-1963”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, March 2002, p.99-134.

nick-named Live Oak. As Commander, Live Oak (CLO), he assumed responsibility, under the direction of France, the United Kingdom and the United States, and in consultation with the FRG<sup>82</sup>, for the planning and execution of trilateral operations aimed at keeping the designated air, rail and road corridors linking West Germany to West Berlin open in the face of interference or aggression by either the USSR or the German Democratic Republic or both. The position of CLO was in addition to Norstad's USCINCEUR and SACEUR's hats.<sup>83</sup>

Two concerns became predominant immediately. The first concern was that the Soviet Union might interdict military access to West Berlin from West Germany, by closing the corridors *without initiating a major attack*. Alternatively, it might conduct a *limited attack* into West Germany to encircle and occupy a city located near the inner-German border, with a view to returning it to West Germany in exchange for the transformation of Berlin into a "free city". Both contingencies raised major strategic and operational challenges:

- the threat of first nuclear use by NATO might not be credible in circumstances other than countering a major Soviet attack;
- reinforcing the garrisons in West Berlin by land from West Germany could involve forces of a volume much larger than a probe along the Helmstedt-Berlin highway, thereby requiring a cross-country, expeditionary operation and risking a major confrontation with Soviet forces on Warsaw Pact territory; furthermore, engaging a ground force on the scale of up to a corps towards West Berlin could weaken NATO's already stretched conventional defences in West Germany and increase the Alliance's vulnerability, in case a limited Soviet operation against West Berlin were a diversion to mask a larger offensive into West Germany, or the USSR used the pretext of the allied reinforcement operation towards West Berlin to undertake such a major attack; and
- the welcome movement of NATO's forward defence line from the Rhine

82 A Washington Ambassadorial Group, composed of diplomats from France, the FRG, the United Kingdom and the United States, was responsible for issuing political guidance to CLO. While Germany was not a member of the Live Oak staff, a German Liaison Officer maintained a consultation channel between CLO and the German Chief of Defence.

83 For each position, Norstad had a distinct staff. G. W. Pedlow, "Three hats for Berlin: General Lauris Norstad and the second Berlin crisis, 1958-1962", in J.P.S. Gearson and K. Schake (eds.), *The Berlin wall crisis: perspectives on Cold War alliances*, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp.175-198.

to the Weser-Lech rivers in mid-1958 had left several major cities, such as Hanover and Kassel, and nearly half of West Germany's territory, still poorly defended and exposed to Soviet seizure.<sup>84</sup>

To mitigate this risk of rapid seizure and occupation, new measures were undertaken to strengthen NATO's defences forward of the Weser River, notably around Kassel, through the standing-up of dedicated Belgian and German "covering forces" tasked with screening and countering any Soviet infiltrations.<sup>85</sup> Further south, the US Army had already deployed armoured cavalry regiments to screen the eastern approaches to the towns of Fulda, Hof and Passau.<sup>86</sup> Countering and defeating Soviet hostile propaganda and disinformation operations also received increased attention, in the form of strengthened coordination and planning for psychological warfare.<sup>87</sup>

Deepening concern that NATO's Emergency Defence Plans (EDP) did not offer the flexibility, in terms of force scalability and responsiveness, necessary to meet lesser and more short notice forms of aggression<sup>88</sup> led Norstad, this time with his SACEUR hat, to propose in December 1959 the establishment of a multinational mobile force – the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) – that could reinforce the covering forces in West Germany rapidly in a contingency.<sup>89</sup> However, growing worries that the USSR might also be tempted to conduct limited operations on NATO's northern and southern flanks, to create a *fait accompli* in a geographically remote area of the Alliance before NATO had been able to react, prompted calls for greater attention to theatres other than Central Europe.

84 The critical importance and vulnerability of the city of Kassel is described in SGM-814-57, *SACEUR's Emergency Defense Plan 1-58*, Cosmic Top Secret, 31 December 1957, NA, p.9. It is addressed again in MCM-18-68, *Allied Command Europe Atomic Demolition Study on Central European Region*, Cosmic Top Secret, 27 March 1968, NA, pp.5-6. The seizure of other geographically-exposed cities, such as Helmstedt, Lubeck and Hof, is addressed in MCM-165-65, *Contingency Plans, Excluding General War*, NATO Secret, 18 November 1965, NA, p.3.

85 Kassel was located at the juncture of the CENTAG and NORTHAG areas of responsibility, which required developing complex coordination arrangements between adjacent Belgian and German forces – the *Forces de Couverture* of the 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian Corps and the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Panzer Grenadier Division* of the III<sup>rd</sup> German Corps. See D. Ruiz Palmer, "Back to the future? Russia's hybrid warfare, revolutions in military affairs, and Cold War comparisons", *Research Paper* 120, NDC, Rome, October 2015, p.10.

86 W. E. Stacy, *US Army Border Operations in Germany, 1945-1983*, Headquarters, US Army Europe & 7<sup>th</sup> Army, Heidelberg, May 1984.

87 SGWM-162-60, *Psychological Warfare*, NATO Secret, 21 March 1960, NA; and C-M(60)22, *NATO-wide Cooperation and Coordination in the field of Psychological Warfare*, NATO Secret, 9 March 1960, NA.

88 *SACEUR's Emergency Defense Plan 1-58*, *op. cit.*, p.8.

89 MCM-14-65, *ACE Mobile Force*, NATO Secret, 19 January 1965, NA.

In December 1960, Greece's Chief of Defence requested the application of the Forward Defence strategy in northern Greece, which triggered the development of contingency plans, to supplement the standing EDP,<sup>90</sup> and measures to strengthen the Hellenic and Turkish armies.<sup>91</sup> As a result of the concerns over the vulnerability of NATO's flank regions, the AMF was reoriented to augment local defences in Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway and Turkey, as a deployable, multinational "trip-wire" force that would embody the Treaty's "all for one" commitment.<sup>92</sup> The first live AMF exercise – Southern Express – took place in Greece in autumn 1962, as part of a persistent effort to ensure that all Allies enjoyed equal protection.<sup>93</sup> Other steps to strengthen reinforcements for the flanks included the conduct in 1964 by SACLANT of the first of the Teamwork maritime exercises in the North Atlantic, as well as the Deep Furrow series of airborne and amphibious exercises staged annually by CINCSOUTH in Greece and Turkey.<sup>94</sup>

These exercises helped set the conditions for credible deterrence and reliable assurance against the risk of a limited attack and a *fait accompli*. They deepened the reach of strategy-making by requiring Allies to reflect deeper on the political implications and operational requirements of a more flexible, but also more demanding, approach to responding to the risk of limited attacks in, possibly, ambiguous circumstances. These exercises also contributed to creating a practice of rehearsing defence plans and reinforcement options regularly, thereby helping shed light for member nations on the military benefits and political implications of pursuing, in a crisis, a particular course of action and the attendant trade-offs.

90 MC 97(Final), *Defense of the Balkan Area According to the Fundamentals of the Forward Strategy*, Cosmic Top Secret, 7 June 1962, NA; and SG 259/1, *Relative Importance of Local Defensive Strength in Deterring Hostile Local Action in Response to the Greek Request*, NATO Secret, 29 August 1962, NA.

91 MCM-86-63, *Mobility and Armour Requirements for the Hellenic and Turkish Armies*, NATO Secret, 10 July 1963, NA.

92 S. M. Maloney, "Fire brigade or tocsin? NATO's ACE Mobile Force, flexible response and the Cold War", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.27, No.4, December 2004, pp.585-613; and D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "From AMF to NRF: the roles of NATO's rapid reaction forces in deterrence, defence and crisis-response, 1960-2009", *NATO Review*, 2009, pp.32-33; and B. Lemke, *The Allied Mobile Force (AMF) 1961 bis 2002*, Munich, Germany, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015.

93 MC 5/17, *The Military Activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, NATO Secret, 10 December 1962, NA, pp.21-22.

94 RDC/64/366, *Exercise Deep Furrow*, NATO Confidential, 1 September 1964, NA; and RDC/69/232, *Exercise Deep Furrow*, NATO Confidential, 22 September 1969, NA. These steps were undertaken against the background of an unsatisfactory NATO reinforcement capacity. SGM-154-60 (Revised), *Strategic Reserves for SACEUR*, Cosmic Top Secret, 1 April 1960, NA.

They made the Flexible Response strategy concrete, even before it was adopted formally in 1967, while also highlighting the military limitations in NATO's capacity to execute it.

Furthermore, the emerging crisis over Berlin was taking place against the background of continuing developments in Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile and space capabilities that were not well understood and whose momentum turned out to be grossly over-estimated, once satellite photography became widely available.<sup>95</sup> Norstad kept pleading for the acquisition of a NATO MRBM force to mitigate the risk that the USSR could use a growing advantage in theatre nuclear forces in Europe to intimidate the Allies and leverage its conventional superiority over NATO under the shadow of a devastating nuclear strike capability.<sup>96</sup> In order to enhance protection from air attack, Norstad also pressed the Allies to agree to merge their individual air defence systems – over which he had been granted coordination authority in December 1955 – into a genuinely integrated air defence system. Air defence guidance, including applicable rules of engagement, was approved by the NAC in September 1960 and NATINADS became operational between July 1961 and December 1963, with SACEUR exercising the full powers of air defence commander for NATO Europe, including the United Kingdom, in peacetime.<sup>97</sup>

In the meantime, the Berlin crisis deepened, culminating in the construction of the Berlin Wall in August and the stand-off between Soviet and US tanks at Checkpoint Charlie in October 1961.<sup>98</sup> As awareness that trilateral Live Oak operations might not attain the volume of forces needed to protect effectively the corridors to West Berlin, or might require the activation of supporting NATO

95 J. Bird and J. Bird (eds.), *Resolving the missile gap with Technology*, CIA Historical Collections, Central Intelligence Agency, Langley, Virginia, 2012.

96 In 1959, the Soviet Union deployed secretly SS-3 *Slyster* medium-range ballistic missiles at two sites in the GDR, but they were withdrawn within months. Matthias Uhl and Vladimir I. Ivkin, “‘Operation Atom’: The Soviet Union’s Stationing of Nuclear Missiles in the German Democratic Republic, 1959”, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 12/13, 2001, 299-307. It had also initiated construction of launch pads for the SS-6 *Sapwood* intercontinental range ballistic missiles at Polyarnny Ural in the USSR, but in 1959 construction of the launch pads was halted. *Resolving the Missile Gap with Technology*, *op. cit.*, p.21. It is still unclear today whether any of those decisions was related to Khrushchev’s moves over the status of Berlin.

97 MC 5/16, *The Military Activities of the North Atlantic Organization during 1961*, NATO Secret, 11 December 1961, NA, pp.17-18; and MC 5/18, *The Military Activities of the North Atlantic Organization during 1963*, NATO Secret, 13 December 1963, NA, p.19.

98 I. W. Trauschweitzer, “Tanks at Checkpoint Charlie: Lucius Clay and the Berlin Crisis, 1961-1962”, *Cold War History*, Vol.6, No.2, 2006, pp.205-228.

actions in West Germany, SACEUR and SACLANC were directed by the NAC to initiate distinct NATO planning for enforcing Allied access rights to West Berlin in the face of determined Soviet and/or East German interference.<sup>99</sup> For the first time since its creation, the Alliance was confronted with a crisis situation that could potentially engage the mutual defence commitments embedded in the Treaty's Article 5 and involve both its conventional and nuclear forces. The close interaction between the NAC and SACEUR over Berlin established a real-world precedent for political-military interaction during crisis situations.<sup>100</sup>

### *Longer-term impact of the Berlin crisis on NATO strategy*

By autumn 1963, tensions over Berlin had abated. The legacy of the Berlin crisis, however, endured. It had an important impact on Soviet military thought, particularly as a result of the excessive reliance placed by Khrushchev on nuclear weapons and the resulting lack of a conventional military posture in Eastern Europe adapted to a policy of intimidation without escalation. During the 1960s, Soviet operational art moved away from an exclusive focus on general nuclear war and towards dual conventional and nuclear coalition operations, starting with Warsaw Pact exercise *Burja* in 1961.<sup>101</sup> This Soviet pivot also introduced gradually a dose of peacetime competition into the balance of forces with NATO. The Alliance could no longer rely, only or principally, on the credibility of defence preparations to deter war. Deterrence had to be underpinned as well by a tangible and visible readiness to compete and deny to the Warsaw Pact an asymmetric and irreversible strategic advantage in major force categories, such that a hypothetical advantage in a given category could not be translated into decisive political leverage to the detriment

99 MCM-98-62, *Berlin Contingency Planning*, Cosmic Top Secret, 20 August 1962, NA; and PO(62)241, *Berlin Contingency Planning*, Cosmic Top Secret, 8 October 1962, NA. In addition to, but separately from, *Live Oak*, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States had in place a specific organisation – the Bonn Group and the Quadripartite Berlin Airlift (QBAL) plan – to execute an air bridge from West Germany to re-supply West Berlin, if the Soviet Union had resorted again to a blockade of the city like in 1948-1949. The firm position of the four governments, however, was to prevent the imposition of another Soviet blockade of West Berlin by being prepared to implement the various *Live Oak* and NATO preventive measures and contingency plans and to rely on execution of the QBAL plan only as a last resort.

100 MCM-133-63, *Provision of Military Advice to the Secretary General and the Council*, NATO Confidential, 12 November 1963, NA.

101 Reportedly, *Burja* (“Storm”) was the Warsaw Pact’s first exercise. V. Mastny, “Imagining War in Europe: Soviet Strategic Planning”, and M. Uhl, “Storming on to Paris: the 1961 *Burja* exercise and the planned solution of the Berlin Crisis”, in V. Mastny, S. G. Holtmark and A. Wenger (eds.), *War plans and alliances in the Cold War*, London, Routledge, 2006, pp.15-71.

of Allies. The Alliance's 1967 *Harmel Report*, by highlighting the complementarity between *détente* and defence, was helpful in enhancing awareness that the relationship with the Soviet Union involved elements of both engagement and competition, but it was only a decade later that the Allies took the full measure of the implications for their security of the USSR's competitive mindset.<sup>102</sup>

The legacy of the Berlin crisis prompted a sustained NATO effort to close the gaps in its conventional defence posture that contingency planning for Berlin had exposed: an unsatisfactory Forward Defence posture; a lack of standing, rapid reaction forces; and a dearth of readily-available reinforcements. In July 1962, a new, joint, multinational Baltic Approaches (BALTAP) command was activated in Denmark to strengthen NATO's forward defence posture in the Baltic Sea and the Alliance's combined capacity to deny the Warsaw Pact the ability to take control of the Danish Straits in a conflict and envelop West Germany and The Netherlands from the North Sea.<sup>103</sup> Then, in September 1963, in a major step to rectify the shortcomings exposed during the Berlin crisis, NATO's Forward Defence line in Central Europe was moved forward again, this time all the way up from the Weser and Lech rivers to the FRG's eastern borders with the GDR and Czechoslovakia.<sup>104</sup> This measure had been made possible by the commitment to NATO of additional German divisions and corps headquarters,<sup>105</sup> the forward stationing of a Dutch armoured brigade in West Germany, and a plan to redeploy French forces from garrisons along the Rhine river to barracks vacated by US forces in eastern Bavaria.<sup>106</sup>

102 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Harmel Report, Vol.1: Council Discussions; Vol.2: National Approaches, Archives Service, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 2017.

103 SGM-694-62, *Activation of Allied Command Baltic Approaches*, NATO Secret, 4 December 1962, NA.

104 "Implementation of Full Forward Defence", History for 1963, 3340/CE/AG/1149/64, NATO Secret, 16 October 1964, HQ Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT), Fontainebleau, France, declassified and disclosed by the History Office, SHAPE, Mons, July 2013, p.8; Helmut Hammerich, "Suddeutschland als Eckpfeiler der Verteidigung Europas", *Military Power Review der Schweizer Armee*, No.2/2011, pp.35-36; and Helmut Hammerich, "Fighting for the Heart of Germany" in Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Kruger, *Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2012, p.162.

105 SGM-674-62, *Assignment of German Forces to SACEUR*, NATO Secret, 23 November 1962, NA. In 1965, when the last of the Bundeswehr's twelve divisions was activated, Germany alone had as many active brigades (36) as all of the other Allies with forces stationed in West Germany together – 18 American, 6 British, 6 French, 4 Belgian, 1 Dutch and 1 Canadian – which underscored the heavy dependence of an effective Forward Defence upon Germany's contribution.

106 In the end, that redeployment, however, did not take place, in light of France's withdrawal from integration and West German forces took responsibility for that sector instead. R. Koven, "French said to be stalling on moving troops 'forward'", *International Herald Tribune*, 31 July 1964; and Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'alliance incertaine: les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands, 1954-1996*, Paris, Fayard, 1996, pp.269-270.



With this move, NATO's forward defence deployment in Central Europe, between the Baltic Sea and the Alps, assumed its "layered cake" pattern of army corps of different nationalities defending adjacent sectors. While West Germany was the most immediate beneficiary of forward defence, it had also become its largest contributor.

By the time Norstad retired at the end of 1962, he had not secured Allies' agreement of his proposal for a NATO MRBM force, but his record of achievement in setting in place the building blocks of a NATO deterrence and defence posture that would endure for the rest of the Cold War and beyond was a sterling one: he had stood up the AMF in 1960; activated NATINADS in 1961; established BALTAP in 1962; and directed the full implementation of Forward Defence in Central Europe in 1963. He had also initiated and overseen Live Oak and SHAPE contingency planning for Berlin and played no small role in keeping NATO united and preventing the crisis from escalating.

In many ways, NATO strategy-making during Norstad's tenure had reached an unprecedented degree of maturity, in relation to its scope, as well as the multiple, national and multinational dimensions involved. In the nuclear field, the concept of a MRBM force never materialised on the scale envisaged, but it opened the door to the formal assignment to NATO of United Kingdom and United States strategic nuclear forces and to new nuclear consultation arrangements. In the conventional field, the standing up of the AMF, NATINADS and BALTAP and the implementation of a full forward defence in Central Europe had several positive implications. No less than eight Allies – Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States – committed rapidly deployable infantry battalions and fighter and reconnaissance squadrons to the AMF, thereby helping ensure that NATO could generate a multinational deterrent force on the flanks at short notice. Politically, Germany's participation in the AMF was particularly significant, because it sent the signal that it would not only be a beneficiary of the protection afforded by the stationing of a large Allied military presence on West German territory, but would also contribute to extending that multinational protection to Norway, Denmark, Italy, Greece and Turkey in times of tension or war. The responsiveness and effectiveness of the AMF in an actual contingency, however, could have been undermined by the assignment to the AMF by some of the contributing nations of units that were earmarked for other NATO roles, in contravention of the agreed policy, and by

recurrent reservations on common funding of airlift costs to transport contingents from nations without an indigenous airlift capacity.<sup>107</sup> The standing up of BALTAP, in turn, aimed at preventing a Soviet seizure of the Danish Straits, by extending NATO's forward defence in Germany northwards to Denmark and creating a close Danish-German military partnership, while keeping the defence of Denmark and Norway tied together in NATO's Northern European Command.<sup>108</sup> BALTAP's creation also offered an operational framework to anchor planning for the onward movement into Denmark of external reinforcements that, in a crisis, would be arriving from Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. Lastly, the activation of NATINADS created an outer perimeter fence to counter the Soviet mass air raids that could be expected at the start of a conflict, while preserving political control through the adoption of standing air defence rules of engagement in peacetime.<sup>109</sup> The concept of a NATO Shield was now a reality.

### *Strengthening conventional defences*

In October 1964, the NATO Military Committee agreed a series of topics for informal discussion among Chiefs of Defence that was illustrative of the growing attention to strengthening conventional defence and the mutual relationships between aggression short of full-scale attack, forward defence, the role of external reinforcements, the release of dual-capable assets for conventional operations, and procedures for authorizing resort to the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>110</sup> This led to a tasking to the three Major NATO Commanders to assess and report back on their conventional capabilities.<sup>111</sup> In June 1965, the retiring British Chief of Defence, drawing on these discussions, recommended the development of dedicated

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107 IMSM-370-68, *SHAPE Briefing on the AMF*, NATO Confidential, 19 August 1968, NA.

108 Seizing Denmark in a war with NATO was an important part of the Soviet plan to break through NATO's defences in northern Germany, as part of a dash to the North Sea. C. N. Donnelly and Phillip A. Petersen, "Soviet strategists target Denmark", *International Defense Review*, August 1986, pp.1047-1051; and *Warsaw Pact: Planning for Operations against Denmark*, SOV 89-10030CX, Top Secret, April 1989, CIA EL, declassified and released to the public on 12 July 2012.

109 MC 66/1-REV1, *Rules for Interrogation, Intervention and Engagement for Air Defence Forces of Allied Command Europe in Peacetime*, NATO Secret, 15 August 1960, NA.

110 MCM-135-64, *Informal Discussions at End of October Tour of Central European Region*, NATO Secret, 1 October 1964, NA.

111 MCM-94-65, *Major NATO Commanders' Appraisals of Their Current Conventional Capabilities*, NATO Secret, 23 June 1965, NA, 1.

contingency plans for circumstances other than general war,<sup>112</sup> and, that same year, Permanent Representatives commissioned two contingency studies focused on defending Northern Norway and Hellenic Thrace.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, when the Kennedy Administration made adoption of a “Flexible Response” posture a priority, the shift gained political momentum, but the process had been underway for several years and would extend for several more until 1967, despite growing French resistance to any move that could indicate a lesser NATO reliance for deterrence on the threat of immediate nuclear response.<sup>114</sup> French reservations on a reorientation towards greater reliance on conventional defence came to the fore on the occasion of the completion by the Military Committee of an estimate of NATO force requirements up to 1970, as well as the submission by the Military Committee of a report on the conduct of the command post exercise FALLEX 64.<sup>115</sup>

In its first communication to NATO, the Kennedy Administration had made reference to the quest for “flexibility in responses”.<sup>116</sup> The 1957 Strategic Concept’s emphasis on deterrence of general war and large-scale nuclear employment seemed unsuited to the ambiguous circumstances of a developing crisis<sup>117</sup> that might not involve large-scale aggression, but that could escalate unintentionally to general war, such as over Berlin.<sup>118</sup> In his statement at the December 1962 ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara remarked, in reference to the Cuban missile crisis two months earlier, that “non-nuclear forces were our sword, our nuclear forces were our shield”, reversing the

112 MCM-165-65, *Contingency Plans, Excluding General War*, *op. cit.*, p.2.

113 MCM-146-65, *Contingency Study, Northern Norway*, NATO Secret, 21 October 1965, NA; and MCM-67-66, *Contingency Study for Hellenic Thrace*, 3 June 1966, NA.

114 F. Bozo, *Two strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance*, Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

115 MC 100/1 (Draft), *op. cit.*; MCM-160-63, *Statements made by the French and Turkish Chiefs of Staff at the 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Military Committee in Chiefs of Staff Session*, Paris, 13 December 1963, NATO Secret, 16 December 1963, NA, pp.2-4; and MCM-140-65, *Report on FALLEX-64*, NATO Secret, 15 October 1965, NA, p.6.

116 SGM-259-61, Enclosure 3 covering USM-128-61, *US Presentation on NATO Strategy and Defense Planning*, NATO Secret, 28 April 1961, NA, p.3.

117 The Kennedy Administration’s push in favour of a Flexible Response posture, to reduce NATO’s reliance on the first nuclear weapons to deter and defend against Soviet limited, non-nuclear attacks, reflected scepticism that any nuclear use could be kept limited. RDC-63-497, “Remarks by Secretary of Defense McNamara at the Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council”, Cosmic Top Secret, 17 December 1963, NA; and F. J. Gavin, “The myth of flexible response: the United States strategy in Europe in the 1960s”, *The International History Review*, Vol.23, No.4, 2001, pp.247-275.

118 “Address by Secretary of Defense McNamara at the Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council”, Athens, 5 May 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963*, Vol.VIII, US Department of State.

terms of Norstad's formulation to describe the MC 14/2 Strategic Concept.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, Norstad's MRBM plan unnerved the Administration by appearing to promote the proliferation of nuclear weapon states, even if within NATO and under strict custodial arrangements. However, the United States was careful to accommodate West Germany's concern that conventional improvements not be seen as a weakening of NATO's nuclear deterrence posture and the Bundeswehr received nuclear-capable, longer range Sergeant and Pershing 1 surface-to-surface missiles also operated by the US Army.

Over the next several years, the United States pursued a strengthening of NATO's conventional defence posture, a major revision of NATO's extended deterrence arrangements, and an enhancement of the institutional structure supporting both. Drawing upon the lessons of the Berlin crisis, in 1962 the United States prepositioned equipment sets for two divisions stationed in peacetime in the United States at specially configured storage sites in West Germany designated "Prepositioning Overseas of Materiel Configured in Unit Sets (POMCUS)". This opened the way to an extensive equipment prepositioning programme in Europe (tanks; armoured personnel carriers; self-propelled howitzers). In autumn 1963, the capacity to airlift rapidly the personnel of one of the two divisions from the United States to Europe was tested during exercise Big Lift.<sup>120</sup> At home, McNamara chided the intelligence community for painting an exalted picture of Soviet ground force capabilities and called for a more sober assessment, lest overstatements of Soviet strength cause "our NATO Allies and many Americans to despair of the possibility of achieving adequate non-nuclear forces".<sup>121</sup> However, starting in the mid-1960s, the United States' expanding military engagement in Southeast Asia competed increasingly with its ambition to reduce NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons; between 1963 and 1969, US troops stationed in Europe declined from over 400,000 to 300,000, although still a remarkably large footprint.

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119 "Address by Secretary of Defense McNamara at the Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council", Paris, 14 December 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963*, Vol. VIII, US Department of State.

120 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "'Big Lift': premier grand pont transatlantique de la guerre froide", *Air Fan*, No.419, October 2013, pp.40-47.

121 Memorandum from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to Director of Central Intelligence John McCone, Secret, 13 February 1963; and *A Study of the Soviet Ground Forces*, classified Top Secret, 21 August 1963, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Electronic Library (EL), both declassified and released to the public on 18 July 2012.

### *Revising extended deterrence arrangements*

In the nuclear field, the Kennedy Administration proposed a model of extended deterrence that differed from the one that had been pursued by the Eisenhower Administration. It proposed that:

- three among the new fleet of US Navy Polaris ballistic missile submarines be assigned to SACEUR and operate permanently in the Mediterranean Sea (with 48 Polaris missiles<sup>122</sup> replacing the 45 Jupiter missiles in Italy and Turkey);<sup>123</sup> and
- the United Kingdom similarly assign its “V” strategic bombers to SACEUR on an interim basis, until such time when the Royal Navy’s own fleet of submarines carrying Polaris missiles, acquired under the terms of the 1962 UK-US Nassau agreement, would become operational in 1969.<sup>124</sup>

The UK and US declarations of assignment of their strategic nuclear forces to SACEUR were synchronized to reflect unity of purpose. In addition, USCINCEUR’s airborne command post, designated Silk Purse, would be made available to NATO as a survivable, alternate command post for SACEUR.<sup>125</sup>

This alternative construct did not replace external support entirely,<sup>126</sup> but it assigned US and UK strategic nuclear forces formally to SACEUR for the first time, as a tangible expression of the strength of the American and British extended deterrence commitments to the Alliance (accordingly, this scheme was labelled

122 Over time, the fleet of US Navy SSBNs and associated missiles assigned to SACEUR was expanded in size, in connection with the replacement of the Polaris missile with the Poseidon missile. The assignment to SACEUR was changed from a specific number of submarines (three) and missiles (48) to a specific number of warheads (150 in 1971 and 400 in 1976). National Security Decision Memorandum 132, *Modification of SSBN Commitments to NATO*, Top Secret, 13 September 1971, declassified and released to the public on 13 February 2007, and National Security Decision Memorandum 328, *Modification of SSBN Commitments to NATO*, classified Top Secret, 4 May 1976, declassified and released to the public on 23 March 2012.

123 MCM-30-63(Revised), *Proposed Changes in US Force Contributions to NATO*, NATO Secret, 27 February 1963, NA. The Polaris submarines started their NATO patrols in spring 1963.

124 The “V” Force was declared to NATO in May 1963. It included at that time the Victor and Vulcan strategic bombers. In 1965, the older Valiant strategic bombers that had been assigned to SACEUR in a tactical nuclear role, in replacement of the earlier Canberra tactical bombers, were withdrawn from service. MC 5/20, *The Military Activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization during 1965*, NATO Secret, 17 March 1966, NA, p.18.

125 MCM-56-62, *Airborne Operations Center*, NATO Secret, 17 April 1962, NA.

126 In addition to the dedicated UK and US strategic nuclear forces assigned to SACEUR, additional US strategic forces were earmarked for external support of NATO. MCM-68-65, *Ballistic Missiles and V/STOL for NATO*, Cosmic Top Secret, 22 April 1965, NA.

“Inter-Allied Nuclear Force”).<sup>127</sup> In exchange for these commitments, the Kennedy Administration softened and, eventually, withheld its support for multilateral schemes, such as a Multilateral Force, through which European Allies would procure land-based, submarine-launched, or ship-borne MRBMs, either individually or collectively.<sup>128</sup> In the meantime, France pursued the development of its own nuclear capability, leading to the first squadron of Mirage IVA strategic bombers becoming operational in October 1964. The extension of their combat radius was assured through an air-to-air refuelling capacity procured from the United States, in the form of Boeing C-135F tankers. The supply of the tankers to France was an early indication of a reassessment by the United States of its support for the *Force de Frappe* that helped build a longer-term, bilateral strategic relationship between Washington and Paris.<sup>129</sup>

### *Institutionalising collective planning and consultation processes*

Lastly, as part of this major, mid-course reorientation towards a Flexible Response posture, NATO agreed to strengthen markedly conventional force planning procedures and nuclear planning arrangements, by instituting a greater degree of political involvement and oversight. In 1960, Secretary General Dirk Stikker had recommended the adoption of a “Triennial Review” that extended by two years the horizon of the Annual Review process started at the 1952 Lisbon ministerial meeting.<sup>130</sup> In a further step, McNamara proposed that, when overseeing conventional force planning, the Council would meet, henceforth, as the Defence Planning Committee (DPC), supported by a Defence Planning Working Group.<sup>131</sup>

127 MCM-51-63, *Secretary General's Report on NATO Defense Policy*, NATO Secret, 23 April 1963, NA, p.7.

128 The twists of this episode are recounted in W. S. Poole, “A NATO Nuclear Force?”, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, Vol.VIII, 1961-1964, Office of Joint History, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC, 2011, pp.194-202. For an illustration of perceptions among non-nuclear European Allies of the change in the US approach between the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, see L. Nuti, “Extended Deterrence and National Ambitions: Italy's Nuclear Policy, 1955-1962”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.39, No.4, 2016, pp.559-579.

129 J. Lewis and B. Tertrais, *US-French nuclear cooperation: its past, present and future*, No.4/2015, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris, October 2015.

130 C-M(60)20, *Report of the Steering Group on the Reform of the Annual Review*, NATO Secret, 8 March 1960, NA; and MCM-19-62, *Procedure for Conduct of the Triennial Review by the NATO Military Authorities*, NATO Secret, 16 February 1962, NA.

131 MC 5/18, *The Military Activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1963*, NATO Secret, 13 December 1963, NA, p.12.

The first DPC session took place in autumn 1963.<sup>132</sup> Allies also agreed another proposal by the United States to complement the Triennial Review process with a new “Force Plan” that extended defence planning five years into the future, in order to foster a greater sense of purpose among the Allies in raising force levels and developing capabilities collectively.<sup>133</sup>

In the nuclear field, at the 1962 and 1963 Ministerial meetings in Athens and Ottawa, NATO agreed proposals by the United States to institutionalise collective political consultations<sup>134</sup> and widen participation of European Allies in nuclear planning.<sup>135</sup> The measures approved included appointing a European general officer from a nation other than the United Kingdom to the new position of Deputy to SACEUR for Nuclear Affairs and establishing a SHAPE liaison mission to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff at SAC headquarters, to effect target coordination and de-confliction.<sup>136</sup> These steps opened the way to the creation of two new bodies at ambassadorial and ministerial levels – the Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group<sup>137</sup> – to formulate nuclear policy and consultation procedures and provide political guidance to the Major NATO Commanders, thereby meeting an earlier request by the Military Committee.<sup>138</sup> The NDAC first met in Paris in November 1965.

France’s withdrawal from the Alliance’s Integrated Military Structure in 1966 allowed the 14 other Allies to agree formally a Flexible Response strategy. The

132 From 1963 through 1966, the DPC was an ambassadorial level body only. Thereafter, and following France’s withdrawal from the Integrated Military Structure, DPC meetings also brought together Defence Ministers, without their French colleague, and the agenda of DPC meetings was expanded beyond defence planning to address the Alliance’s military business as a whole, with the exception of nuclear matters, which were the preserve of the Nuclear Planning Group. A Defence Review Committee was stood up under this new model DPC, replacing both the Annual Review Committee of 1952 and the Defence Planning Working Group of 1963.

133 C-M(65)138 and 153 and MC-166-65, *Yearly Assessment by Major NATO Commanders of Forces Made Available to Them*, NATO Confidential, 19 November 1965, NA, p.2.

134 Procedures for political consultation in regard of the recourse to nuclear weapons were referred to informally as the “Athens Guidelines”. C-M(62)66, *NATO Defense Policy*, NATO Secret, 30 May 1962, NA.

135 MCM-160-65 *Machinery for Release of Nuclear Weapons*, NATO Secret, 12 November 1965, NA.

136 MC 5/18, *op. cit.*, p.16. The Deputy position’s first incumbent was Lieutenant General Florent Van Rollegem of the Belgian Air Force.

137 Initially, the NPG included permanent and non-permanent members among the Allies, which contradicted the aim of expanding participation in, and ownership of, nuclear-sharing arrangements. Once the NPG’s membership was widened to all Allies (with the exception of France), the NDAC went into abeyance.

138 MC 95, *Military Aspects of the Control of Nuclear Weapons in NATO*, Cosmic Top Secret, 17 November 1961, NA.

essential steps for its implementation – the adoption of a full forward defence deployment in Central Europe that closed the gaps in the face of a major Warsaw Pact attack, as well as more limited Soviet incursions, and an extended deterrence posture that enabled a better tailored and more discriminate use of nuclear weapons under collective political guidance – had already been taken in 1963. The relocation of US and Canadian forces and NATO facilities from France had diverse consequences: operationally, it deprived the United States of the logistical line of communication from the Atlantic coast to West Germany across French territory; institutionally, it led to a geographical scattering away of headquarters that had been clustered, within driving distance from one another, around Paris – NATO Headquarters and SHAPE to Belgium, AFCENT to The Netherlands and USEUCOM to Germany.<sup>139</sup> These drawbacks were compensated by the move of AFCENT much closer to its two main subordinated headquarters in West Germany, CENTAG in Mannheim and NORTHAG at Rheindahlen, near Mönchengladbach, and the co-location of the NAC and the Military Committee in the same building in Brussels, which facilitated daily interaction between them and their respective staffs.<sup>140</sup> The Military Committee's relocation from Washington also made the Chairman of the Military Committee, rather than SACEUR, the NAC's senior military adviser, although SACEUR's direct engagement with both the NAC and the MC was eased by the dissolution of the Standing Group in Washington as an intermediate body.<sup>141</sup>

As part of NATO's institutional development in the 1960s, NATO's Integrated Communications System Management Agency in Brussels and its Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Development in Paris, as well as SHAPE's Technical Centre in The Hague and SACLANT's Antisubmarine Warfare Research Centre in La Spezia, Italy, assumed critically important roles. Drawing on the model of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Office of Naval Research in the United States, their activities helped foster the sharing and spreading

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139 In addition, the NATO Supply Centre, renamed NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency, relocated from Chateauroux to Luxembourg and the NATO Defense College from Paris to Rome.

140 The Standing Group's supporting staff in Washington, DC – the International Planning Staff, headed since 1964 by a 2-star general officer – was replaced in Brussels by a larger International Military Staff supporting the Military Committee and headed by a 3-star general officer.

141 Between 1951 and 1967, when NATO Headquarters were located in Paris and SHAPE was nearby at Rocquencourt, SACEUR interacted frequently in person with the Secretary General and Permanent Representatives, but his written advice to the NAC had to be submitted to, and approved by, both the Standing Group and the Military Committee, an ocean away, in Washington, DC, first.



of technological knowledge and technical skills in such fields as telecommunications, aircraft design, early warning radar technology and underwater sensors. In the early 1970s, with the advent of new technologies, the NATO Integrated Communications System became the essential technical enabler for consultation and command and control, by linking NATO Headquarters, the various military commands at each level, and Allied capitals, as part of an Alliance-wide web. NATO strategy-making during the Cold War also had these important technical and technological dimensions that endure today.

In the meantime, France's withdrawal from military integration in 1966 and the removal of a large part of the United Kingdom's permanent military presence from the Mediterranean basin in 1967, including the dissolution of the British-led AFMED command in Malta, resulted, *inter alia*, in Germany and Italy assuming larger command roles in NATO's Central and Southern regions, respectively.<sup>142</sup> Henceforth, Britain would concentrate its military contributions to NATO on a large northwest Europe area, extending from the North Cape down to Iceland and from there to the British Isles and the Inner-German border near Kassel. This expanded British role in northwest Europe was underpinned by British general and flag officers holding the positions of CINCHAN and CINCEASTLANT at Northwood, UK; CINCNORTH at Kolsaas, Norway; COMNORTHAG at Rheindahlen; and, starting in 1975, CINCUKAIR at High Wycombe, UK. It was also supported by the strengthening of the Royal Navy's 3<sup>rd</sup> Commando Brigade, in the form of the UK-Netherlands Amphibious Force, as a North Flank reinforcement formation, and the reorientation of the UK Mobile Force's reinforcing role from northeast Italy to Denmark. In effect, the United Kingdom, the FRG and the United States assumed lead nation roles for NATO's Northern, Central and Southern Regions, respectively, playing a helpful lead role in federating the contributions of the other Allies.

The realignment of command responsibilities reflected a wider redistribution of roles and missions that had been reshaping the Alliance since the mid-1960s and that would extend until the end of the Cold War:

142 The position of CINCENT went to Germany and, in 1967, the headquarters moved from Fontainebleau to Brunssum in The Netherlands. From 1977 onwards, SACEUR also had two deputies, one each from Britain and Germany. The British position of CINAFMED in Malta was dissolved in 1967 and a new maritime commander for the Mediterranean Sea, COMNAVSOUTH, was appointed under CINCSOUTH in Naples, and held by Italy. MCM-170-64, *Command Structure in the Mediterranean*, 30 December 1964, NA.

- the growing role of Germany in influencing implementation of the Forward Defence concept, once it assumed the CINCENT position from France;<sup>143</sup>
- the absorption by CINCSOUTH in Naples of the naval responsibilities formerly exercised by CINCAFMED in Malta, thereby achieving, for the first time, unity of command for the entire Mediterranean Sea basin;
- a consolidation of reinforcement planning for Denmark and Norway;
- a strengthened contribution by maritime forces to defences on land; and
- an expanded conventional contribution to the common defence by France, as a non-integrated Ally.<sup>144</sup>

The assumption of a regional lead role by the larger Allies gradually allowed SACEUR to take a broader approach to deterrence and defence across Western Europe and to leverage more effectively the contributions of SACLANT and CINCHAN to forward defence and external reinforcement. For instance, CINCHAN revised nearly completely his concept of operations to reflect a much heavier emphasis on escorting rapid reinforcement across the English Channel and the southern North Sea early in an emerging crisis, relative to protecting shipping for purposes of resupply in a conflict.<sup>145</sup> The outcome of this process became clearly apparent a decade later, under the tenure of General Alexander M. Haig Jr.

### *False start: NATO's lost decade (1965-1975)*

The adoption of a new Strategic Concept, MC 14/3, in 1967 set in motion over the next decade several measures to reduce reliance on an early first use of nuclear weapons, because of excessive conventional weakness, in accordance with the Flexible Response strategy. That same year, SACEUR and SACLANT made proposals to strengthen planning for the external reinforcement of the flanks<sup>146</sup>;

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143 RDC(66)215, *Succession of CINCENT*, NATO Confidential, 24 June 1966, NA.

144 D. S. Yost, *France and conventional defense in Central Europe*, Westview Special Studies in Military Affairs, 1985; and D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "Between the Rhine and the Elbe: France and the conventional defense of Central Europe", *Comparative Strategy*, Vol.6, Iss.4, 1987, pp.471-512.

145 MCM-88-68, *A Study of the Consequences of the New Strategic Concept (MC 14/3) in the ACCHAN Area*, NATO Secret, 31 October 1968, NA.

146 MCM-23-68, *Concept for External Reinforcement of the Flanks*, NATO Secret, 16 April 1968, NA; and MCM-02-69, *Progress Report on Contingency Planning for the External Reinforcement of the Flanks*, NATO Secret, 7 January 1969, NA.

establish in peacetime a Standing Naval Force, Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) that would perform a permanent deterrent role<sup>147</sup>; and create a Maritime Contingency Force, Atlantic (MARCONFORLANT) as a scalable reinforcement force that could be activated in times of crisis.<sup>148</sup> The adoption of the Flexible Response strategy also triggered a major strengthening of NATO's crisis management arrangements, to ensure that the strategy could be implemented in support of effective deterrence and conflict prevention. Over the next few years, Allies agreed to:

- replace the former series of FALLEX command post exercises held in the autumn, every two years, between 1960 and 1968, with the new WINTEX series, held in the winter every two years, starting in 1971. WINTEX exercises had a stronger focus on defending with conventional forces and on rehearsing rapid reinforcement;<sup>149</sup>
- initiate a new series of “High-Level Exercises” (HILEX) to rehearse the political consultation process in the simulated conditions of a deteriorating East-West crisis situation.<sup>150</sup> Whereas the FALLEX and WINTEX exercise series focused on decision-making after an armed attack had occurred, HILEX exercises were aimed at the period of rising tension upstream from potential aggression;<sup>151</sup>

147 MCM-45-67, *Standing Naval Force Atlantic*, NATO Secret, 6 December 1967, NA; A non-standing Naval-On Call Force, Mediterranean (NAVOCFORMED) placed under the authority of SACEUR and patterned after SACLANT's STANAVFORLANT, was agreed upon in 1969. MC 202 (Draft), *Concept for the Naval On-Call Force Mediterranean*, NATO Secret, 22 October 1971, NA. To emphasize NAVOCFORMED's deterrent purpose, periodic activations of this multinational naval force were labelled *Deterrent Force*. A Standing Naval Force, Channel (STANAVFORCHAN) was proposed and stood up by CINCHAN in 1973, specialised in maritime mine warfare, with the same visible presence and deterrent purpose as STANAVFORLANT and NAVOCFORMED. MC 222 (Military Decision), *Concept for the Standing Naval Force Channel*, NATO Secret, 19 April 1973, NA.

148 MCM-76-68, *Maritime Contingency Forces Atlantic*, NATO Secret, 24 September 1968, NA. A main aim of MARCONFORLANT was to offer a ready-to-use framework for the assembly of a large amphibious force contributed principally by The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. It prompted The Netherlands and the United Kingdom in 1972 to combine their respective Royal Marines into a UK-NL Amphibious Force.

149 J. Sheahan, “NATO Command Post Exercises in the 1970s and 1980s”, in B. Heuser, T. Heier and G. Lasconarias (eds.), *Military exercises, political messaging and strategic impact*, NDC, Rome, 2018, p.96.

150 DPC/D(68)5, *Proposed High Level Exercises: HILEX-1*, NATO Confidential, 2 February 1968, NA.

151 The first four HILEX exercises were held during the period 1968-1970 as proof-of-concept rehearsals. The last of the FALLEX exercises took place in 1968 and the first of the new WINTEX exercises in 1971. Thereafter, WINTEX and HILEX exercises were held in alternate years until the end of the Cold War, with WINTEX 89 being the last of them. DPC/D(69)57, *Preliminary Proposals for the Conduct of exercise HILEX-4*, NATO Confidential, 20 November 1969, NA, p.2.

- consider instituting, in times of crisis, a state of heightened awareness and alertness, to complement the condition of “Military Vigilance” that the three Major NATO Commanders were empowered to declare in times of tension;<sup>152</sup>
- establish a NATO-Wide Communications System (NWCS)<sup>153</sup> dedicated to political consultation and linking Allied capitals with the new NATO Headquarters and the headquarters of the three Major NATO Commanders, taking into account the lessons learned from NATO’s mixed performance in anticipating and tracking the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in summer 1968. Lastly, in 1971, EDPs were revised to emphasize conventional operations and relabelled General Defence Plans.<sup>154</sup>

The emphasis on strengthened conventional capability also found expression in the nuclear field. In 1969, the NPG agreed “*Provisional Political Guidelines for the Initial Defensive Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons by NATO*”, which set nuclear first use strictly in the context of restoring deterrence. The essence of the Guidelines was captured in the FRG’s *1975-1976 White Paper on Security*, which set out that “the initial tactical use of nuclear weapons must be timed as late as possible but as early as necessary... The initial use of nuclear weapons is not intended so much to bring about a military decision as to achieve political effect”.<sup>155</sup>

The 1969 *Provisional Guidelines* reflected the Allies’ resolve not to allow Soviet conventional preponderance decide the outcome of a conflict by depriving NATO of the capacity to retake the strategic initiative. Discriminate nuclear use, rather than responding to military necessity, would reflect deliberate political intent. It would aim to deliver an unmistakable political *coup d’arrêt*. Compared with the strategic thinking of a decade and a half earlier, NATO’s nuclear policy of the late 1960s and early 1970s represented a major advance in reconciling the dual requirements to avoid making early NATO nuclear use the consequence of excessive conventional weakness and avoid removing from the Soviet risk calculus the prospect of NATO deliberate escalation. As noted earlier, Soviet deployment of the intermediate range

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152 DPC/D(68)8, *Conduct of and Lessons Learnt from Exercise HILEX-1*, NATO Secret, 5 April 1968, NA, p.4.

153 DPC/D(67)6, *NATO-Wide Communications System for Use in Times of Tension and Crisis*, NATO Secret, 1 March 1967, NA.

154 Hammerich, “Suddeutschland als Eckpfeiler der Verteidigung Europas”, *op. cit.*, p.34.

155 *White Paper 1975/1976: the Security of the Federal Republic of Germany and the development of the Federal Armed Forces*, 20 January 1976, *op. cit.*, p.20.

SS-20 and short-range SS-21 ballistic missiles in the late 1970s and early 1980s, respectively, sought to undermine NATO's confidence in the viability of this deterrent approach.

### *Reversal of fortune*

Efforts to strengthen NATO's conventional planning and responsiveness could not compensate, however, for enduring capability shortfalls. In 1966-1967, in connection with the growing demands of the US military engagement in Southeast Asia, the withdrawal of US forces from France and an increasingly adverse balance of payments, the United States removed from Europe the equivalent of a division and some ten fighter, reconnaissance, electronic warfare and tactical transport squadrons. However the equipment for the division and for six fighter and reconnaissance squadrons was prepositioned in Europe to enable their rapid return, which was exercised from 1969 onwards annually.<sup>156</sup> These US Army withdrawals, however, when combined with the withdrawal of a British brigade and the removal of French forces stationed in West Germany from SACEUR's authority<sup>157</sup> resulted in the loss, among "in-place" forces, of approximately ten brigade equivalents. An already unfavourable balance of forces with the Warsaw Pact worsened further, as the USSR stationed five divisions in Czechoslovakia in the wake of the August 1968 invasion. These five divisions were in addition to the 20 divisions stationed in the German Democratic Republic, the four divisions in Hungary and the two divisions in Poland. In 1969, the Soviet Union completed the design of its "theatre strategic operation" to invade Western Europe and conducted exercise Zapad 69, seemingly the first in a series of Soviet and Russian large-scale exercises that has continued to this day.<sup>158</sup> Approval of the Warsaw Pact's "peacetime statutes", as well as Zapad and exercise Comrades-in-Arms 70 in East Germany, sought to correct some of the

156 Starting in 1969, the United States returned these "dual-based" land and air forces annually to Europe during the US Army's REFORGER (REturn of FORces to GERmany) and US Air Force's Crested Cap strategic mobility exercises. From 1975 onwards, they were embedded in SACEUR's new Autumn Forge exercise series. IMSWM-35-75, REFORGER 75, NATO Secret, 14 February 1975, NA; and IMSM-458-75, CRESTED CAP 75, NATO Confidential, 28 August 1975, NA.

157 The "Ailleret-Lemnitzer" agreement of August 1967 set out the conditions under which SACEUR could exercise operational control over French forces in wartime, subject to an independent French decision to participate in combined Allied operations against invading Warsaw Pact forces.

158 Ruiz Palmer, *High commands and large scale exercises in Soviet and Russian military practice: insights and implications*, *op. cit.*, p.8.

glaring deficiencies exposed during the Pact's operation to occupy Czechoslovakia.

The air balance was also affected negatively by the loss of French squadrons, the US Air Force withdrawals and a major reduction in 1969 of Canada's air presence in Europe<sup>159</sup>, some 30 fighter, fighter-bomber, tactical reconnaissance and electronic warfare squadrons in total. Furthermore, NATO's air posture was affected adversely by the Soviet Air Force's increased offensive air capability, including the Soviet air force presence newly established in Czechoslovakia following the 1968 invasion. Growing concern over NATO air base vulnerability accelerated the building of hardened aircraft shelters under the Cloud Cover construction programme.<sup>160</sup> At sea, the reduction in size of European naval forces, the concentration of US Navy assets in the Pacific Ocean to provide offshore support to operations in Vietnam and the large Soviet maritime exercise Okean in 1970, called into question NATO's ability in wartime to keep control of the North Atlantic Ocean, north of the so-called Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) gap, and reinforce Norway.<sup>161</sup>

Concerns over reinforcement were compounded by limitations on the AMF's effectiveness and responsiveness uncovered during exercises, such as FALLEX 68. Attention focused on the desirability of:

- avoiding assigning to the AMF units that already had other NATO roles;
- strengthening the AMF's organic command and control capacity, to enable simultaneous deployment of AMF contingents to the Northern and Southern Flanks, if necessary; and
- securing common funding to cover airlift costs.<sup>162</sup>

These adverse developments suggested an Alliance under strain and unable to deliver on its commitment to enhance conventional defences,<sup>163</sup> and prompted

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159 MCM-107-69, *Canadian Force Reductions*, NATO Secret, 7 September 1969, NA.

160 Jordan, *Generals in international politics*, *op. cit.*, pp.130-133.

161 For instance, reporting on NATO maritime exercises conducted in 1973 indicated that it was intended that future ACLANT (Allied Command Atlantic) exercises concentrate more on improving ACLANT's ability to gain control of the seas rather than exercising operations which might be conducted once control of the sea has been gained. MC 43/29, *A Report by the Military Committee to the Defence Planning Committee on NATO Military Exercises 1972*, NATO Secret, 20 September 1974, NA, p.5.

162 DPC/D(69)16, *Exercise HILEX-3*, NATO Secret, 20 May 1969, NA, p.5

163 W. S. Poole, "NATO's flexible response: reality or mirage", *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, Vol. IX: 1965-196, Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Top Secret, declassified and released to the public, 2012, pp.111-128.

various initiatives: by NATO Defence Ministers to measure the operational impact of withdrawals and reductions on the balance of forces with the Warsaw Pact;<sup>164</sup> by Defence Ministers of the Alliance's European members (with the exception of France), meeting at the initiative of the United Kingdom in the informal setting of a "Eurogroup" with the aim of agreeing a common "European Defence Improvement Programme" (EDIP) in support of NATO's own Alliance Defence for the 1970s (AD 70) conventional defence improvement programme approved in December 1970<sup>165</sup>; by Secretary General Manlio Brosio to address the worsening maritime situation;<sup>166</sup> and by the new SACEUR, General Andrew Goodpaster, to correct the mal-deployment of many NATO ground forces in Central Europe.<sup>167</sup> In his 1972 Combat Effectiveness Report, Goodpaster warned that the growing imbalance of forces with the Warsaw Pact "must result in further lowering of the nuclear threshold and leave in serious question the capability of Allied Command Europe (ACE) forces to defend successfully against major aggression".<sup>168</sup>

During this period, strategy-making was at risk of fraying. Despite the positive impact of *détente* on transatlantic relations, in the wake of the May 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) Treaty and the June 1973 agreement on the prevention of nuclear war, other developments, beyond NATO's geographic and institutional perimeter, exerted a contrarian influence. These included the international financial fallout of the suspension in August 1971 of the convertibility of the US dollar into gold and the reverberations of growing strife in the Middle East, notably during the Black September episode in Jordan between September 1970 and July 1971.<sup>169</sup>

164 DPC/D(68)24, *Outline and Scope of a Possible Method of Approach for the Study on Relative Force Capabilities of NATO and the Warsaw Pact*, NATO Confidential, 12 July 1968, NA.

165 Jordan, *Generals in international politics*, *op. cit.*, pp.130-133.

166 Brosio Study, *Relative maritime strategies and capabilities of NATO and the Soviet bloc*, March 1969, cited in J. J. Sokolsky, "The SACLAN'T years", *The Fraternity of the Blue Uniform*, Newport, Rhode Island, Naval War College press, 1991, p.32.

167 AC/281-REPORT(71)35, *Maldeployment in the Central Region*, NATO Secret, 14 October 1971, NA.

168 PO/73/119, *SACEUR's Combat Effectiveness Report 1972*, NATO Secret, 17 August 1973, NA.

169 L. E. Lehrman, "The Nixon shock heard round the world", *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2011; and B. Vanetik and Z. Shalom, *The Nixon administration and the Middle East peace process, 1969-1973: from the Rogers plan to the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war*, Sussex Academic Press, 2013.

### *Setting the stage for NATO's revival*

Despite the worsening trends with the Warsaw Pact, as well as enduring balance of payment challenges and the adverse impact on the military's operating costs of the oil embargo that followed the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, NATO endeavoured to make the best out of the 1967 guidance to enhance conventional defences. Building on the earlier initiatives to strengthen reinforcement of the flanks, prospects brightened, as demonstrated by exercise Strong Express 72 in Norway<sup>170</sup> – one of the largest NATO exercises ever<sup>171</sup> – and by exercise Deep Furrow 73 in Hellenic and Turkish Thrace.<sup>172</sup> Strong Express was a follow-on exercise to maritime exercises Teamwork in 1964 and Silver Tower in 1968.<sup>173</sup> The information policy supporting Strong Express specifically pointed to the exercise's contribution to maintaining a military balance with the Warsaw Pact by demonstrating a strong defence, as part of the Alliance's dual approach of *détente* and defence rooted in the 1967 Harmel Report.<sup>174</sup> Despite the Force's recorded limitations, it was not unreasonable to note, on the occasion of Strong Express, that, after a decade of regular deployment exercises to NATO's Northern and Southern flanks, "the AMF is now a well-respected deterrent organisation, but its credibility depends largely on its speed of response".<sup>175</sup> In the Central Region, the Royal Netherlands Army undertook in 1973 its first ever corps-level field training exercise (FTX), Big Ferro, to rehearse its capacity, in times of tension, to move rapidly the bulk of its forces forward into the FRG, over a distance of 350km, and join West German forces.<sup>176</sup>

170 "Exercise Strong Express in Retrospect", *International Defense Review*, 6/1972, pp.661-664. Despite the unprecedented ambition projected into exercise *Strong Express* – 64,000 personnel, 700 aircraft and 300 ships – Allied commanders indicated that the "size and composition of NATO forces were certainly inadequate to oppose the type of threat expected during a similar actual conflict with the Warsaw Pact". MC 43/28, *A Report by the Military Committee to the Defence Planning Committee on NATO Military Exercises 1972*, NATO Secret, 3 December 1973, NA, p.5.

171 *Strong Express* complied with the guidance of 1968, building on the lessons of FALLEX 64 and *Teamwork* 64 and following adoption of MC 14/3 the year before, that in 1972 NATO should conduct "a NATO-wide naval LIVEX". Annex A, MC 94/1 (Revised), *NATO Exercise Policy*, NATO Confidential, 1 March 1968, NA.

172 IMSM-369-73, *Exercise Deep Furrow 73*, NATO Confidential, 28 August 1973, NA.

173 In accordance with the agreed policy to schedule a major maritime exercise every four years, *Strong Express* was followed by *Teamwork* exercises in 1976, 1980, 1984 and 1988. MC 94/2 (Military Decision), *NATO Exercises*, NATO Confidential, 23 February 1970, NA, p.12.

174 PO(72)358, *Information Policy on Exercise Strong Express*, NATO Confidential, 7 July 1972, NA, p.1.

175 "Exercise Strong Express in Retrospect", *International Defense Review*, May-June 1972.

176 "Big Ferro", HQ 1 (NL) Legerkorps, 10-21 September 1973; and Sergio Mecchia, "Big Ferro: una prova di efficienza", *Eserciti e Armì*, No.15, April 1974, pp.39-45.



And, in 1974, the Bundeswehr instituted the practice of conducting a corps-level FTX every autumn, starting with exercise Schneller Wechsel that year.<sup>177</sup> The US Army had started conducting corps-level exercises in 1969 (exercise Carbide Ice) on the occasion of the annual REFORGER transatlantic reinforcement exercise; they grew in scale and complexity from 1974 onwards (exercise Certain Pledge).<sup>178</sup> Lastly, in autumn 1973, the Defence Planning Committee approved an important proposal by SHAPE to build Forward Storage Sites to preposition ammunition at Forward Defence positions across Western Europe, in order to ease and expedite the movement of Allied forces from their peacetime garrisons in a crisis, and to common fund their construction. A decade after the move of NATO's Forward Defence line to West Germany's eastern borders, this decision was an important enabler in helping ensure that Allied forces could fight "the first battle", stand their ground, and prevail.<sup>179</sup>

General Goodpaster sought to capitalise on this momentum by proposing in autumn 1973 to undertake a study to enhance the flexibility of Allied forces, the first instalment of which was submitted to NATO Headquarters a year later.<sup>180</sup> Despite these encouraging steps, however, by 1975 the Alliance had been only moderately successful in delivering on Flexible Response's premise of conventional strength.

### ***NATO's strategic and operational renaissance (1975-1987)***

In the mid-1970s, NATO entered strategically a period of maximum danger. In the United States, there was a growing apprehension that the Soviet Union did not adhere to the concept of "assured destruction" underpinning mutual deterrence and was pursuing actively a "damage limitation" capacity to prevail in a nuclear

177 The US Army started conducting corps-level field training exercises in West Germany annually in 1969, on the occasion of the first REFORGER exercise. See "Reforger I", *Time*, 17 January 1969. They grew in scale steadily after 1974 (exercise Certain Pledge). Following Big Ferro and Schneller Wechsel, the conduct of large, corps-level exercises in West Germany on a regular basis, involving on average some 40-60,000 troops, became generalized. In 1976 and 1977, the British and Belgian armies executed their first, corps-level exercises – Spearpoint and Blue Fox – respectively.

178 General E. Ferber, "CINCENT Views REFORGER", *NATO's Fifteen Nations*, February-March 1975, pp.58-64.

179 MC 32/55 (Draft), *Common Funding of Forward Storage Sites under the NATO Common Infrastructure Programme*, NATO Confidential, 12 April 1973, NA; and DPC/D(73)28, *Common Funding of Forward Storage Sites under the NATO Common Infrastructure Programme*, NATO Confidential, 22 October 1973, NA.

180 MCM-71-74, *Flexibility Study*, NATO Confidential, 1 October 1974, NA; and MCM-79-74, *Flexibility Study*, NATO Confidential, 12 November 1974, NA.

war. Such a capacity included, notably, the hardening of Soviet strategic command facilities, coupled with new ballistic missile attack capabilities against exposed US strategic command and control nodes and vulnerable bomber airfields.<sup>181</sup> In Europe, the USSR was on the way to reaching uncontested military preponderance over NATO in conventional and, increasingly, non-strategic nuclear capabilities deployed opposite NATO.<sup>182</sup> Soviet force developments confirmed operational trends that had been underway since the late 1960s:

- an expansion of the focus of combined-arms warfare from the *Front* level to the much wider theatre of military operations (TVD);
- the standing up of high commands for the Western and Southwestern TVDs (opposite Denmark and West Germany; and Greece and Turkey, respectively);
- the activation of two Soviet strategic air armies and two combined Warsaw Pact naval fleets supporting the two TVD high commands;
- the regular conduct of Zapad, Soyuz and other Warsaw Pact exercises in the two TVDs; and
- an increased emphasis on preparations for a short-warning attack, by “front-loading” the theatre strategic operation and the execution of encirclement operations aimed at enveloping and breaking NATO’s forward defences apart and led by fast-paced, purpose-built raiding forces – the “operational manoeuvre group” (OMG).<sup>183</sup>

The new SACEUR, General Alexander Haig, warned in successive Combat Effectiveness Reports of persisting capability shortfalls and growing dangers.<sup>184</sup>

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181 D. E. Hoffman, *The dead hand*, New York, NY, Anchor Books, 2009, pp.150-154; and D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “Military exercises and strategic intent through the prism of NATO’s Autumn Forge exercise series, 1975-1989”, in B. Heuser, T. Heier and G. Lasconjarias (eds.), *Military Exercises: Political Messaging and Strategic Impact*, Rome, NDC, 2018, pp.74-79.

182 For a detailed assessment of this period, see D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “The NATO-Warsaw Pact military competition in the 1970s and 1980s: a revolution in military affairs in the making or the end of a strategic age?”, *Cold War History*, Vol.14, Iss.4, 2014, pp.533-573.

183 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, *Theatre Operations, High Commands and Large Scale Exercises in Soviet and Russian Military Practice: Insights and Implications*, *op. cit.*, pp.10-15.

184 IMSWM-189-77, *SACEUR’s 1976 Combat Effectiveness Report*, NATO Secret, 16 August 1977, NA; IMSWM-45-78, *1977 Supplement to SACEUR’s 1976 Combat Effectiveness Report*, NATO Secret, 20 February 1978, NA.

### *Regaining the initiative*

As awareness of a steady shift in the balance of forces in Europe against NATO spread, the Carter Administration led a post-Vietnam NATO strategic and operational “renaissance”, with strong support from the Congress.<sup>185</sup> Once in place, the momentum of renewal strengthened further during President Ronald Reagan’s two terms, extending into the late 1980s. NATO’s revival combined strategic-level measures by Haig aimed at improving the readiness of Allied forces, enhancing NATO’s reinforcement capability, and rationalizing mutual support arrangements among Allies, under the heading of SACEUR’s “3Rs” (readiness, reinforcement, and rationalisation)<sup>186</sup>; an extraordinary commitment by the United States at the 1978 NATO Summit in Washington, to double, from three to six, the number of US Army reinforcing divisions for the Central Region with their equipment prepositioned in Europe;<sup>187</sup> and an across-the-board enhancement of NATO’s conventional and nuclear posture, in the form of the Long-Term Defence Programme (LTDP). In the early 1980s, growing US defence expenditures and a commitment to introduce rapidly a new generation of weapon systems into the US Army and Air Force, to replace legacy systems dating back to the 1960s, transformed the US military presence in Europe – for example, 600 F-4 Phantom combat aircraft stationed in Europe were replaced by new generation F-15, F-16, F-111 and A-10 fighters, fighter-bombers and close-air-support aircraft.

Haig’s “3Rs” initiative was underpinned by the “Flexibility Study” initiated by Goodpaster two years earlier. By the time the Flexibility Study effort was completed in 1981, 479 recommendations had been submitted and 463 acted

185 Senator Sam Nunn, *Policy, Troops and the NATO Alliance*, Report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 2 April 1974; Nunn and Senator Dewey F. Bartlett, *NATO and the New Soviet Threat*, Report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 24 January 1977. Nunn was a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and he deserves credit for having generated in the Senate, almost single-handedly, considerable support for NATO’s post-Vietnam renaissance. It resulted, among others, in funding in Fiscal Years 1975 and 1976 for the stationing of two additional US Army Brigades in West Germany – designated “Brigade 75” and “Brigade 76” – compensating for the withdrawal of two brigades in 1968.

186 M. Honick, “Haig: the diplomacy of Allied Command”, in R. S. Jordan (ed.), *Generals in international politics, op. cit.*, p.171; and Enclosure to IMSWM,127-77, *Autumn Forge 77 Exercise Series*, NATO Unclassified, 3 June 1977, NA, p.1.

187 *Final Communiqué, North Atlantic Meeting with the Participation of Heads of State and Government*, 30-31 May 1978, para. 23. Eventually, the prepositioning in Europe of the equipment for six US Army divisions translated into the storage of materiel for 16 armoured and mechanised infantry brigades, in effect doubling the US Army strength in West Germany, within ten days of a reinforcement decision, to 32 brigade equivalents. That was a strength comparable to the 32 active *panzer* and *panzergrenadier* brigades of the Bundeswehr.

upon.<sup>188</sup> Headline items, such as rationalisation, were supported by recommended measures in each domain. In the land domain, they translated into new tactics, techniques and procedures aimed at improving “rationalisation, standardisation and interoperability” (RSI) among Allied armies in NATO’s Central Region. The planning of coordinated operations across the boundaries of adjacent Allied army corps that could be threatened, in wartime, by targeted Soviet OMG raids, received special attention. They were rehearsed during two purpose-built field training exercises staged in West Germany, exercises Constant Enforcer in 1979 and Carbine Fortress in 1982.

In the air domain, a strong emphasis was placed on leveraging NATO’s air power lead, through improved forward planning and the generation of larger air packages, labelled “composite air operations” (COMAO), as a substitute for the practice of employing longer range combat aircraft in offensive air support operations in a piecemeal fashion. To facilitate this higher level of multinational force integration, NATO’s air resources were consolidated into two new NATO air commands at Ramstein, Germany (AAFCE), and at High Wycombe, in the United Kingdom (UKAIR) in 1974 and 1975, respectively.<sup>189</sup> A new Tactical Leadership Programme (TLP) was established at Jever airbase in Germany in 1979, to prepare “mission commanders” to plan and lead COMAO operations into the Warsaw Pact’s heavily defended airspace.<sup>190</sup> SHAPE also initiated an ambitious, NATO-wide, combat aircraft cross-servicing programme that involved preparing ground crews belonging to the air force of an Ally to service, in wartime, the fighter and tactical reconnaissance aircraft from another NATO nation, and rehearsing those procedures during dedicated Ample Gain and Ample Train exercises. Lastly, the capacity of NATINADS to detect incoming air raids by low-flying fighter-bombers belonging to the two new Soviet strategic air armies was strengthened by the acquisition by NATO and the United Kingdom of state-of-the-art airborne early warning aircraft (AWACS) in the 1980s.<sup>191</sup> In the maritime domain, scattered naval plans under

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188 MCM-CXG-55-81, *ACE Flexibility Studies (NU)*, NATO Confidential, 3 September 1981, NA, p.1.

189 General J. W. Vogt Jr., “A look at a new command in the Central Region”, *NATO’s Fifteen Nations*, December 1974-January 1975, pp.59-64; and John Marriott, “New NATO Command in the UK”, *NATO’s Fifteen Nations*, April-May 1975, p.18.

190 Four decades later, the TLP continues to train Allied COMAO mission commanders for today’s operational environment at Los Llanos air base, near Albacete, Spain.

191 MCM-77-75, *The Tri-MNC Statement of Operational Requirement and Concept of Operations for the NATO Airborne Early Warning Force*, NATO Confidential, 14 November 1975, NA.

the authority of SACEUR, SACLANT and CINCHAN were consolidated into the five maritime campaigns encompassed by NATO's new Concept of Maritime Operations (CONMAROPS) and spanning the North Atlantic, the North and Norwegian Seas, and the western and eastern Mediterranean Sea.<sup>192</sup>

To give multinational training a new impulse, Haig pooled separate exercises conducted every autumn by individual nations and commands into a single framework and schedule, the Autumn Forge exercise series.<sup>193</sup> While Autumn Forge did not generate additional exercises, it triggered a revision of the aim and format of most pre-existing exercises and greater coordination among participating forces and commands. For instance, SACEUR's Bold Guard joint exercise in the Baltic Sea was synchronised with CINCHAN's Northern Wedding maritime exercise in the North Sea, to rehearse coordinated defence operations on both sides of Denmark and the Danish Straits.<sup>194</sup> SACLANT's Magic Sword maritime exercise was scheduled to overlap with SACEUR's Cloudy Chorus/Cold Fire air exercise, to test the integration of carrier air sorties originating in the North Sea or the Bay of Biscay into the general air battle over West Germany. Exercises Teamwork in the Norwegian Sea and Display Determination in the eastern Mediterranean practiced offshore reinforcement with multinational amphibious forces and offensive air support from US Navy aircraft carriers. In the North Atlantic, the focus of the US Navy's new Maritime Strategy on contesting the Soviet Navy's ambition to challenge NATO's sea control found expression in the new Ocean Venture maritime exercise series initiated by the Commander-in-Chief of the US Atlantic Command (USCINCLANT) in autumn 1981.<sup>195</sup> In contrast to USCINCLANT's earlier Solid Shield exercises anchored on defending the GIUK gap, Ocean Venture exercises were oriented to rehearsing the capacity to deny the Soviet Navy access to the

192 Maritime exercises were tailored for each campaign – CINCHAN's Northern Wedding and SACLANT's *Ocean Safari* and *Teamwork* exercise series for the three northern maritime campaigns and SACEUR's Dawn Patrol and Display Determination exercises for the two Mediterranean Sea campaigns.

193 IMSWM-180-75, *Proposed Press Release for Exercise Autumn Forge 75*, NATO Confidential, 5 August 1975, NA; and D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "Military exercises and strategic intent through the prism of NATO's Autumn Forge exercise series, 1975-1989", B. Heuser, T. Heier and G. Lasconjarias (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp.65-91.

194 IMSWM-129-78, *Exercise Bold Guard 78*, NATO Confidential, 31 May 1978, NA; and IMSWM-EYB-146-82, *Exercise Bold Guard 82*, NATO Confidential, 17 June 1982, NA, and IMSWM-EYB-137-86 *Exercise Bold Guard 86*, NATO Confidential, 25 June 1986, NA.

195 USCINCLANT was dual-hatted as NATO's SACLANT.

Norwegian Sea in a conflict.<sup>196</sup> This was forward deterrence and defence at sea.<sup>197</sup>

In autumn 1980, the British Army staged its largest reinforcement exercise of its contingent stationed in West Germany since the 1950s – exercise Crusader/Spearpoint 80 – alongside exercise REFORGER 80, as part of the Autumn Forge 80 exercise series. They were combined into the NATO reinforcement exercise Concordant Journey, the first of its kind, to ensure proper coordination of reinforcement flows across Belgium and The Netherlands.<sup>198</sup> Drawing on SACEUR’s Rapid Reinforcement Plan (RRP), each of these exercises rehearsed the staging and movement of external reinforcements from the four sending nations (Canada, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States) to the six receiving nations (Norway, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Greece and Turkey).<sup>199</sup> The responsiveness and effectiveness of SACEUR’s Rapid Reinforcement Plan was underpinned by the completion between sending, transit and receiving nations of the applicable lines of communications and host nation support agreements, thereby helping ensure efficient reception, staging and onward movement of reinforcements.

The prepositioning of equipment for six US Army divisions at storage sites in the FRG, Belgium and The Netherlands made Europe’s reinforcement for the first time truly rapid on a large scale, giving teeth to the commitment to have ten US Army divisions combat ready in West Germany within ten days of a reinforcement decision – the “10 in 10” goal. In addition, NATO common infrastructure funding helped finance the upgrading of airbases across Western Europe, including in northern Norway and eastern Turkey, through the prepositioning of jet fuel and ammunition and the construction of hardened aircraft shelters, to help expedite the deployment of reinforcing fighter squadrons.<sup>200</sup>

196 For an authoritative assessment of how a deepening understanding of Soviet naval strategy drove the development of the US Navy’s *Maritime Strategy*, see Peter M. Swartz, *Understanding an Adversary’s Strategic and Operational Calculus: A Late Cold War Case Study with 21st Century Applicability*, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia, August 2013.

197 IMSWM-EYB-154-81, *Ocean Venture 81, Magic Sword North 81, Magic Sword South 81 and Ocean Safari 81*, NATO Confidential, 10 June 1981, NA; D. Middleton, “U.S. and Allied Navies Starting Major Test Today”, *The New York Times*, 1 August 1981; and Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, *op. cit.*, pp.65-88.

198 IMSWM-EYB-139-80, *Proposed Press Release and Public Information Policy for Exercise “Concordant Journey”*, NATO Confidential, 16 June 1980, NA.

199 The details of the RRP are addressed in General Sir Peter Whiteley, “The Reinforcement of Europe”, *NATO’s Fifteen Nations*, August-September 1979, pp.232-26.

200 D. E. Lewis, B. W. Don, R. M. Paulson, W. H. Ware, *A perspective on the USAFE collocated operating base system*, N-2366-AF, Project Air Force, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, July 1986.

Furthermore, equipment prepositioning shifted the transatlantic reinforcement flow increasingly from sealift to airlift. That helped reduce the reinforcement effort's dependence on slower and vulnerable convoys and freed the US Navy, correspondingly, from escort duties south of the GIUK Gap to exercise sea control north of the GIUK Gap and fend off any Soviet challenge in the Norwegian Sea. The interaction between the land and maritime dimensions of defending Western Europe and the mutual interdependence between forward defence in the Central Region and in the Northern flank were becoming starkly clearer.<sup>201</sup> Lastly, compared with a decade earlier, NATO now had in place, with the AMF and the three Naval Forces – STANAVFORLANT, NAVOCFORMED and STANAVFORCHAN – multinational formations that could undertake, on short notice, dedicated deterrence operations, as distinct from defence operations, to convey an image of Allied resolve and unity and help de-escalate a rising East-West crisis. The Soviet Union was put on notice that NATO was determined and had the operational capacity to deter and defend firmly in all regions, from northern Norway to eastern Turkey.

*An overall construct for deterrence and defence takes shape*

Under Haig, the vision, going back to Norstad's tenure, of a single, NATO-wide strategic construct, whereby all of the components of the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture would work together seamlessly across the entire North Atlantic Treaty area came fully into focus. This construct combined forward defence operations (General Defence Plans); the air defence battle (NATINADS); the offensive air support operations (COMAO); the maritime campaigns (CONMAROPS); and the reinforcements flows and their supporting arrangements (RRP). In this enterprise, the United States played a pivotal role in generating the Alliance's core operational capability across all regions. By the early 1980s, the United States had committed to NATO three Army corps and twelve divisions, two Navy fleets, four Air Force air forces, and two division-size Marine Corps amphibious forces, or more than two thirds of the total, worldwide, US conventional strength. Most of the external reinforcements would have been deployed to Western Europe, ready to defend, within 30 days of a reinforcement decision, many within ten days.

201 G. L. Dyndal, "How the High North became central to NATO strategy: revelations from the NATO Archives", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 34, Iss. 4, August 2011.

At the core of this construct stood the notion that successful deterrence and defence across the whole of Western Europe rested on devoting particular attention to five inter-dependent “hinges”: northern Norway and the Norwegian Sea; the Danish Straits; West Germany; West Berlin; and the strategic area formed by northern Greece, western Turkey, the southern Black Sea and the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea. Protecting and holding on to these hinges would help ensure that, in a conflict, the Soviet Union would not be able to execute successfully any of the following five threatening options in whatever sequence or combination:

- a strategic envelopment of northwest Europe from the High North and the geographic isolation of Norway from the rest of the Alliance;<sup>202</sup>
- an encirclement of Denmark from the northwest and the southeast;
- a dash across northern West Germany to the North Sea and the English Channel;
- a conquest of West Berlin as a supporting diversionary operation; and
- a strategic envelopment of Greece and the geographic isolation of Turkey from the rest of the Alliance, extending from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean Sea and leading towards the Strait of Sicily, as well as towards the Mediterranean basin’s eastern shore.<sup>203</sup>

All plans and exercises were designed to ensure the integrity of the NATO strategic construct referred to above in all circumstances (see Figure 2 below).

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202 In March-April 1984, denial of NATO’s control of the Norwegian and North Seas was rehearsed during the Soviet Union’s largest ever maritime exercise in the North Atlantic, labelled *Springex 84* by NATO. See R.W. Apple, “Soviet is holding big naval games”, *The New York Times*, 4 April 1994; and “Sowjetunion: Manöver der sowjetischen Kriegsflotte”, *Osterr. Milit. Zeitschrift*, No.4/1984, pp.371-372.

203 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “Paradigms lost: a retrospective assessment of the NATO-Warsaw Pact competition in the Alliance’s Southern Region”, *Comparative Strategy*, Vol.9, Iss.3, 1990, pp.265-286.



**Figure 2. Comprehensive NATO approach to deterrence and to defending the five “hinges” in the 1970s-1980s.**

Threats to NATO “hinges”	Soviet intentions as revealed by Soviet/Warsaw Pact exercises	NATO and Live Oak live exercise rehearsing deterrence options and defence responses
Strategic envelopment of northwest Europe and isolation of Norway	Large-scale maritime exercises in March-April 1984 and May-June 1985 <sup>1</sup>	<i>Ocean Safari, Teamwork</i>
Encirclement of Denmark	<i>Zapad 77, Soyuz 80</i> <i>Zapad 81, Soyuz 83</i> <i>Zapad 83, Zapad 84</i>	<i>Bold Game/Grouse/Guard, Northern Wedding</i>
Dash to the English Channel	<i>Zapad 77, Soyuz 80</i> <i>Yug 81, Zapad 81, Soyuz 83</i> <i>Zapad 83, Zapad 84</i>	<i>Crack Force/Central Enterprise, Cloudy Chorus/Cold Fire, REFORGER – Crested Cap<sup>2</sup>, Magic Sword</i>
Seizure of West Berlin	<i>Borkante</i>	<i>Live Oak exercises Bold Gauntlet and Treaty<sup>3</sup></i>
Strategic envelopment of Greece and isolation of Turkey	<i>Soyuz 78, Shebit 82, Soyuz 84</i>	<i>Deep Furrow/Display Determination</i>

1 The Soviet name of these exercises was unknown and they were designated *Springex 84* and *Summerex 85*, respectively, by NATO.

2 REFORGER (US Army) and *Crested Cap* (US Air Force) were US strategic mobility exercises conducted annually from 1969 onwards to reinforce the US European Command in West Germany and linked to NATO through SACEUR's *Autumn Forge* exercise series.

3 *Live Oak* exercises were conducted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States in accordance with their distinct responsibilities for West Berlin.

Systematically, NATO targeted each area of growing Soviet strength, including in the nuclear area. In 1979, as an extension of the Long Term Defence Programme, NATO approved the deployment of Pershing 2 and Gryphon missiles, aimed at denying the Soviet Union the option, in a crisis, of intimidating NATO into submission with the SS-20 Saber missile.<sup>204</sup> This “dual-track” decision preserved explicitly the option of not proceeding with the deployment, if the Soviet Union were to agree to withdraw its rapidly expanding arsenal of SS-20 missiles from service and restore the conditions for strategic stability in Europe, which it did not.

This was NATO strategy-making at its best: steady political support, underpinned by a compelling concept for deterrence and defence, both translated into an operational transformation of NATO of growing scope and reach. By the time General Bernard Rogers succeeded Haig as SACEUR in 1979, the momentum towards countering and defeating Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov's quest of unchallenged Soviet military primacy in Europe was strengthening steadily.

204 Development and deployment of Long-Range Theatre Nuclear Forces was Task 10 of the LTDP.

However, long-standing concerns over insufficient defence spending among the Allies – notably, a failure in many cases to comply with the agreement at the Washington Summit in 1978 to increase defence expenditures annually “in the region” of three percent in real terms – as well as persistent readiness gaps and sustainability shortfalls, notably in relation to ammunition stocks, were ever present. In response to these concerns, the Military Committee had commissioned earlier a series of studies addressing evolving trends in the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance of forces, which documented a deteriorating situation for NATO.<sup>205</sup> This effort benefited from ground-breaking analysis on the European military balance being undertaken at the time by the Director of Net Assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, with the technical support of other Department of Defense entities, such as the US Army Concepts Analysis Agency, as well as by operations research work by defence research establishments in Germany and the United Kingdom. In his *1980 Combat Effectiveness Report*, Rogers warned that “under present circumstances, a conflict in Europe would almost certainly force a very early decision to escalate”.<sup>206</sup> To drive his point home, Rogers disclosed publicly, for the first time, the operational parameters – the loss of Forward Defence’s cohesion – that would prompt him, in a conflict, to request the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>207</sup> The tying of nuclear release to specific operational circumstances opened the way to the approval by the Nuclear Planning Group in 1986 of the “*General Political Guidelines for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons in the Defence of NATO*”. This approval, in effect, marked the completion of the process started two decades earlier with the creation of the Nuclear Planning Group to determine and agree the circumstances under which, in a conflict, nuclear use would be considered and approved.

205 IMSM-233-77, *Study of Warsaw Pact and NATO Conventional Force Capabilities – Report on Phase IV*, NATO Secret, 10 May 1977, NA; and IMSM-213-78, *Military Committee Study of Relative NATO and Warsaw Pact Conventional Force Capabilities in the Central Region in 1982*, NATO Confidential, 18 April 1978, NA. Of note, at approximately the same time, the Soviet General Staff was undertaking assessments of the “correlation of forces” with NATO. *Combat potentials of the armament and combat equipment of the ground forces and aviation of the USSR and of the Armies of the Probable Enemy*, Top Secret, 25 October 1980, CIA FOIA EL, declassified and released to the public, 18 June 2012.

206 IMSWM-JIM-33-83, *SACEUR’s 1982 Combat Effectiveness Report* (NU), 28 January 1983, NA.

207 “Interview with General Bernard W. Rogers”, *Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1983, p.72; B. Furlong and M. Levinson, “SACEUR calls for research on a European ABM system”, *International Defense Review*, February 1986, p.151.

### *NATO's checkmate move*

In the aftermath of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, NATO had to contend with the possibility that US forces stationed in the United States and earmarked to reinforce Europe in a conflict might be diverted to meet new contingency requirements in Southwest Asia.<sup>208</sup> NATO's "Southwest Asia Impact Study" had the merit of addressing head-on the uncomfortable contingency of the Alliance, possibly, having to expect a lesser US reinforcement increment, and proposing compensatory measures by the other Allies.

At the same time, under Rogers, the quest for a stronger conventional posture continued unabated. Rogers sought to dust off the contingency planning for West Berlin conducted by Norstad two decades earlier, because that planning did not reflect properly the growth in Warsaw Pact conventional and non-nuclear capabilities, nor technological developments and changing operational concepts. Although, following approval of the quadripartite agreement on the status of Berlin in September 1971, Allied responsibilities for West Berlin were never challenged politically by the USSR again, Allies could not neglect the likelihood that, in a wider conflict, Soviet and East German forces would attempt to conquer West Berlin. Such intent was revealed in East German military records recovered by the West German Ministry of Defence after the end of the Cold War.<sup>209</sup> Accordingly, between 1983 and 1986, the three Western powers agreed, for the first time, a combined defence plan and updated command arrangements that gave Rogers, as Commander, Live Oak, a wider coordinating authority for the defence of West Berlin that extended beyond the protection of the access corridors.<sup>210</sup> In 1984, the Allies approved Rogers' Follow-On Forces Attack (FOFA) sub-concept, aimed at disrupting the forward movement of Warsaw Pact follow-on echelons through the application of "emerging technologies" for battlefield surveillance and deep attack.<sup>211</sup> These technologies combined enhanced sensors, missiles and sub-munitions developed on

208 IMSM-DCG-538-81, *The NMA Southwest Asia Impact Study*, NATO Restricted, 22 October 1981, NA.

209 H. Gopel, "Die Berlin-Operation", in K. Naumann (ed.), *NVA: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit nach ausgewählten Dokumenten*, Berlin: Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn GmbH, 1993, pp.286-300. At the time of the publication of this book, General Klaus Naumann was Germany's Chief of Defence. Otto Wenzel, "East German plans for the conquest and occupation of West Berlin", *Armor*, November-December 1994, pp.6-12.

210 *Berlin Command – Consolidated Historical Review, 1985-1986 (U)*, Secret, 11 January 1989, declassified and released to the public on 29 May 2013, p.55. Live Oak was disbanded on the SHAPE compound in Mons, Belgium, on 2 October 1990, the day before Germany's reunification.

211 B. W. Rogers, "Follow-on forces attack: myths and realities", *NATO Review*, December 1984, pp.1-9.

both sides of the Atlantic to target and destroy Warsaw Pact ground force assembly areas, river crossing engineer equipment and air base runways, including as the result of a cutting-edge technology demonstrator programme – Assault Breaker – led by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.<sup>212</sup> FOFA sought to ensure that a forward defence would remain viable by preventing the Soviet Army from concentrating overwhelming force in breakthrough sectors.

Through the 1980s, Rogers kept a strong focus on the regular conduct of exercises, to demonstrate NATO's expanding ability to reinforce rapidly and strengthen interoperability. Every autumn, as part of the Autumn Forge exercise series, SHAPE staged a large, joint, live exercise in the eastern Mediterranean to rehearse rapid reinforcement of Greece and Turkey – exercise Display Determination, which succeeded the earlier Deep Furrow exercises – and another to reinforce Denmark, named alternatively Bold Game, Bold Grouse and Bold Guard. Following Spain's accession to the Alliance in 1982, Spanish forces started to participate regularly in exercises, while remaining initially outside of the Integrated Military Structure. In the Central Region, the United Kingdom undertook in autumn 1984 the Cold War's largest reinforcement ever of the British Army of the Rhine, across the North Sea and Belgium, with exercise Lionheart/Spearpoint 84. It involved the exceptional movement of 57,000 active and reserve troops, essentially doubling the BAOR's peace time strength. Once in Germany, the reinforcing troops rehearsed NORTHAG's new concept of an armoured "counter-stroke" by a combined force of British and German armoured divisions against an invading Soviet armoured force. The growing attention accorded to mobile operations to defeat Soviet fast-paced tank raids extended to the development of self-standing airmobile formations combining attack helicopters and air-transportable infantry heavily equipped with antitank weapons, such as the US Army's 6<sup>th</sup> Combat Brigade (Air Cavalry), the French Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Airmobile Division and NORTHAG's own Multinational Division (Central) composed of airborne and airmobile forces contributed by Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.<sup>213</sup> In 1985, with exercise Ocean Safari, SACLANT started to send annually the Striking Fleet, Atlantic, into the northern Norwegian Sea to contest any Soviet attempt originating

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212 R. Tomes, "The Cold War offset strategy: Assault breaker and the beginning of the RSTA revolution", *War on the Rocks*, 20 November 2014.

213 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "Countering Soviet encirclement operations: emerging NATO concepts", *International Defense Review*, November 1988, pp.1413-1418; and General Sir N. Bagnall, "Airmobile Operations in Northern Army Group", *NATO's Sixteen Nations*, Vol. 32, No.6, pp.75-79.

in the Kola Peninsula to deny NATO's sea control, as rehearsed by the Soviet Navy in March-April 1984 and May-June 1985.<sup>214</sup> The Soviet maritime exercise in spring 1984 took place during an eight-month period of exceptionally high Warsaw Pact exercise activity that included the Druzhba 84 field training exercise in Poland in February, the Yug 84 field training exercise in East Germany in March, the Soyuz 84 command post exercise across the Southwestern TVD also in March, the Zapad 84 combined command post and field training exercise throughout the Western TVD in late June and early July, and, lastly, the Shchit 84 field training exercise in Czechoslovakia in late August and early September. In the light of the activation in peacetime of the two Warsaw Pact's TVD high commands in September 1984, it is possible that the scheduling of this high number of exercises was coordinated to give the Soviet General Staff an opportunity to rehearse the full scope of a war in Europe across multiple, adjacent TVDs.

The focus on reinforcing Norway and preventing an envelopment of northwest Europe from the High North endured. In 1986, Canada conducted exercise Brave Lion into Norway, as part of that year's Autumn Forge exercises. It was Canada's largest Cold War transatlantic reinforcement exercise ever, involving the deployment of its air and sea transportable brigade (CAST), specialised in winter warfare, together with its organic air support. High-end maritime operations into the northern Norwegian Sea were repeated during the Ocean Safari 87 and Teamwork 88 exercises.<sup>215</sup> Exercise Teamwork 88, in particular, had the distinction of involving two US Navy aircraft-carriers – the USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Forrestal – and a Royal Navy anti-submarine warfare carrier – HMS Illustrious – all three operating and launching aircraft sorties from inside Norwegian fjords.<sup>216</sup> This tactic allowed high-value Allied naval assets to benefit from the radar screening afforded by the fjords' surrounding mountains, while strengthening the USN carriers' ability to intercept Soviet bombers early in their flights into the North Atlantic from their temporary bases in the Kola Peninsula, before they could launch their anti-ship missiles, according to the economy-of-effort principle of "aiming for the archer rather than the arrows".<sup>217</sup> The momentum towards reasserting, from

214 Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, *op. cit.*, p.169.

215 D. Fouquet, "NATO soldiers march into autumn, testing tactics, equipment systems", *Defense News*, 15 September 1986.

216 J. Borresen, "Alliance naval strategies and Norway in the final years of the Cold War", *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring 2011.

217 On the Soviet bomber threat to NATO maritime forces in the North Atlantic in the 1980s, see T. Ries,

Norway to Turkey, NATO's freedom of action, was unmistakable. Furthermore, to strengthen the deterrence messaging to the Soviet leadership that, if the Soviet Union started a conflict in Europe, the United States would be free to conduct counter-offensive operations targeted at the USSR's Far East, the US Navy initiated large-scale maritime exercises in the western Pacific Ocean.<sup>218</sup>

Lastly, in 1987, France, Germany, the United States and SHAPE coordinated the unprecedented execution of two large field training exercises in southern and northern Germany – exercises Kecker Spatz-Moineau Hardi and REFORGER 87/Certain Strike. REFORGER 87 was the largest US transatlantic exercise to reinforce Western Europe since NATO's creation (31,000 troops).<sup>219</sup> Kecker Spatz-Moineau Hardi involved the largest movement of French forces across the Rhine River to reinforce NATO of the Cold War (20,000 troops), as part of the engagement of France's new Force d'Action Rapide alongside the Bundeswehr. The coordinated scheduling of both exercises demonstrated NATO's strengthened operational capacity to engage joint counter-attack forces, in a carefully synchronised way, across the length of West Germany's eastern border, and defeat successfully a Warsaw Pact offensive, without having to rely on the early first use of nuclear weapons. When combined with exercise Lionheart in 1984 and with the other exercises on the northern and southern flanks, these two exercises marked the high point in NATO's two decade-long quest since the late 1960s to achieve and demonstrate strategic excellence. Together with the elimination of the SS-20 and other Soviet non-strategic missiles, under the terms of the Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) signed that year, NATO had essentially removed the threat to the two pillars – Forward Defence and Deliberate Escalation – of its Flexible Response strategy. The USSR could no longer expect to be able to intimidate NATO with the prospect of a conventional invasion of Western Europe under the threat of nuclear devastation. In the history of strategic competitions, NATO had achieved a rare, but clear checkmate.<sup>220</sup> Strategically, the Cold War ended in 1987.

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“Defending the High North”, *International Defense Review*, July 1984, pp.873-880.

218 Lehman, *Oceans Ventured*, *op. cit.*, p.153;

219 REFORGER exercises involved every year the transatlantic deployment to Europe of, on average, 16,000 US Army troops. Exceptionally, REFORGER 87 involved almost twice as many.

220 Lieutenant General B. E. Trainor, “A triumph in strategic thinking”, *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 2008.

### *Bringing the Cold War to a rapid close*

The opening of the Iron Curtain and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had both an immediate and a longer-term impact on NATO's Cold War posture. The WINTEX and Autumn Forge exercise series were cancelled after their 1989 edition. REFORGER exercises were carried out for a few more years in a compact, command post exercise format and terminated in 1993. The scale of many exercises was reduced significantly,<sup>221</sup> while other exercises, such as the Display Determination reinforcement exercise in the Mediterranean Sea, were discontinued.

On 3 October 1990, Germany was reunified, marking in the most powerful and visible way possible the end of Europe's post-WWII division. Gradually, but steadily, the components of the Cold War's "infrastructure of confrontation" on either side of the former Iron Curtain were disassembled (air bases; barracks; bunkers; storage sites; training areas; etc.). In 1994, the last Russian troops vacated their garrisons in eastern Germany. The Allied mechanized army corps stationed in Germany, France and Italy were either disbanded or converted into lighter, deployable rapid reaction corps, and the air defence "belts" of Hawk and Patriot surface-to-air missile batteries, extending from the Baltic Sea to the Alps, dismantled. By the mid-1990s, Belgian, Canadian and Dutch forces had been withdrawn from Germany, and British, French and US forces stationed there considerably reduced. The size of the Bundeswehr was also reduced on a large scale. Many of the Cold War arrangements that had been set in place by SHAPE to check the readiness and combat effectiveness of Allied forces and ensure, if required, an efficient "transition to war" were terminated.

The Cold War was over. A strategic era marked by high tension and risk had happily come to an unexpectedly rapid end. Changes to NATO strategy-making practices reflected that transformational moment. A quarter-of-a-century later, however, in the changed strategic circumstances prompted by Russia's annexation of Crimea, the adverse operational implications for deterrence and defence of having abandoned some of NATO's Cold War planning and training practices became clearer. This realisation triggered a quest to restore an "operational art"

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221 SACLANT's *Ocean Safari* and *Teamwork* and CINCHAN's *Northern Wedding* maritime exercises were discontinued. They were replaced by two smaller maritime exercises conducted biannually, rather than every year – *Sharp Spear* in the North Sea and *North Star* in the Norwegian Sea, the former held in 1989 and 1993 and the latter in 1991 – but they too were discontinued.

mindset and a “culture of readiness” that, as commanders’ conferences and exercises demonstrated, had atrophied considerably since 1990.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Major General M. Melvin, “Exercise United Shield 2008”, *RUSI Journal*, June 2009, pp.36-43. At the time of exercise *United Shield*, General Melvin was commander of British forces stationed in Germany.



## NATO's post-Cold War “out-of-area” pivot (1990-2014)

Following the end of the Cold War, strategy-making in NATO underwent a major reorientation away from a single focus on collective defence towards the conduct of “non-Article 5” conflict resolution and peace enforcement operations inside Europe (but “out-of-area”). As a result of NATO’s growing engagement in helping prevent or bring conflicts to an end and its widening partnerships, crisis management and cooperative security assumed gradually the status of Alliance core tasks, alongside collective defence.

This third part of the *Research Paper* addresses the aims, achievements and challenges of NATO’s post-Cold War transformation. Agreement of the new Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Concept for the conduct of so-called crisis response operations in 1994 and the standing up of IFOR in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina in 1995 reflected a new post-Cold War determination to address security risks that did not involve a threat of aggression to NATO. These developments were followed, during the next decade, in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, by the initiation of a large-scale security assistance and stabilisation operation in Afghanistan. Several decisions taken in 2002-2003 combined to sharpen NATO’s reorientation towards addressing security threats originating beyond Europe and conducting expeditionary operations accordingly. Key decisions included: the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council at the NATO-Russia Summit near Rome in May 2002, which confirmed NATO’s partnership with Russia initiated in 1997; the statement at the 2002 Prague Summit that NATO “must be able to field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed”; the creation of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the renaming of Allied Command Europe (ACE) as Allied Command Operations (ACO); and NATO’s take-over of ISAF in Afghanistan.<sup>223</sup> NATO’s successive post-Cold War transformations and

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223 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “The Road to Kabul”, *NATO Review*, 2003.

widening operational undertakings were underpinned by successive enlargements and broadened partnerships that brought an expanding number of nations into NATO's strategy-making process and continuing "strategic odyssey".

### *Leaving the Cold War behind and accepting new tasks*

NATO marked formally the end of the Cold War with a special Summit meeting in London in summer 1990 and the approval of a new Strategic Concept at the Rome Summit in autumn 1991. This new concept broke new ground almost completely, not the least by being a public document that addressed NATO's enduring purpose and new tasks in a wider setting than strictly that of operational strategy. Of note, the 1991 Strategic Concept stated that "all the countries that were formerly adversaries of NATO have dismantled the Warsaw Pact and rejected ideological hostility to the West... The monolithic, massive and potentially immediate threat which was the principal concern of the Alliance in its first forty years has disappeared". It further set out that "the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated (by the Allies) are therefore even more remote".<sup>224</sup> The build-down of forces was codified in the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. US Presidential Nuclear Initiatives resulted in a reduction of NATO's non-strategic nuclear forces and nuclear stockpile in Europe by over 90 percent, which, significantly, was not reciprocated by Russia in relation to its own non-strategic nuclear weapons and launchers of less than 500km in range.<sup>225</sup>

These important steps to overcome Europe's Cold War division and set the scene for a new security order on the continent were quickly overshadowed, however, by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in summer 1990 and by the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the deepening civil war in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina. While NATO as such was not involved in the US-led Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait, the Alliance took defensive measures to protect Turkey by deploying NATO's airborne early warning (AWACS) force, as well as the air component of the Allied Mobile Force. Operations Anchor Guard and Ace Guard to defend Turkey were NATO's first ever real-world operations. In contrast, the Alliance was engaged collectively nearly from the start

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224 *The Alliance's New Strategic Concept*, NATO Summit, Rome, 7-8 November 1991.

225 S. J. Koch, *The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992*, Case study 5, National Defense University, Washington, DC, September 2012, pp.11-12.

in helping the international community contain the spread of hostilities in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina. NATO's engagement in the western Balkans foreshadowed a two decade-long period of intense operational activity, with troop levels numbering in the tens of thousands deployed across several theatres (approximately 80,000 SFOR and KFOR troops in 1999; and approximately 140,000 ISAF and KFOR troops in 2010), that extended through the standing down of ISAF in Afghanistan at the end of 2014.

### ***Containing conflict and enforcing the peace in the western Balkans (1992-1999)***

#### *First steps in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina*

Between 1992 and 1995, NATO initiated, in sequence, under successive United Nations mandates, a maritime operation to monitor movements of merchant ships into and out of harbours along the former SFRY's coastline and, thereafter, to enforce a UN-mandated arms embargo; to monitor Bosnia-and-Herzegovina's airspace and, subsequently, to enforce an air-exclusion zone; and, lastly, to provide close-air-support to the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR). Because the United Nations does not have standing, deployable headquarters, NATO also loaned to the UN the mobile headquarters of the former NORTHAG command as the core of the UNPROFOR Force Headquarters near Sarajevo. Effective UN-NATO coordination required complex arrangements between the UN and NATO headquarters in New York and Brussels, and the respective chain of command staff entities at Zagreb and Sarajevo for the UN and at Mons, Naples and Vicenza for NATO.<sup>226</sup> In addition, to facilitate an efficient use of limited assets, maritime interdiction operations in the Adriatic Sea undertaken separately by NATO and the WEU were merged in 1993 under a combined chain of command responding to both organizations. In each instance, NATO was able, within a short time, to develop and approve the applicable Operation Plans (OPLAN), drawing on its unmatched multinational planning experience and capacity.

Gradually, lessons learned from operations and reforms of command and force structures and revision of planning procedures merged into a pattern of interaction

<sup>226</sup> NATO's Balkans Combined Air Operations Centre was located near Vicenza, Italy.

between the one and the other that endured for the next two decades.<sup>227</sup> Strategy-making now involved not only conducting real-world engagements for the first time since the Alliance was established in 1949, but also an enduring requirement to appraise the scope, content and phasing of those engagements in the context of changing political and operational circumstances on the ground, wider international diplomacy dynamics, and domestic considerations among troop-contributing nations. Agreement of the scope of the initial Concept of Operations and the tailored Rules of Engagement and force contributions associated with each OPLAN often required a considerable amount of consultation among the Allies and with other troop contributors and international actors, and the recurrent provision of detailed military advice. Henceforth, political consultation and military planning and execution would interact on a continuous basis, with no longer a sharp sequence between the one and the other. A key focus of strategy-making was on balancing the complementary, but also competing, needs to generate the required military contributions for an operation and to ensure participation by the broadest possible number of Allied and partner nations, even at the risk of complicating support arrangements and interoperability. Planning had to account for the fact that, unlike the plans of the Cold War, the nationality and nature of individual contributions to an envisaged operation or mission were not preordained and would need to be accommodated and optimised as they were notified, through tailored “force sensing, generation and balancing” processes.

### *First post-Cold War reform of the NATO Command structure*

In 1994, NATO approved its first post-Cold War Command Structure, which sanctioned the disbandment of CINCHAN and the merger of the CINCHAN and CINCUKAIR headquarters located in the United Kingdom with the CINCNORTH headquarters in Norway into a new scaled-down CINCNORTHWEST in Britain. It also included the activation of a new, strategic-level, ACE Reaction Forces’ Planning Staff (ARFPS) at SHAPE overseeing the old AMF, the new UK-led ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) and, for air forces, a Reaction Forces (Air) Staff, reflecting a new emphasis on preparing NATO for short-notice, crisis-response operations and on tailored planning. In the meantime, the tempo of NATO’s air engagement in enforcing the UN-mandated air exclusion zone and supporting

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227 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “The enduring influence of operations on NATO’s transformation”, *NATO Review*, Spring 2008, pp.24-28.

UNPROFOR on the ground accelerated, including the shooting down in February 1994 of two Bosnian Serb combat aircraft, in compliance with the UN-mandated enforcement of the air exclusion zone, in the first ever use of force by NATO since 1949.<sup>228</sup> Later that year, allied combat aircraft conducted offensive air support sorties against Bosnian Serb positions encircling the Gorazde and Bihac enclaves, including against a supporting airfield. In late summer 1995, the conduct of the Deliberate Force air campaign against Bosnian Serb forces, in conjunction with the engagement of a UN-mandated Rapid Reaction Force on the ground in the vicinity of Sarajevo, brought the hostilities in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina to an end and a cease-fire came into force.<sup>229</sup> This decisive action set the stage for NATO assuming responsibility for enforcing the Dayton Peace Agreement and for a NATO-led IFOR succeeding UNPROFOR.

### *The growing impetus for operational and institutional reform*

By the mid-1990s, NATO was firmly "out-of-area" and in business. Defence and operations planning processes at NATO Headquarters were revised and reoriented to identify and meet the requirements associated with operations conducted beyond Alliance territory. The Crisis Management Exercises (CMX) that succeeded the Cold War's HILEX and WINTEX exercises provided a tailored vehicle to refine internal planning procedures and rehearse consultations with non-NATO troop contributors and with other international organisations.<sup>230</sup> The gradual standing up of a new NATO Force Structure (NFS) through the 1990s, composed of air, land and maritime high readiness, multinational headquarters, led by one or several framework nations, that were evaluated and certified by SHAPE and declared to NATO, accelerated the demise of the "heavy metal" force structures associated with the old Forward Defence concept. The standing up of the ARRC was followed by that of the Eurocorps, as a multinational formation available to both the EU and NATO, as well as by that of the 1<sup>st</sup> German-Netherlands Corps and other, similar, rapid reaction corps headquarters led by France, Greece, Italy, Spain and

228 M. R. Gordon, "NATO craft down four Serbian warplanes attacking Bosnia", *The New York Times*, 1 March 1994.

229 Colonel R. C. Owen, "The Balkans air campaign study", Part 1, *Airpower Journal*, Summer 1997, pp.4-25; and Part 2, *Airpower Journal*, Fall 1997, pp.6-27.

230 I. A.D. Ferrier, "NATO strategic level political military crisis management exercising – history and challenges", in Heuser, Heir and Lasconjarias, *Military Exercises*, *op. cit.*, pp.141-162.

Turkey. The headquarters of the Cold War's LANDJUT Corps, part of the former BALTAP command, was relocated from Germany to Poland, to become the new Multi-National Corps Northeast. The ARRC's attainment of full operational capability in 1994 made it possible for the Alliance to call upon it to lead the land component of IFOR in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina in 1995 and of KFOR in Kosovo in 1999. This development of the NFS, eventually reaching some 18 multinational air, land and maritime headquarters, was decisive for the creation of the NRF in 2002, because these multinational headquarters, and the forces affiliated with them, were called upon to play the role of air, land and maritime component commands of the NRF. In the mid-1990s, therefore, IFOR, ARFPS and the new NFS reflected the emergence of new, flexible and deployable post-Cold War NATO, against the backdrop of a deepening engagement in the Balkans.

A further reform of the Command structure was approved at the Madrid Summit in summer 1997, resulting in the merger of the CINCNORTHWEST and CINCENT positions and their headquarters into a new CINCNORTH headquarters at Brunssum. A new Combined Joint Planning Staff (CJPS) reporting to SACEUR and SACLANT replaced the ARFPS at SHAPE and three, operational-level, CJTF headquarters were activated at Brunssum and Naples to lead land-based CJTF operations and at Lisbon to plan a sea-based CJTF operation that would be directed from the US Navy's USS Mount Whitney command ship. CJTF operations were rehearsed during the large-scale Strong Resolve live exercise in 1998. The exercise involved 50,000 troops contributed by 15 Allies and ten partner nations and included successive non-Article 5 crisis response and Article 5 collective defence phases, conducted in Portugal and Spain and in Norway, respectively.

The CJTF Concept became the organising construct to facilitate the transition from the Cold War's structure of static commands with pre-assigned forces to deployable headquarters overseeing a tailored force package. Implementation of the concept also involved France taking the first steps since 1966 to modify its military relationship with NATO, through attendance by the French Defence Minister and Chief of Defence of high-level NATO meetings, alongside their colleagues, participation by French officers in the CJPS and CJTF staffs, and contribution of French forces to NATO-led operations. In the end, however, France's expected military reintegration into NATO on the occasion of the Madrid Summit did not take place.<sup>231</sup>

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231 See G. Delafon and T. Sancton, *Dear Jacques, Cher Bill... : Au cœur de l'Élysée et de la Maison Blanche, 1995-1999*,

### *Kosovo takes centre stage*

In 1998, the situation in Kosovo deteriorated further, leading NATO to deepen its engagement in the Balkans. Operations were initiated to support monitors of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) deployed on the ground in Kosovo with an on-call, off-shore NATO "Extraction Force" composed of contingents contributed by France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom and an airborne photographic reconnaissance capacity (Operation Eagle Eye) involving British, French and US strategic reconnaissance assets. In spring 1999, when no other course of action, including repeated demarches and extended diplomatic negotiations, seemed able to bring a change in the belligerent and repressive behaviour of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, NATO initiated another air operation to bring hostilities to a halt, this time in Kosovo. The Allied Force air campaign opened the way to a cease-fire and the deployment of KFOR as of June 1999. Between KFOR and SFOR in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina (the successor of the initial IFOR), NATO now had over 80,000 troops on the ground. Maritime and air operations associated with NATO's operational engagements in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina and in Kosovo ended in 1996 and 1999, respectively.<sup>232</sup> The aim of bringing almost a decade of civil wars in the western Balkans to an end had been achieved. The longer-term goal of bringing the independent countries that were formerly a part of the SFRY into Euro-Atlantic structures could now start in earnest. Slovenia and Croatia joined NATO in 2004 and 2009, respectively, and Montenegro in 2017. The Republic of North Macedonia will do so shortly. In the meantime, Albania joined the Alliance in 2009.

This is a telling example of NATO strategy-making during the post-Cold War era, which illustrates the Alliance's capacity, through a continuous process of consultation, planning and engagement, to keep in focus the immediate objective of prosecuting and completing a succession of operational engagements with the political goal of building longer term regional stability, through partnership and enlargement. In this instance, strategy-making helped keep in alignment:

- the higher NATO purpose of preventing continuing hostilities in the western Balkans from threatening to undermine the wider Euro-Atlantic security architecture that had emerged at the end of the Cold War;

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Paris, Plon, 1999, pp.181-218.

232 NATO's Balkans CAOC at Vicenza closed-down in 2001, after supervising the execution of over 220,000 NATO air sorties since 1993. In performing its operational role, it became a real-world multinational experiment in the design and conduct of complex air operations.

- the Alliance's own institutional transformation, with the adoption of responsive and inclusive procedures for political-military consultation and for cooperation with like-minded nations, such as a tailored Political-Military Framework and a Partnership Cooperation Cell at SHAPE; and
- the development of adaptable command arrangements and force structures, such as the CJPS, CJTF and NRF, that facilitate the planning of scalable operations and the contributions of non-NATO countries.<sup>233</sup>

The Allied Force air campaign, however, exposed glaring shortfalls, including:

- the limited command and control capacity of the Command Structure to plan and conduct a high tempo air operation outside of Alliance territory;
- the shortfalls in available capabilities against the operational requirement (e.g., in such areas as close air support; suppression of enemy air defences; airborne electronic combat; and combat search and rescue);<sup>234</sup> and
- NATO's excessive dependence on the contributions of the United States.<sup>235</sup>

These shortcomings confirmed earlier findings from operations in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina that had prompted the launching of a Defence Capabilities Initiative to address outstanding shortfalls in time for NATO's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Summit in Washington. More ominously, a narrative around Operation Allied Force developed a momentum of its own among Russian military specialists in the years following 1999, according to which the United States had demonstrated during air operations over Serbia a capacity for airpower coercion that could represent a future strategic threat to Russia.<sup>236</sup> For these Russian experts, it confirmed their earlier observations from the conduct of Operation Desert Storm to expel invading Iraqi forces from Kuwait in February 1991 on the rising importance of airpower in helping decide

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233 T. D. Young, *Command in NATO after the Cold War: Alliance, national and multinational consideration*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1997.

234 On Operation *Allied Force*, see D. L. Haulman, "The US Air Force in the Air War over Serbia in 1999", *Air Power History*, Summer 2015, pp.6-21.

235 Of some 1,300 aircraft of all types involved in Operation Allied Force, approximately 80 percent were contributed by the United States, even though European Allies and Canada together had a large inventory. P. Langereux, "Operation Force Alliée: 1300 avions mobilisés", *Air & Cosmos*, Hors Serie No.1, 1999, pp.5-7.

236 Y. Sakagushi and K. Mayama, *Significance of the war in Kosovo for China and Russia*, NIDS Security Reports No.3, National Institute for Defence Studies, Tokyo, March 2002.



the strategic outcome of a campaign.<sup>237</sup> That narrative was used to justify the quest for a Russian military revival a decade later.<sup>238</sup>

In 2004, the European Union succeeded the Alliance in Bosnia in enforcing implementation of the Dayton agreement with its own force – EUFOR Althea – under so-called “Berlin Plus” agreements, which involve NATO supporting EUFOR with the provision of a command and control capacity and other NATO capabilities.<sup>239</sup> Today, Bosnia-and-Herzegovina is a NATO partner and NATO keeps a small headquarters in Sarajevo. In Kosovo, NATO continues to lead a KFOR force that, although much smaller in size than two decades ago (3,500 troops), is well tailored to the continuing execution of its mission. NATO also maintains on alert and exercises regularly over-the-horizon reserve forces that can be deployed at short notice, if necessary. In addition, NATO maintains in Kosovo an advisory and liaison team.

Successive engagements in the western Balkans over a decade transformed NATO. They demonstrated Allies’ resolve and NATO’s capacity to:

- discharge core functions other than collective defence in politically complex and operationally demanding circumstances;
- act as the core of wider coalitions involving many non-NATO nations;
- take over operations and missions from other organisations, such as the United Nations; operate alongside other organisations, such as the WEU; and hand over to other organisations, such as the European Union; and
- transform an operational engagement into a platform to develop a genuine, longer term political and military partnership.

These are abilities that helped set the stage for NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan and that would come into play again in the planning and conduct of other operations and missions, each time in very different geographic and political settings, such as counter-piracy operations off East Africa’s littoral and NATO’s air and maritime engagement in Libya in 2011.

237 General M. Gareev, *If war comes tomorrow: the contours of future armed conflict*, J. W. Kipp (ed.), London, Frank Cass, 1998, pp.57-60 and pp.114-115.

238 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, *Theatre Operations, High Commands and Large-Scale Exercises in Soviet and Russian Military Practice*, *op. cit.*

239 The “Berlin Plus” arrangements are based on an agreement between NATO and the EU of 16 December 2002 and a subsequent exchange of letters of 17 March 2003.

## *The Afghanistan challenge and NATO's response (2001-2014)*

NATO's collective political response to the unprecedented terrorist attack on the United States on 11 September 2001 was strong and immediate, resulting in the invocation, for the first time, of the Treaty's mutual defence clause, Article 5.<sup>240</sup> Invocation of Article 5 set a strong precedent by expressing the Alliance's readiness to respond fully to the non-traditional, but concrete threats, that were emerging with the new century.<sup>241</sup> Within days of the attack, NATO reinforced the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) by sending NATO airborne early warning aircraft to patrol North America's airspace and substitute for US Air Force AWACS aircraft dispatched to the Middle East to support the US-led coalition operation into Afghanistan – Operation Enduring Freedom. NATO also initiated an Article 5 maritime interdiction operation – Active Endeavour – oriented to patrolling and protecting the Mediterranean sea lanes against potential terrorist threats.

NATO's focus, however, rapidly shifted to Afghanistan itself, as a result of the involvement of most Allies in both the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force established by the December 2001 Bonn Conference. By the time of ISAF's third rotation under the joint command of Germany and The Netherlands in spring 2003 (following the initial rotations led by the United Kingdom and Turkey), it had become clear that meeting the combined requirement to sustain ISAF over the longer term and expand its footprint from Kabul to the whole of Afghanistan would require a vast, collective effort, that would exceed the capacity of a single or, even several, lead nations. Only NATO could help generate the required contributions. The Alliance turned, accordingly, to the lessons from its decade-long engagement in the Balkans, the partnerships it had developed with many non-NATO countries, and the high readiness, rapid reaction, land headquarters of the NATO Force Structure to generate the commitments and capabilities necessary to lead and expand ISAF from 10,000 troops in Kabul to eventually 130,000 deployed across the country. By 2010, ISAF included the largest part of the expanded US contingent in Afghanistan, as well as all of the Provincial

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240 E. Buckley, "Invoking Article 5", *NATO Review*, Summer 2006.

241 Formal invocation of Article 5 is not necessary for its mutual defence clause to come into force in case of attack against one or more Allies. No article in the North Atlantic Treaty sets out the requirement for formal invocation, nor describes an invocation procedure. However, the particular circumstances and consequences of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack made formal invocation of Article 5 desirable.

Reconstruction Teams that had been deployed across Afghanistan to facilitate the delivery of foreign aid and reconstruction efforts by providing local security.

NATO was not involved in the 2003 Iraq War, reflecting a deep division among the Allies over the war's motives and aims.<sup>242</sup> NATO, however, agreed the implementation of measures to protect Turkey, which involved the deployment of AWACS aircraft under Operation Crescent Guard, as well as to the provision of planning support to the Polish-led Multinational Division that was part of the international stabilisation force in such areas as force generation, logistics and communications. Furthermore, disagreement over the Iraq War did not prevent Allies reaching consensus in 2003 on the gradual takeover of ISAF in Afghanistan by NATO, starting with Kabul and its immediate surroundings, and on the activation of the NRF that year.

The Alliance's engagement in Afghanistan since 2003 has exposed, however, the challenges involved in managing a collective effort involving 50 NATO and non-NATO nations, across many military and non-military lines of effort, in a distant and complex theatre. These challenges have included matching political engagement with military delivery; engaging Afghanistan's neighbours effectively; maintaining the operational coherence of the entire force, often deployed at remote locations across a vast country; ensuring combat effectiveness, force protection and real-life support in an austere environment; managing efficiently the disruption created by continuous force rotations and vulnerable resupply flows; securing key enablers from troop contributors, such as helicopters; and seeking the maximum level of mutual coherence and support between the ISAF and OEF chains of command up and downstream.

### *Developing a comprehensive strategy of engagement*

Many of these factors created the momentum necessary for NATO to develop a genuine, theatre-scale strategy to guide its engagement in Afghanistan. It took the form of a "Comprehensive, Strategic Political-Military Plan" (CSPMP) that was approved, in its initial version, by the Heads of State and Government of Afghanistan and all ISAF troop contributors at the NATO Summit held in Bucharest in spring 2008 and, in an updated version at the summer 2009 Strasbourg-Kehl

242 C. Bennett, "Book Review: NATO and the use of force", *NATO Review*, 2007.

Summit meeting.<sup>243</sup> In many ways, development of the CSPMP marked the higher form of NATO post-Cold War strategy-making during the “out-of-area” period that extended from 1992 to 2014. The CSPMP reflected a strengthening interaction and alignment between:

- a political impetus among the Allies and other ISAF troop-contributing nations to consolidate Afghan ownership of the stabilisation and reconstruction process in the country;
- a multi-domain consultation and planning process with the United States, as the leader of Operation Enduring Freedom and the largest ISAF troop contributor, the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union and the G-7 Group of industrial democracies, covering military and, particularly, non-military, lines of effort, where ISAF played a supporting role to other actors, such as in fighting the narcotics trade; and
- the final takeover by ISAF of operational responsibility in supporting the Afghan National Security Forces across the whole of Afghanistan with a very large footprint, extensive arrangements for real life support, rapid reaction, medical evacuation, and the provision of aerial support.

The build-up of ISAF was another example where strategy-making was able to generate constancy of purpose, despite the adversity encountered in attempting to stabilise a vast country that had witnessed constant strife since the fall of the Afghan monarchy in 1973.

While NATO’s gradual takeover of ISAF became the main driving force behind the Alliance’s further reorientation towards leading expeditionary operations beyond Europe, other factors were also at play. In 2002, NATO and Russia agreed on a deepening partnership, crystallized by the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council, confirming the process of mutual engagement initiated in 1997. This step opened the way to new forms of military-to-military cooperation, as well as access to Russian territory for the onward movement of ISAF forces deploying to Afghanistan. At the 2002 Prague Summit, Allies approved the creation of the NRF as a standing, joint expeditionary force that brought together the individual headquarters and affiliated forces of the NATO Force Structure into a NATO-

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243 *ISAF nations confirm long-term commitment to Afghanistan*, Bucharest Summit, 3 April 2008, NATO; and T. Farrell, F. Osinga and J. A. Russell (eds.), *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2013, pp.94-95.

led, tri-service structure. Lastly, in 2003 Allied Command Europe was relabelled as Allied Command Operations, to reflect NATO's strengthening operational orientation and to distinguish its operational responsibilities from the responsibilities for capability development and operational innovation assumed by the new Allied Command Transformation that replaced the former SACLANT. Here, again, the consensus-building impetus of strategy-making enabled the Allies to reconcile a very strong disagreement over the Iraq War with consensus on NATO taking over ISAF; pushing ahead with NATO's military transformation; pursuing the Alliance's enlargement with the admission of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia; and cooperating with Russia.

### *Preparing for short-notice, expeditionary operations beyond Europe*

In 2002, NATO conducted exercise Strong Resolve in Poland and Norway, its last collective defence exercise in Europe for over a decade. Exercise Strong Resolve 02 was a successor to the initial Strong Resolve exercise staged in 1998. It also involved practicing CJTF operations in two successive settings – a non-Article 5 crisis response phase in Poland and the Baltic Sea and an Article 5 collective defence phase in Norway and the Norwegian Sea, with the participation of 40,000 troops contributed by 15 Allies and 12 partners. The staging of part of the exercise in Poland, which had joined the Alliance three years earlier, alongside the Czech Republic and Hungary, was significant politically, as well as militarily. However, the Allies' widening force commitments in Afghanistan and the transition to the NRF, together with the conclusion of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, made large-scale collective defence exercises and CJTF operations, on a scale of 60,000 troops, appear out-of-touch with evolving strategic realities in Europe and operational priorities beyond Europe. As a result, the Strong Resolve exercise series were discontinued. NATO resumed planning and conducting collective defence exercises only in 2013 with exercise Steadfast Jazz, as an extension of the 2012 Connected Forces Initiative and under the shadow of a more belligerent Russia.

The shift to making the NRF a ready and rapidly deployable force intensified during the tenure of the new SACEUR, General James Jones. In 2006, exercise Steadfast Jaguar in the Cape Verde islands marked the attainment of the NRF's full operational capability. In 2012, NRF rotations, which since the activation of the Force in 2003, had lasted for six months, were extended to a year, to reduce

the turbulence created by an excessively frequent hand over between successive framework nations. While many Allies struggled to meet the force requirements associated with keeping the NRF ready, while also deploying forces on NATO-led and other operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and elsewhere, the NRF played an important role as an enabler for standardizing planning, logistical and command and control procedures among the headquarters of the NFS, and strengthening interoperability. Retrospectively, the creation of the NRF was a stroke of genius. Without the NRF, the high readiness headquarters of the NFS were isolated pools of deployable capability. Without these headquarters as its component commands, the NRF would be an empty shell. When the time came to enhance the NRF in 2014, with the creation of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the investment made by the Allies, notably European Allies, in sustaining the NRF since 2003, against heavy headwinds and recurrent, but often misplaced, criticism, paid off handsomely.<sup>244</sup>

The new Strategic Concept approved at the 2010 Lisbon Summit, while reconfirming the primacy of mutual defence commitments – the ironclad pledge that “NATO members will always assist each other against attack”<sup>245</sup> – maintained a strong focus on the Alliance’s other two core tasks – crisis management and cooperative security. It also reflected lessons from operations in the Balkans and in Afghanistan on the importance of embedding NATO’s contribution to wider efforts by the international community into a “comprehensive approach”, on the ground as well as at higher levels, and the desirability of anticipating reconstruction efforts in any military planning, while executing stabilisation operations. NATO’s participation with naval assets in counter-piracy efforts off the eastern coast of Africa and its engagement in Libya in 2011, as well as the contribution of its AWACS force to the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), confirmed the Alliance’s readiness to act to help preserve international peace and security and to lend support to the protection of civilians in conflict zones. It also demonstrated NATO’s ability to work alongside other international organisations and command structures – the UN, the EU and the US-led Combined Maritime Forces in the field

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244 The VJTF, with a land component of brigade strength of approximately 5,000 troops at very high readiness, replaced the NRF’s earlier Immediate Response Force, which was kept at a lower level of readiness. In order to ease command and control arrangements, the framework nation which, at the start of each 12 month-long NRF rotation, assumes command of the NRF’s larger Land Component Command also takes command of the VJTF’s land component.

245 *Active Engagement, Modern Defence*, Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Lisbon Summit, 19-20 November 2010, p.7.

of counter-piracy – or work within non-NATO command structures, as well as to take over from coalition operations. In Libya, for instance, NATO's Operation Unified Protector succeeded the US-led coalition operation Odyssey Dawn at the end of March 2011, within two weeks of the latter being launched.

In the meantime, completing a process of rapprochement initiated in 1993, France reintegrated militarily into NATO in 2009, and the United States handed over the Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation (SACT) position (successor to the former SACLANT), thereby enabling an Ally with a strong military capacity to play its full role in the Alliance.

### ***Taking over unexpectedly in Libya (2011)***

NATO's operational engagement in Libya in 2011 was unlike any other until then. In Bosnia-and-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Afghanistan, as well as in support of counter-piracy efforts, NATO's involvement had been gradual, with intermediate steps planned over several months and, most often, extending over several months or years. In Libya, a coalition led by three Allies – France, the United Kingdom and the United States – and involving several more took action at short notice, on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions, to enforce a maritime arms embargo and an air exclusion zone, as well as, importantly, protect civilians without a military presence on the ground. Coalition operations were coordinated under the auspices of Operation Odyssey Dawn led by the US Africa Command, with on-the-scene command being exercised by the maritime component commander of Africa Command, Admiral Samuel Locklear, from aboard the US 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet's flagship, the USS *Mount Whitney*.

Because of the fast pace of developments on the ground in Libya, including an immediate threat to civilians in Benghazi, action by the coalition overtook the planning process and the phased deployment of assets to airbases in southern Europe, principally Greece and Italy. This resulted in command and control structures having to be adjusted as air operations were already underway and host nation support arrangements not being fully completed. Within a few days, a widening consensus emerged concurrently inside the coalition and within the Alliance on the desirability of NATO assuming leadership for the engagement in Libya. A speedy transfer of responsibility to NATO was pursued, as a means to fulfil the requirement formulated by several Allies to enhance collective political control over the operation, as well

as meet the preference expressed by the United States for transferring leadership of the operation to either France and the United Kingdom or to NATO. To reflect visibly the handover of the operation from the United States, political control of the NATO successor operation – Operation Unified Protector – passed from the *ad hoc* steering committee that had overseen Odyssey Dawn to the North Atlantic Council. Concurrently, command of Unified Protector was assumed by the deputy commander of NATO's Allied Joint Force Command, Naples, Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard of the Royal Canadian Air Force. NATO's takeover was facilitated by the fact that the vast majority of forces involved in the two operations were the same, as well as by a standing familiarity among Allies with such transfers of authority between national and NATO chains of command.

The international intervention in Libya prevented large-scale bloodshed in circumstances of considerable tension and immediate threats to the civilian population. Assessments and investigations of the intervention in the years since have pointed out that the information available regarding the situation on the ground in Libya in March 2011 seemingly was insufficient to justify military action. However, it is precisely because of that uncertainty over the scale and immediacy of the risk to the Libyan civilian population in and around Benghazi of a large scale loss of life that individual Allies initially, under Operation Odyssey Dawn, and NATO as a whole thereafter, felt compelled to act and keep that threat to civilians from marauding Libyan Army forces removed. Subsequent political developments in Libya do not invalidate that initial, protective impulse. This episode illustrates, however, the risks of aiming for only an incomplete end state, or of generating unintended consequences, inherent in any operational engagement, when the attainment of political objectives and the provision of military effects are not sufficiently well synchronised from the start. NATO, with its time-tested consultation and planning processes, offers an established framework where those risks can be usefully mitigated and managed, provided that military delivery can take place effectively and in a timely way.

The Unified Protector air campaign also brought to light enduring gaps in NATO's capacity to initiate and direct an expeditionary air campaign on short notice, and sustain a high tempo of operations thereafter. The NATO air command at Izmir, Turkey, relocated to the NATO Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Poggio Renatico, Italy, but the CAOC was not prepared to undertake the role of Unified Protector air operations centre (AOC) without additional time and



augmentation. Handover to NATO required a large part of the Joint Force Air Component Command personnel from the Odyssey Dawn participating nations to relocate from Ramstein to Poggio Renatico and augment the Unified Protector air operations centre. The AOC also did not have the required technical capacity and human expertise to process near real-time targeting information.

These deficiencies illustrate starkly the Alliance's post-Cold War operational dilemma: since the end of the Cold War, NATO's Command Structure has often been insufficiently robust and ready to lead large-scale operations involving an initial surge, which triggers a preference for using national chains of command and coalition approaches. At the same time, Allies cannot be expected to provide readily the additional human and financial resources necessary to enhance the Command Structure's operational capacity on a permanent basis, if that capacity is seldom put to use in actual operations.

The air campaign also exposed persistent shortfalls among European Allies in their capacity to generate a high number of fighter sorties, deliver precision-guided munitions (PGMs), acquire airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance data, and provide escort jamming and air-to-air refuelling. Both sets of shortcomings – those affecting NATO and those affecting Allies – highlighted the Alliance's excessive dependence on US contributions in many capability areas, even in capability areas where NATO's own operational capacity, such as command and control, should be unsurpassed, or which are technologically and financially accessible to European Allies and Canada, such as PGMs and tankers.

The lessons learned from Unified Protector triggered remedial action. Highlights include the standing up of a NATO Deployable Air Command and Control Centre at Poggio Renatico to provide additional air command and control capacity and train a pool of deployable AOC augmentees, as well as the launching of procurement programmes to acquire, bilaterally or multilaterally, airborne stand-off jammers, drones, air-to-ground PGMs and tankers.<sup>246</sup> These enhancements have

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246 Poland and Turkey are cooperating in the area of airborne electronic attack. Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States are pursuing the development of maritime unmanned systems cooperatively. France and Germany are developing a Medium Altitude Long Endurance drone. Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom, as well as Finland, are procuring PGMs together. Lastly, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Norway will acquire collectively Airbus A330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft and establish a multinationally-owned and operated fleet of MRTTs.

been facilitated by the commitment by European Allies and Canada at successive NATO summits to fill capability shortfalls and, following approval of a Defence Investment Pledge (DIP) at the 2014 Wales Summit, by steady increases in their defence expenditures since 2015, which are expected to reach an aggregate total of some USD100 billion in real terms by the end of 2020.<sup>247</sup>

More generally, lessons learned from ISAF and from two decades of operations triggered approval of the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) at the spring 2012 Chicago Summit, with the aim of preserving the gains in operational effectiveness and interoperability among the forces returning to their garrisons in Europe and North America, through an ambitious programme of exercises. CFI set the stage, for instance, for the execution in 2015 of one of NATO's largest exercises since the end of the Cold War – Trident Juncture 15.

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<sup>247</sup> J. Marson, "NATO Members Lift Military Spending, but Remain Below Goals", *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 March 2019.

## NATO's strategy-making and the post-2014 “reset”

NATO's decisions at the Chicago Summit to transition by the end of December 2014 from a combat mission in Afghanistan to a smaller, follow-on non-combat mission (*Resolute Support*) and to launch the Connected Forces Initiative signalled the anticipation of a lowering tempo of operations and the need to preserve good practices from overseas operations. That anticipation conformed to the continuing perception of the absence of a major threat in Europe, even though Russia's occupation of sovereign Georgian territory after the summer 2008 war had been a first, strong warning that Moscow was intent on restoring an area of privileged influence on its periphery, including through the use of force. The decisions at Chicago opened the way to a ten-fold reduction in the volume of personnel involved in NATO and NATO-led operations, compared to the level of 2010 (140,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan and Kosovo; with additional forces deployed at sea in the framework of the maritime operations Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea and Ocean Shield in the Indian Ocean). This downward trend reflected a growing wish among the Allies to reduce the human and financial costs, and related domestic political pressures, associated with the conduct of large-scale expeditionary operations, as well as regenerate the forces, against the backdrop of declining defence spending since 2009-2010.

Allied leaders at Chicago in spring 2012 could not have anticipated, however, that, two years later, Russia would occupy and annex illegally the Crimean Peninsula, representing a direct challenge to the cooperative Euro-Atlantic order established at the end of the Cold War, and prompting a fundamental reconsideration by NATO of the security environment in Europe. Russia's challenge was amplified by enduring support to separatist movements in the Donbas region of Ukraine, as well as other belligerent behaviour. The latter has included since 2014 the persistent practice of regularly conducting large-scale manoeuvres and no-notice, snap alert exercises<sup>248</sup>; the violation of the INF Treaty through the deployment of a new

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248 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, *Theatre operations, high commands and large-scale exercises in Soviet and Russian military practice*,

class of prohibited ground-launched cruise missiles; the use of a weapons-grade chemical agent in Salisbury, United Kingdom; and the conduct of hostile deception and disinformation operations involving cyber means and hybrid activities. Today, Russia is the only country in the Euro-Atlantic area that stages exercises on a scale of 100,000 men or more and that rehearses the execution of war fighting operations on that scale. That strategic capacity is backed up with an increasingly diversified capability of conventional, nuclear and dual-capable ballistic and cruise missiles.<sup>249</sup> Together, these two developments are transforming Europe's strategic landscape.

In the Middle East, the rapid rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in the shadow of the intensifying hostilities in the latter country, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa, signalled a new development in the spread of extremist ideologies and movements. NATO is not involved in national or coalition operations in either Syria or sub-Saharan Africa. However, NATO's contribution of AWACS aircraft to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and of airlift and other support for the African Union for its peace-keeping operation in Somalia, as well as the participation of forces from several Allies in US-led operations in the Middle East and French-led operations in Mali, has brought new urgency to the task of projecting stability in the Alliance's southern periphery. The objective of helping partner countries in North Africa and the Near East strengthen their security structures and their own capacity to contribute to regional security is being pursued actively, through intensifying programmes of cooperation with Mediterranean Dialogue partners.

### ***Russia's belligerence and the rise of ISIS change NATO's post-ISAF calculus***

The strategic reset initiated in the run-up to the Wales Summit, following the occupation and annexation of the Crimea Peninsula, was as unwelcome, as it was necessary, because Russia's behaviour in Ukraine called directly into question the assumptions that had underpinned the Alliance's post-Cold War policy of promoting a Europe whole, free and at peace. That policy has included, as a central pillar, a

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*op. cit.*; and D. Johnson, "Vostok 2018: ten years of Russian strategic exercises and warfare preparation", *NDC Policy Brief* No.3, February 2019.

249 D. Johnson, "Russia's conventional precision strike capabilities, regional crises, and nuclear thresholds", *Livermore Papers on Global Security* No.3, Center for Global Security Research, Livermore, California, February 2018.

deepening partnership with the Russian Federation.<sup>250</sup> NATO's response has been both resolute and reassuring. Its scope and momentum provide strong evidence that the practices of strategy-making set in place seventy years ago remain effective in building up and sustaining an Allied consensus in changing circumstances and in an enlarged Alliance. These include setting out strategic objectives, such as ensuring the protection of all Allies from threats arising from any direction; developing an agenda for common action focused on a vast panoply of measures to strengthen assurance, deterrence and defence; and implementing the resulting agreements and arrangements. The intensified process of assessment and political consultation on the changed security landscape in Europe brought about by Russia's actions in Ukraine, as well as by the rise of ISIS, and their implications for the Alliance, established a new baseline, and helped set NATO in a new direction.

The outcome – combining the Alliance's three core tasks to deliver both a strengthened deterrence and defence posture within the North Atlantic Treaty area and an enhanced capacity to project stability beyond – was not preordained. Sustaining the consensus on an overall strengthened deterrence and defence posture required satisfying varied perspectives on the distinct security requirements of NATO's eastern, southern and northern flanks, as well as on the balance to be sought between deterring and engaging Russia. Those perspectives reflected not only the necessarily diverse influence of geography across an expanded membership, but also the differentiated legacy of Europe's division during the Cold War and attitudes towards Russia. Hence, measures to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture in northeast and southeast Europe had to accommodate the persistent, but rotational nature of Allied forward presence in both areas, while also being complemented with a framework for adapting that posture to the security challenges on the Alliance's southern periphery. NATO's "participatory" nature also made progress dependent on Allies being prepared to lead and make contributions, individually, as well as multilaterally.

As was often the case during the Cold War, the coherence of the overall construct that emerged eventually from the cumulative impact of decisions taken at the Wales (2014), Warsaw (2016) and Brussels (2018) Summits became apparent,

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250 T. Bagger, "The World According to Germany: Reassessing 1989", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2019, pp.53-63, provides an enlightening and sobering assessment of why Russia's March 2014 *coup de force* shook the cooperative post-Cold War security order to its foundations, prompting a painful reassessment in the West of the assumptions that had underpinned its resolute pursuit.

**Figure 3. Elements of NATO's Deterrence and Defence**

Source: NATO

**Baltic Air Policing mission**

**Mission**

Protecting the airspace of the Baltic States

**Location**

 Estonia  Latvia  Lithuania  Poland

**Contributing nations**

 Belgium (Siaulai, Lithuania) Autumn/Winter  
 Denmark (Siaulai, Lithuania) Winter/Spring  
 France (Amari, Estonia) Spring/Summer  
 Germany (Amari, Estonia) Autumn/Winter  
 Italy (Amari, Estonia) Winter/Spring  
 Portugal (Siaulai, Lithuania) Spring/Summer  
 Spain (Siaulai, Lithuania or Malbork, Poland) Spring/Summer

**Support and Assurance for Turkey**




**Mission**

Reinforcing Turkey's air defences

**Location**

 Turkey

**Contributing nations**




 Italy (Kahramanmaraş, Turkey) - Surface-to-air missile batteries  
 Spain (Adana, Turkey) - Surface-to-air missile batteries  
 NATO - AWACS aircraft

**Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance**


**Mission**

Supporting decision-makers with timely information and intelligence

**Location**

 Germany  Italy  United Kingdom

**NATO assets**

 NATO - AGS Global Hawk, AWACS aircraft

**Standing Naval Forces**

**Mission**

Providing the Alliance with a continuous naval presence

**Location**

The Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea

**NATO assets**






 NATO - Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMG1 & 2), Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups (SNMCMG1 & 2)

**AWACS patrols over Eastern Europe**

**Mission**

Patrolling the skies over Eastern Europe

**Contributing nations & NATO assets**


 France  Greece  Turkey  
 United Kingdom  
 NATO - AWACS aircraft

**Framework for the South: regional Hub for the South**

**Mission**

Improving regional understanding and anticipation of threats emanating from the south

**Location**

 Italy - Joint Force Command Naples

**Contributing nations**

21 Allies contribute with Voluntary National Contributions and reassigned JFC Naples staff




### Iceland Peacetime Preparedness

#### Mission

Protecting Iceland's airspace

#### Location

 Iceland, Keflavik

#### Contributing nations



 Denmark (Winter/Spring)  
 Italy (Autumn/Winter)  
 United States (Spring/Summer)

### Enhanced NATO Response Force / Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

#### Mission

Ready to deploy at short notice for crisis management or collective defence

#### Location

 Joint Force Command Brunssum (eNRF 2018)  
 Italy (VJTF lead nation 2018)

#### Contributing nations

Enhanced NATO Response Force (eNRF): 27 Allies  
 Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF): 22 Allies

### NATO's Forward Presence

#### Mission

Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence

#### Location

 Estonia  Latvia  Lithuania  Poland  Romania  Bulgaria

#### Contributing nations

ESTONIA	Framework nation:  United Kingdom  Denmark  Iceland
LATVIA	Framework nation:  Canada  Albania  Czech Republic  Italy  Montenegro  Poland  Slovakia  Slovenia  Spain
LITHUANIA	Framework nation:  Germany  Belgium  Czech Republic  France (until August)  Iceland  Luxembourg (since August)  Netherlands  Norway
POLAND	Framework nation:  United States  Croatia  Romania  United Kingdom
BULGARIA	 Bulgaria  Canada  Hungary  Italy
ROMANIA	 Luxembourg  Poland  Portugal  Romania
AND BLACK SEA	 Spain  Turkey  United Kingdom  United States

### Ballistic Missile Defence

#### Mission


Protecting NATO's populations, territory and forces


#### Location

 Germany  Romania  Poland  Spain  
 Turkey

#### NATO assets

 United States (Rota, Spain) - US Aegis BMD-capable ships  
 United States (Deveselu, Romania) - Aegis ashore  
 United States (Kürecik, Turkey) - BMD tracking sensor  
 United States (Redzikowo, Poland) - Aegis ashore (2020)  
 NATO (Ramstein, Germany) - Allied Air Command

 NATO members

 NATO partners

Map data as at December 2018

0 500 km



and the focus of particular attention, only towards the end of the reset process. An enduring characteristic was noticeable, however, from the start: the need to balance an immediate need for visible assurance, in the wake of Crimea's annexation, in the form of shorter term "assurance measures", with a longer term requirement for persistent adaptation. Accordingly, the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) launched at the Wales Summit in September 2014 merged into the wider effort to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture and the centre of gravity of that effort shifted from assurance to lasting deterrence and defence. By the time of the Brussels Summit in July 2018, key enabling elements for effective deterrence and defence, such as reinforcement and logistical enablement, had assumed greater salience and weight, reflecting a higher level of ambition in responding to a more complex and adverse security landscape. Whereas at Wales and Warsaw NATO's evolving deterrence and defence posture was described as being designed to counter current threats and future challenges from wherever they arise, the Brussels Summit's communiqué added that threats could arise potentially "from multiple directions in more than one region"<sup>251</sup> This addition reflected an acknowledgement that the Alliance's strengthened deterrence and defence posture had to be sufficiently robust to counter effectively several threats across the North Atlantic Treaty area simultaneously.

### ***A transformed NATO (2014-2019)***

Full implementation of decisions taken at the Wales, Warsaw and Brussels Summits is still underway and further adaptation of the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture is likely, in the light of lessons learned and, possibly, future developments in the international environment. Key components of that strengthened posture include (See Figure 3 on pages 94-95):<sup>252</sup>

- Assurance measures:
  - Rotational presence on the Alliance's eastern periphery of Allied maritime patrol and NATO airborne early warning aircraft; NATO Standing Naval Forces; and Allied air, land and maritime units for exercises;

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251 Brussels Summit Declaration, NATO, 11 July 2018, para. 12.

252 Wales Summit Declaration, 5 September 2014; Warsaw Summit Communiqué, 9 July 2016; Brussels Summit Declaration, 11 July 2018.



- Tailored assurance measures for Turkey, in the form, notably, of Allied surface-to-air missile batteries to augment NATO's air defences in Turkey.
- Persistent forward presence:
  - Enhanced Forward Presence composed of four multinational battle groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States, respectively;
  - Tailored Forward Presence involving a Romanian-led Multinational Brigade, as well as Allied air and land training in Bulgaria and Romania and maritime activity in the Black Sea.
- High responsiveness:
  - Very high readiness Joint Task Force of approximately 5,000 troops (brigade-size land component, with air and maritime support), able to deploy at short notice very rapidly;
  - Enhanced NATO Response Force (division-size land component, with air, maritime and special operations forces support).  
Together these two measures have tripled the size of NRF to some 40,000 troops.
- High readiness:
  - "NATO Readiness Initiative": from the existing, overall pool of forces, an additional 30 major naval combatants; 30 heavy or medium manoeuvre battalions; and 30 kinetic fighter squadrons, available at 30 day readiness or less.
- Rapid reinforcement:
  - Heavier, high end, fully-supported, deployable forces.
- Logistic enablement and mobility:
  - Eight NATO Force Integration Units in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia;
  - NATO Standing Joint Logistic Support Group;
  - Prepositioning of equipment and supplies;
  - Host nation support;
  - Cross-border crossing authorities and enabled movement routes.
- Airspace integrity and air superiority:
  - NATO-wide air policing and enhanced air policing in Estonia, Bulgaria and Romania;
  - NATO Joint Force Air Component;

- Joint Airpower strategy.
- Maritime presence and joint expeditionary engagement:
  - Enhanced NATO Standing Naval Forces;
  - Naval Striking and Support Forces, NATO (STRIKFORNATO);
  - Strengthened Alliance maritime posture.
- Enhanced awareness and command and control capacity:
  - Multinational Corps Northeast, Poland;
  - Multinational Division Southeast, Romania;
  - Multinational Brigade Southeast, Romania;
  - Multinational Division Northeast, Poland;
  - Multinational Division North, Latvia;
  - Framework Division offered by Italy in support of the “Framework for the South”;
  - Allied Joint Force Command, Norfolk, United States;
  - Allied Joint Support and Enablement Command, Ulm, Germany.
- Effective training and exercising:
  - Large, live, joint exercises led by NATO every three years – Trident Juncture 15 in Italy, Portugal and Spain and Trident Juncture 18 in Norway – in addition to annual VJTF live deployment exercises and NRF live air and maritime exercises.<sup>253</sup>

NATO’s major exercise activity this decade has demonstrated the Alliance’s commitment to, and growing capacity to deliver on, a 360-degree approach to deterrence and defence: exercises Steadfast Jazz in Poland in 2013, Trident Juncture in Italy, Portugal and Spain in 2015 and Trident Juncture again in 2018, this time in Norway, provided the successive venues for deploying a combined joint force on the Alliance’s eastern, southern and northern flanks.<sup>254</sup> NATO exercises are complemented with live, multinational exercises led by individual Allies (e.g., Cold Response by Norway; Anakonda and Dragon by Poland; Joint Warrior by the United Kingdom; and Saber Guardian and Saber Strike by the United States).

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253 Of particular notice, exercise Trident Juncture 18 involved the participation of an aircraft-carrier – the USS *Harry Truman* – marking the first deployment of a US Navy carrier battle group to the Norwegian Sea since exercise *North Star* in 1991.

254 Exercises Trident Juncture 15 and 18 involved approximately 35,000 and 50,000 troops, respectively. In assessing NATO’s recovered capacity to exercise a large combined joint force, these aggregate figures compare favourably with exercises Silver Tower in 1968 (40,000), Strong Express in 1972 (over 60,000), Strong Resolve in 1998 (40,000) and Strong Resolve in 2002 (50,000).

Together, these measures conform to a wholesale and determined strengthening of NATO's deterrence and defence posture, combining the three pillars of enhanced force readiness and responsiveness, command and control, and reinforcement and sustainment. The Enhanced and Tailored Forward Presence, the VJTF and the balance of the Enhanced NRF, and the additional forces addressed by the NATO Readiness Initiative, represent the building blocks of a multi-tiered set of ready and capable forces. These forces report to a standing and seamless command and control architecture that extends from the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas, across Central and Western Europe, to the Atlantic Ocean and North America's eastern seaboard. Under SHAPE, that command and control structure includes the three Multi-National Division headquarters in Romania, Poland and Latvia and the Multi-National Corps Northeast in Poland, together with the three Allied Joint Force headquarters in Brunssum, Naples and Norfolk and the three single service Allied air, land and maritime headquarters at Ramstein, Izmir and Northwood. Lastly, force movement, integration and sustainment are the province of the NFIUs and the new Joint Support and Enablement Command at Ulm. In addition, at any one time, three NRF single-service component command headquarters drawn from the NATO Force Structure are on standing alert, ready to assume command over the VJTF and follow-on NRF forces.

Progress in several of the categories listed above will be dependent on strengthened multinational cooperation, including through such mechanisms as NATO's Framework Nations' Concept<sup>255</sup> and the multilateral Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACEIT) initiative, as well as adequate common funding for extending and upgrading infrastructure. In addition, the Alliance has strengthened its deterrence and defence posture on its southern periphery by adopting a dedicated policy framework for the South that includes the standing up of a "Hub for the South" within the headquarters of the Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, Italy. Lastly, NATO has set in place strong policies and capabilities to enhance the civil resilience of Allies, counter hybrid threats and strengthen cyber defence, including in cooperation with the European Union.<sup>256</sup> As part of a strengthening cyber defence capacity, NATO has recognised cyber as an operational domain, alongside the land, air and maritime domains. Together, these

255 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, "The framework nations' concept and NATO: game-changer for a new strategic era or missed opportunity?", *Research Paper* 132, NDC, Rome, July 2016.

256 G. Lasconjarias and J. Larsen (eds.), "NATO's response to hybrid threats", *Forum Paper* No.24, NDC, Rome, 2015.

elements provide the components of what could become an overarching Deterrence and Defence military concept to address and counter effectively conventional, nuclear, hybrid and cyber threats, including in a systemically ambiguous environment.

Implementation of the Readiness Action Plan and Strengthened Deterrence and Defence Posture was underpinned and, often, spearheaded by two complementary US initiatives: Operation Atlantic Resolve<sup>257</sup> and the European Deterrence Initiative.<sup>258</sup> Key lines of effort of these initiatives include the augmentation of the US permanent military presence in Europe with rotational deployments, such as “theater security packages” involving the temporary stationing of USAF fighter squadrons at airbases in Europe; the rotational deployment to Poland of USAF fighter and tactical transport squadrons based in Germany; the stationing of a US Army division-level “mission command element” in Poland, to exercise command and control over an armoured brigade combat team deploying with its equipment from the United States for nine month-long “heel-to-toe” rotations; and the opening of prepositioned equipment storage sites in Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands, as well as, in future, in Poland, to support the rapid deployment of another armoured brigade, as well as the augmentation of the division-level Mission Command Element headquarters, a field artillery brigade and other units.

In addition, the United States is making an important contribution, with its European Phased, Adaptive Approach in the field of missile defence, to the strengthening of NATO’s overall missile defence capacity against the threat represented by ballistic missile launches originating from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. This contribution has made missile defence one of the strategic capabilities underpinning the transatlantic link, alongside the US military presence in Europe and NATO’s extended deterrence arrangements. Earlier initiatives by the United States, as framework nation, have included standing up Headquarters, Naval Striking

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257 Operation Atlantic Resolve (AOR) draws its name from exercise Atlantic Resolve staged in Germany in 1994. At the time, exercise Atlantic Resolve was foreseen becoming the successor to the REFORGER exercises, the last of which took place in 1993. However, the US Army’s involvement in 1995 in generating IFOR for duty in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina, plus growing scepticism over the continuing need for such transatlantic reinforcement exercises after the completion of the withdrawal of Russian forces from eastern Germany, contributed to make Exercise Atlantic Resolve 94 a one-time event. However, with the name AOR, the REFORGER lineage and legacy have been preserved.

258 NATO uses the term “assurance” instead of “reassurance”. In 2017, the European Readiness Initiative (ERI) was relabelled European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) to conform to the wider NATO transition from the Readiness Action Plan to a strengthened deterrence and defence posture. EDI/ERI is the mechanism to channel US DoD funding to strengthen the US European Command’s posture. EDI funding increased from less than USD1 billion in Fiscal Year 2015, starting on 1 October 2014, to nearly USD4.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2018.

and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) in 2004<sup>259</sup>, a NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre in the United Kingdom in 2006 and the NATO Special Operations Forces Headquarters, within the SHAPE compound in Belgium, in 2010. The United States also worked closely with Estonia in setting up a Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. In each case, the US contribution played an enabling role for the development of a broader NATO collective capacity, such as NATO's new airborne ground surveillance force, or new multinational capabilities, for instance, a regional special operations command between Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as Austria.<sup>260</sup>

As a result, the US military posture in Europe is considerably more diversified, if significantly smaller, than during the Cold War, and includes enabling capabilities that make a distinct, and often unique, contribution to NATO in areas of strategic importance:

- Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance;
- Maritime expeditionary warfare;<sup>261</sup>
- Special Operations Forces;
- Missile defence; and
- Cyber defence.

Complementing this strengthened deterrence and defence posture, NATO has also been enhancing its capacity to project stability in its eastern and southern neighbourhoods, as well as to contribute to the international fight against terrorism. Measures taken since Wales have included:

- expanded Defence Capacity-Building support to interested partners;
- strengthening of the *Resolute Support Mission* to train, advice and assist the Afghan National Security Forces;

259 STRIKFORNATO is a NATO Force Structure multinational headquarters built around the US 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet that has the capacity to generate and lead a NATO Extended Task Force composed of several aircraft carriers and a large amphibious force. It is the successor to NATO's Cold War STRIKFORSOUTH. In 2010, the headquarters relocated from Naples to Lisbon.

260 "Four Allies and one partner will create a regional Special Operations command", NATO Headquarters, 13 February 2019.

261 The periodic deployment of an aircraft-carrier with the US 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet, starting in 2014, restores a Cold War practice of keeping one to two carriers in the Mediterranean Sea at all times.

- launching of the NATO Mission in Iraq to support capacity-building in various fields, as well as defence sector reform;
- contribution to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

NATO's military posture has also been adapted to support enhanced engagement with partner countries located on NATO's southern periphery. Continuing engagement with these partners, in particular, supports a sharing of strategic perspectives and operational experiences that can facilitate a strengthening of regional security structures and practices. In addition, initiatives by Italy and other Allies to develop a regional *pôle d'excellence* in southern Europe, by leveraging the Security Force Assistance and Stability Policing Centres of Excellence and the Multinational Civil-Military Cooperation Group, could help strengthen further NATO's military capability to deliver defence capacity-building assistance in permissive and semi-permissive environments.

Looking back on the three decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the wide spectrum and diversity of NATO's contributions and missions today make it virtually impossible to describe the Alliance in any single way. While concerns have been expressed at times that the finite resources of Allies are being dispersed across an excessive number of endeavours, NATO's multi-dimensional and evolving nature helps ensure its continuing relevance to an unpredictable security environment and to the diverse security needs of its members and partners. There is no return to the Alliance of 1949-1989, although NATO's Cold War record should continue to be a source of inspiration for strategic steadfastness and operational innovation.

# Conclusion

## Reflecting on NATO's seven decade-long “strategic odyssey”

After 2014, the Alliance, again, has transformed, as it did following the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 terrorist attacks to reflect its successive enlargements, broadening partnerships and the requirements and lessons from operational engagements within and beyond Europe. Much has been achieved since the Wales Summit in adapting the Alliance to a more complex and threatening security environment in and around Europe and strengthening its deterrence and defence posture, while pursuing actively the aim of projecting stability. As Allies continue to commemorate this year the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, with a Leaders' meeting scheduled in the United Kingdom, in December, NATO's primary focus remains, as it should be, on implementing the decisions agreed at the Wales, Warsaw and Brussels Summits and on anticipating and preparing for future challenges.

### *Lessons from the strategic odyssey*

NATO's record of performance since 1949, in successive and widely different strategic settings, suggests that the Allies have been well served by adhering to a handful of enduring principles and practices:

- the resourcing with readily available forces of a NATO that is “in-being” operationally in peacetime, for purposes of visible deterrence and assurance, as well as responsive crisis management;
- the mutually supportive relationship between broad-based multinationality and a “lead role” for the larger Allies in helping leverage the distinct contribution of every nation; and
- the complementarity of purpose between seeking a more equitable sharing of roles, responsibilities and burdens on a transatlantic basis and

European aspirations to make a more effective and efficient contribution to the Alliance.

Sustaining these principles and practices in the current security environment calls for a NATO that has restored in its collective arrangements the mindset of a tightly-knit mutual defence alliance, while preserving the flexibility necessary to respond effectively to evolving non-traditional threats, including the capability of non-state actors to inflict harm upon civilians on a large scale. The historical record also shows that the Alliance’s “participatory” character, where every Ally contributes actively to the common enterprise, is its greatest source of legitimacy and strength. NATO works to best effect when policies and arrangements have been devised that leverage and value the contribution of each Ally. Accordingly, there is merit in considering and developing specific strategies and arrangements that enhance further the contributions of European Allies and of Canada to the Alliance and to strengthened security. Lastly, for decades, Alliance nations have been at the forefront of technological innovation in the military and commercial fields. NATO should continue to be an institutional enabler for technology-focused information sharing and for the collective application of promising solutions, notably to enhance situational awareness, facilitate consultation, and strengthen connectivity and interoperability. Strengthened NATO Communications and Information Systems’ innovation and resilience can be a genuine “unity and force multiplier” for NATO and Allies, as this was the case at critical junctures in the Alliance’s evolution; the lack of it could be a fatal vulnerability.

### *Looking back*

During both the Cold War and in its aftermath, the attention to keeping NATO united and ready, by focusing on the future and adapting its overall strategic posture to changing circumstances and future requirements, and by overcoming operational shortfalls and institutional shortcomings, has been the key to its successful record. This is why being familiar with NATO’s rich strategic and operational legacy, as a political-military alliance and as an institution, remains fundamental to setting its future direction most appropriately and ensuring its continuing relevance. Strategy-making – the continuous engagement of Allies in developing and agreeing common concepts and policies and in devising and adapting strategic postures and operational arrangements to implement them – was the key ingredient in sustaining



a constancy of purpose in often turbulent times and challenging circumstances.

This *Research Paper* has tried to make clear that this legacy can be best understood as a unique, “strategic odyssey” among sovereign, democratic nations, spanning decades, successive generations and several phases of international relations. In this endeavour, each Ally, large and small, European and North American, has had to play its unique part, fully, and will be expected to continue to do so. Successive Secretaries General have endeavoured to keep the focus of attention on the higher, collective good and on the grave risks for all of failing to do so. Successive SACEURs and other NATO Commanders have played the key role of showing the way towards a strengthened Alliance and merging the, often, disparate national perspectives and capabilities of proud military establishments into a formidable Allied capacity, by virtue of the international responsibilities vested in them.

Allies have benefited considerably from the decisions of 1949 to entrust to the Atlantic Alliance, as a strategic actor, the responsibility for their collective defence and security. As a result, they have been stronger and more secure and prosperous; the historical record on this is remarkable and unmistakable.



# Annex A

## Use of declassified and disclosed NATO documents

Over the past two decades, the NATO Archives staff at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, have undertaken a systematic review of NATO's Cold War and early post-Cold War classified document holdings, under the auspices and guidance of the NATO Archives Committee. A large number of documents has been declassified and publicly disclosed. They are held in the custody of the NATO Archivist ([archives.nato.int](http://archives.nato.int)). Many are accessible on-line.

The research that has underpinned the drafting of this *Research Paper* has relied extensively, for the Cold War period, on a review of NATO's declassified and disclosed documents. This review has allowed drafting to take place on the basis of access to NATO authoritative documents to an extent that is, possibly, unprecedented.

A systematic review of documents belonging to the NATO Military Committee (MC) and its two executive bodies – the Standing Group (SG) between 1949 and 1966 and the International Military Staff (IMS) thereafter – yielded many insights on evolving NATO and Allied strategic perspectives and operational challenges and responses, up to the late 1960s and, more sparingly, the mid-1980s. The applicable document series include the following:

- MC policy documents (MC);
- MC Memoranda (MCM);
- SG Memoranda (SGM);
- IMS Memoranda (IMSM); and
- IMS Working Memoranda (IMSWM).

These series provide a useful tie and balance between the detailed advice provided by the Major NATO Commanders (SACEUR, SACLANT and CINCHAN) and the more succinct assessments and recommendations often found in policy and political-military documents issued to the North Atlantic Council and its subordinate committees.



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