



COME HOME, NATO?

THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE'S NEW STRATEGIC
CONCEPT

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Contents

Abstract	4
Introduction	5
1. What is NATO's Strategic Concept?	6
2. Controversies: Old NATO or New NATO?	16
2.1 Political NATO: Threats and Fundamental Security Tasks	16
2.2 Military NATO: Preparing to Meet Future Threats and Challenges	21
3. Conclusion: Global NATO or regional NATO?	25
Defence and Security Studies at DIIS	28

Abstract

In this report, we provide an overview of the political and military issues that are likely to shape the coming discussions about NATO's new Strategic Concept. NATO's current Strategic Concept dates back to 1999 and over the last couple years an increasing number of policy-makers have suggested that it is time to take stock of the transatlantic Alliance. The exercise is significant because the Strategic Concept represents the operational view of the Washington Treaty – the basic text of NATO – and because it will bequeath a new strategic direction to the Alliance. In the report we present three arguments. One is that the Strategic Concept serves several functions: it codifies past decision and existing practices; it provides strategic direction; and it serves as an instrument of public diplomacy. Our second argument is that the new Strategic Concept must balance the push and pull of two competing visions of NATO, one being 'Come home, NATO;' the other being 'Globalize, stupid.' The contest between these diverging visions has consequences for a number of issues that the Strategic Concept must address. Lastly, we argue that although the agenda of globalization is being questioned, NATO will continue down the path of global engagement.

Introduction

NATO is likely to begin a review of its Strategic Concept following the April 2009 summit in Strasbourg-Kehl that will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Alliance. A new Strategic Concept will then be ready for 2010 or 2011, depending on the level of political ambition and the pace of negotiations. The current Strategic Concept will be ten years old by the time of the 2009 summit, since when the Alliance has changed considerably, both politically and militarily. The widespread feeling in NATO is that it is time to take stock of the Atlantic Alliance. The exercise is significant because the Strategic Concept represents the operational view of the Washington Treaty – the basic text of NATO – and because it will bequeath a new strategic direction to the Alliance.

In this report, we provide an overview of the political and military issues that will shape the new Strategic Concept. We make three arguments. One is that the Strategic Concept is less ‘strategic’ than the name indicates. The Strategic Concept codifies past decisions and presents them to the public as a coherent whole: indeed, codification and public diplomacy are its core functions. However, strategic direction remains a function too, and it is possible that this is experiencing a revival today. We lay out this argument in its historical context in the first section of this report. Another argument is that a new Strategic Concept must balance the push and pull of two competing visions of NATO, one being ‘Come home, NATO;’ the other being ‘Globalize, stupid.’ We can observe these competing visions and their political implications in a number of issues that the Strategic Concept inevitably must address, and we present our overview in the second section of the report. It must be stressed, however, that it would be a mistake to make clear-cut distinctions between member states that are promoting the global vision and those that are urging NATO to come home: most members have yet to make final pronouncements on this issue. A third and final argument concerns the future: we cannot foresee events, but we can offer our informed assessment, which is that NATO will continue down the path of globalized engagement.

I. What is NATO's Strategic Concept?

The Strategic Concept is the Alliance's operational and dynamic view of its founding treaty. The Washington Treaty (signed 4 April 1949) is a generic document that lays out the core values (democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, free institutions) which the Alliance will 'safeguard' in a manner consistent with the United Nations charter. The Treaty does not in any way define a threat or a particularly important geographical zone of interest. Instead, Article 4 adopts a global perspective in so far as 'The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.' This global outlook is balanced by Article 6, which defines the geographical area – essentially territory and forces in 'the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer' – that is covered by the collective defense clause in Article 5.

Where the Washington Treaty thus leaves open the balance between global and regional tasks, the Strategic Concept must specifically interpret concrete geopolitical circumstances. What are the threats, and what are their military implications? These are the two basic and essential questions that the Strategic Concept must answer.

Since the inception of the Atlantic Alliance in 1949, the transatlantic security organization has produced six bona fide Strategic Concepts.¹ The decision-making procedures leading to the final approval of these landmark documents have varied a great deal. In some cases, the process has been protracted and complicated, as the events that led up to the adoption of the 1957 Concept, MC 14/2, while in other instances – as in 1952, when MC 3/5 was endorsed – the process has been swift and straightforward. Moreover, while all Strategic Concepts have been approved by the North Atlantic Council, there is no agreed or authoritative template which defines who holds the initiative and which actors and bodies must be included in the process. Sometimes – as in 1968 – the change in NATO's overall strategy has been the product of American pressure; in other cases there has been no easily identifiable member state or body taking the initiative.² In sum, there is no single NATO method for producing a Strategic Concept.

¹ The six Strategic Concepts are DC 6/1 (1949), MC 3/5 (1952), MC 14/2 (1957), MC 14/3 (1968), the Alliance's New Strategic Concept (1991), and the Alliance's Strategic Concept (1999).

² Gregory W. Pedlow (ed.), *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/intro.pdf>.

NATO's first 'Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area' dates back to October 1949. It aimed to ensure 'unity of thought and purpose insofar as the objectives of the defense of the North Atlantic Treaty area are concerned.'³ While this 'unity of thought and purpose' remains the enduring ambition from 1949 to 2009 and beyond, we need to distinguish between the Strategic Concepts of the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. The Cold War Strategic Concepts were explicit in almost every way that the post-Cold War documents cannot be. The Cold War Concepts addressed the easily identifiable adversary, the Soviet Union, and put together guidelines for the preparation of military defense in given geographical regions. NATO's military authorities – the command structure – matched these regions, and so the machine went to work. Among the Strategic Concepts that defined the great debates of the Cold War Alliance are MC 14/2 of May 1957 (the massive retaliation strategy) and MC 14/3 of January 1968 (the flexible response strategy, which lasted for the remainder of the Cold War). These Cold War documents were, of course, all secret, a fact which allowed them to be quite specific.⁴ The MC 14/1 strategy of December 1952 is illustrative: in it we find not only an enumeration of the countries belonging to the Soviet bloc and NATO respectively, but also the countries that are assumed to be granting base rights to either side, as well as partners that are likely to assist NATO; the likely reactions of neutral countries are also outlined.

NATO's first Strategic Concept of 1949 always served more than just one purpose. Today, we argue, the document has at least three major functions: two internal and one external. One of its internal functions is to codify past decisions and practices and thus solidify the Alliance's foundation. Codification is akin to vacuum-cleaning, as one senior NATO official put it: a new Strategic Concept summarizes and formalizes the string of ministerial communiqués and lesser decisions that have emerged since the last Strategic Concept.⁵ Every ministerial communiqué is in fact a miniature Strategic Concept, the official argued, and from time to time real world events will have driven NATO so far down new paths that it is necessary to gather all the miniatures and combine them in one overarching document. The exercise is meant to provide coherence to a record of decisions and engagements that may not

³ MC3, October 19, 1949, <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a491019a.pdf> accessed 30 November 2008. The document received ministerial approval in NATO's Defense Committee on 1 December 1949 and in the North Atlantic Council on 6 January 1950. Gregory W. Pedlow (ed.), *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/intro.pdf>.

⁴ It was only in 1995 that the North Atlantic Council decided to declassify NATO's strategic documents as a package which is now freely available: <http://www.nato.int/archives/strategy.htm>, accessed 30 November 2008.

⁵ Interview at NATO HQ, 31 October 2008.

always be coherent at first sight. This points us to another internal function, namely that of providing new strategic direction – of laying down the foundation for future coherence.

Strategic direction was a crucial purpose of the Cold War Concepts, of course, and it remains essential, albeit in a new context of public diplomacy (see below) and codification. It is in fact difficult to disentangle these functions. Strategic direction concerns most fundamentally the basic values of the Washington Treaty and their defense in global and regional contexts, which is also where this section began. The allies must basically provide strategic direction by defining the balance between regional and global engagements, the type of threats the alliance is likely to encounter, and what it can do about them. In providing answers to these questions, and thus providing strategic direction, the Alliance inevitably conducts public diplomacy. Moreover, to move the world, the Alliance needs a place to stand, and so strategic direction begins where codification ends.

As touched upon above, the Strategic Concept has taken on a new and externally oriented function since the end of the Cold War – that of public diplomacy. Evidently, NATO's post-Cold War Concepts have been more ambiguous than their predecessors, and of course part of the reason for this has to do with the new security environment, which is marked by risks that are difficult to predict: it is simply not possible to plan for a single threat in a single theater. Another reason, however, is the decision to publish these Concepts as an element in NATO's efforts to communicate the story of a focused and indispensable Alliance to wider national audiences, i.e. NATO selling its product. Post-Cold War Strategic Concepts must inform the world what NATO is about now that its Cold War adversary has gone, and it must mobilize support at home and prepare the Alliance for engagements that cannot be predicted, but which surely will be demanding. In short, the Strategic Concept must convey purpose.

The interrelatedness between these functions explains why NATO nations have not delegated the task of writing Strategic Concepts to its public diplomacy division or to the Secretary General. Tight governmental control prevails. This is not the EU where the High Representative of foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, drafts security strategy and holds public meetings to discuss the emerging document. The EU security strategy is mostly about public diplomacy; NATO's Strategic Concept maintains a strategic dimension. Thus, once heads of state and government have tasked the strategic review (this tasking also takes place in the EU), NATO ambassadors and their deputies basically run the show. Governments know that the distance between

the Strategic Concept and decisions regarding war and peace is comparatively short and direct, so they strive to control and shape the Concept.

The Strategic Concept that NATO will agree to in 2010 or 2011 will be NATO's third post-Cold War Strategic Concept, although in some ways it is number 3.5. NATO's first such concept was published at the Rome summit in November 1991; this was then updated and revised in time for the Washington summit – and the Alliance's fiftieth anniversary – in April 1999. This second Concept still stands. However, by 2004-2005, following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and NATO's growing engagement in Afghanistan, the issue was raised whether the second Concept was not in need of revision or maybe even replacement. Given a lack of political agreement within the Alliance, symbolized, of course, by the disputes over the Iraq war, a decision was made to upgrade that part of the Strategic Concept that deals with military implications and thus to provide better guidance to allied military authorities. The result was approval of the so-called Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG) at the Riga summit in November 2006. The track record is thus two new Strategic Concepts and one Comprehensive Political Guidance. A brief overview follows.

'The Alliance's New Strategic Concept' of November 1991 took note of the widening definition of security and the transition from threats to risks: 'In contrast with the predominant threat of the past, the risks to Allied security that remain are multi-faceted in nature and multi-directional, which makes them hard to predict and assess.'⁶ There was little to codify in terms of post-Cold War behavior, given the pace of events and the short time that had passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall (the Soviet Union still existed in November 1991), but the Strategic Concept does explicitly make reference to the June 1990 London Declaration on a Transformed Alliance that promised a range of changes in order to provide for Alliance continuity.⁷ The Strategic Concept then entered into the combined domain of strategic direction and public diplomacy by outlining four 'fundamental security tasks':⁸

- 'To provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable security environment in Europe,' which was another way of keeping the United States engaged or 'in' Europe;

⁶ Paragraph 8, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c911107a.htm>, accessed 1 December 2008.

⁷ See paragraph 15 of the Strategic Concept. For the London Declaration, see <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c900706a.htm>, accessed 1 December 2008.

⁸ See paragraph 20.

- ‘To serve, as provided for in Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, as a transatlantic forum for Allied consultations on any issues that affect their vital interests;’
- ‘To deter and defend against any threat of aggression against the territory of any NATO member state,’ which related to Articles 5 and 6;
- ‘To preserve the strategic balance within Europe’ – a reference to the residual Soviet power in Europe.

Defense guidelines in this Strategic Concept essentially foresaw a change from a comprehensive, in-place, linear defensive posture to a reduced and more flexible posture consisting of a graduated triad of immediate and rapid reaction forces, main defense forces, and augmentation forces.

‘The Alliance’s Strategic Concept’ of April 1999 was a revised version of the 1991 Concept, which is why the word ‘new’ was removed from the title. The nature of the alteration can best be gauged from the ‘fundamental security tasks:’ the first three tasks remained, although they were renamed – Security, Consultation, and Deterrence and Defense, respectively – and the fourth task was revised. It is perhaps not surprising that NATO in 1998-1999 felt no need to be fundamentally concerned about Europe’s ‘strategic balance,’ but the question was what to put in its stead. NATO was divided between global and regional perspectives and ended in a compromise position, which is visible in two respects: first, emphasis was placed on ‘the Euro-Atlantic region,’ which is more than NATO territory but not global NATO; secondly, the fourth fundamental security task did not follow straight from the three first tasks but was introduced with a single line effectively separating it:⁹

- ‘Security’
- ‘Consultation’
- ‘Deterrence and Defense’
- ‘And in order to enhance the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area:’
 - ♦ Crisis-management on a case-by-case basis and by consensus
 - ♦ Partnership, cooperation, and dialogue in the Euro-Atlantic area

This subtle hierarchy of fundamental tasks had to do with the fact that crisis-management related to Article 7 of the Washington Treaty and the role of the United

⁹ Paragraph 10, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>, accessed 1 December 2008.

Nations Security Council (UNSC) in providing for general peace and stability. As in 1948-49, NATO in 1998-99 was not about to deposit its decision-making at the UNSC; however, invoking it was good public diplomacy – and a fitting response to the crisis in which NATO found itself, as the summit took place amidst the Kosovo bombing campaign.

The 1999 military guidelines did note that crisis response operations may require rapid deployments far beyond home territories, but the general policy nonetheless proceeded from the principle of keeping forces at the ‘lowest level consistent with the requirements of collective defense.’¹⁰ Graduated readiness thus followed, which was also to say that crisis response operations would be handled by building up forces, deploying them, and drawing them down as necessary. Tasked by the heads of state and government in June 2004, the CPG of 2006 set out to correct this. It instructed the military authorities to place more emphasis on the ‘ability to meet the challenges, from wherever they may come’ and to be able to ‘respond quickly to unforeseen circumstances’ and draw on a wide variety of techniques of military and civilian crisis management.¹¹ The CPG downplayed graduated readiness in favor of deployability and sustainability, asking member states to think more broadly about crisis management. All this was a codification of the debates on lessons learned from the wars in Afghanistan and also Iraq: as we shall see, the controversy generated by these wars threatened to undo the CPG, but in the end the CPG was finalized and approved at Riga.

As already noted, the CPG was mainly a military update, but it did contain two brief paragraphs on ‘the strategic context.’¹² We need look no further if we wish to understand the controversies that inhibited the making of a new Strategic Concept at this time. The first paragraph describes the likely ‘principal threat’ to NATO for the ‘next 10 to 15 years:’ ‘Terrorism, increasingly global in scope and lethal in results, and the spread of weapons of mass destruction.’ The other paragraph turns to solutions and notes that ‘Peace, security and development are more interconnected than ever:’ NATO will therefore have to work with the UN, the EU and other organizations in a network of security relationships. The first paragraph thus lays out the threat that inspired the George W. Bush national security strategy, which some European allies subscribed to; the second paragraph, conversely, presents the multilateral solution

¹⁰ Paragraph 53.

¹¹ Paragraph 7 of CPG, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b061129e.htm>, accessed 3 December 2008.

¹² Paragraphs 2 and 3.

that other European allies promoted as a means to tie down what they perceived as rampant U.S. unilateralism during Bush's first years in office.

If we were to pinpoint the origins of the Strategic Concept that is now on the agenda, we must step back to the years following the terrorist attacks of 2001 and examine the process that led to the adaptation of the CPG. The CPG epitomizes the frustrated but yet partially successful move to reorient Alliance strategy. As already mentioned, the CPG was tasked in June 2004, at the Istanbul summit. As we know, the year prior to this tasking was marked by diplomatic division, and the United States sought at one stage to counter what it perceived to be a balancing move within the EU, where France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg were pushing to create an autonomous EU military headquarters. The US ambassador to NATO, Nicolas Burns, called this 'one of the greatest dangers to the transatlantic relationship'¹³ and called an extraordinary NATO-EU summit. Next, in October 2003, the United States urged the adoption of a NATO-EU 'joint strategic vision' that could be prepared for approval at the 2004 Istanbul summit.¹⁴ However, diplomatic divisions were so profound that such strategic agreement was impossible; what was possible was a new look at military requirements, and this became the CPG.¹⁵

The difficulties of actually writing the CPG had to do with continuing diplomatic disputes. Famously, at the 41st Munich Conference on Security Policy, Chancellor Schröder deplored the fact that NATO was no longer a setting where the allies took care to 'consult and coordinate' their strategies, a criticism that was widely interpreted as yet another step in the ongoing wrestling match between NATO and the EU.¹⁶ The Autumn 2005 issue of *NATO Review* brought together several observers on the issue of Strategic Concept reform: some thought NATO was in dire need of a new concept;¹⁷ one found that the problem really resided in the Europeans' and Canadians'

¹³ Judy Dempsey, 'NATO Urged to Challenge European Defense Plan,' *Financial Times*, 17 October 2003.

¹⁴ Chris Lindborg, 'NATO Ministerial Meetings in Brussels: Looking Ahead to the Istanbul Summit 2004,' *Basic Briefings*, 3 December 2003, <http://www.basicint.org/pubs/NATOobref.htm>; Michael Evans, 'U.S. Offers Vision for NATO,' *London Times*, 22 October 2003.

¹⁵ Rebecca More (ed.), *Transforming NATO (...again): A Primer for the NATO Summit in Riga 2006*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, November 2006, pp. 15-17.

¹⁶ Gerhard Schröder, 2005, (http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2005=&menu_konferenzen_archiv=&menu_2009=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=143&). For the debate, see Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Schröder calls for overhaul of NATO,' *The Guardian*, 14 February 2005; Judy Dempsey, 'U.S. rebuffs Germany on plan for NATO,' *International Herald Tribune*, 15 February 2005.

¹⁷ Peter Van Ham, 2005, (<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/analysis.html>), Lionel Posnard 2005 (<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/debate.html>).

lack of political realism;¹⁸ and one finally argued that the 1999 Strategic Concept could do the job, if only because the exercise of revising the Concept in turbulent times would generate fission, not fusion.¹⁹ At this point, in 2005, nothing indicated that a new Strategic Concept would emerge at the top of the agenda; on the contrary, the Alliance could at best wish for the successful conclusion of the CPG.

Why did the CPG make it through this turbulence, and how come Strategic Concept reform prevailed in the end? There is no one good answer to these questions, but several probable ones. One has to do with electoral fortunes in Germany, where Angela Merkel became Chancellor in November 2005. At the 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, in February 2006, Merkel struck a markedly different note than her predecessor, stating among other things that NATO must 'realize that the world has changed again considerably since 1999. For that reason I propose that we discuss whether we want to look again in 2008 or 2009 – ten years after the last Strategic Concept – at how we should develop it further; remember, 1999 was before 11 September 2001 [and] before the major round of enlargement.' From this point on, things began changing within the Alliance: the CPG was essentially written between February and November 2006. Leadership from the Secretary General is another factor we should mention. Beginning at the November 2006 summit, Secretary General Hoop de Scheffer began to use his powers more assertively to define a new agenda: noting the new political momentum, he said: 'So looking to 2008 – and even beyond to our 60th anniversary in 2009 – I predict that the idea will gather momentum to draft a new, basic document outlining NATO's grand strategy.'²⁰ Finally, various background interviews indicate that a final factor in moving the agenda forward was a loose coalition of transformation-minded nations – those most willing to invest in transformed forces and NATO reform.²¹ People are careful not to point fingers at reluctant nations, but it is probably no stretch of the imagination to argue that the majority of the transformation-minded nations are those who have been most engaged on the ground in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

A tentative agreement had thus emerged by the time of the Bucharest summit in April 2008. The heads of state and government then declared:

¹⁸ Julian Lindley-French, 2005, 'Big world, big future, big NATO', *NATO Review*, Spring.

¹⁹ David Yost, 2005, (<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/debate.html>)

²⁰ <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2006/s061128a.htm>. The Secretary General repeated this call for a new Strategic Concept at the next Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2007.

²¹ Interviews at NATO HQ, 30-31 October 2008.

We look forward to the 60th Anniversary Summit in 2009, which will underscore the enduring importance of the transatlantic link. [...] The Summit will provide an opportunity to further articulate and strengthen the Alliance's vision of its role in meeting the evolving challenges of the 21st century and maintaining the ability to perform the full range of its missions, collectively defending our security at home and contributing to stability abroad. Accordingly, we request the Council in Permanent Session to prepare a Declaration on Alliance Security for adoption at the Summit to further set the scene for this important task.

This call for a strengthened vision and notably a new Declaration on Alliance Security (DAS) are sure signs that a strategic review is gathering pace. The DAS will be ready by April 2009, which, in the words of Secretary General Hoop de Scheffer, 'will hopefully kick off the process of drafting a new Strategic Concept to define NATO's role in fulfilling that purpose.'²² High-ranking officials in NATO indicated that the DAS will be a 'precursor' to the Strategic Concept, although various national officials were reluctant to make such a strong link between the two documents. The current US NATO ambassador, Kurt Volker, has hinted at a DAS that will be more than a 'birthday card' but less than 'an executive summary of a Strategic Concept' which will then be fleshed out in later work. According to Volker, the new administration will need more time to craft a coherent policy on NATO.²³

The 1991 and 1999 Strategic Concepts were both accompanied by solemn declarations. However, both declarations were issued simultaneously with the Concepts. The 1991 'Rome Declaration on Peace and Security' is verbose, probably reflecting the tumultuous geopolitical environment. The 1999 'Washington Declaration' is, in contrast, short and crisp, but was produced as a last minute add-on to the other summit documents (notably the Washington communiqué and the Strategic Concept) mainly for reasons of public diplomacy. The 2009 approach is thus different. The DAS will be short and crisp as in 1999, but it will kick off rather than cap off the strategic review. This brings us back to the various functions of the Strategic Concept: codification, public diplomacy, and strategic direction. It is as if the allies realize that the last function – strategic direction – is more important this time round, which would explain the 'DAS first, then SC' approach. One senior NATO official put it

²² <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2008/s081110a.html>, accessed 5 January 2009.

²³ US Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker, 'Launching NATO's Next 60 Years: Where Are We and Where Do We Need to Go?' speech given at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 9 December 2008, http://nato.usmission.gov/ambassador/2008/Amb_Volker_120908.htm, accessed 5 January 2009.

bluntly: 'The Declaration on Alliance Security is of supreme strategic importance.' He went on to argue that the DAS will capture the essence of NATO and prepare the most urgent task of the Alliance, namely the identification of the common sense of purpose that has been lacking these past years. Another senior NATO official working close to the Secretary General compared the past and the present and ventured, 'This time it's different – people are serious.'

2. Controversies: Old NATO or New NATO?

What will the new Strategic Concept contain, and what kind of NATO will it envisage? We address these questions in this section, giving particular emphasis to two competing visions of NATO: one is 'come home, NATO,' which calls for a regionally anchored Article V alliance; the other is 'globalize, stupid,' which holds that NATO will ignore globalization at its peril. The former position stresses the continuity between the alliance of the past and future; the latter stresses the transformation of NATO from a traditional alliance to a 'hub of security relationships' that is destined to manage global problems, as one official put it.²⁴ There are overlaps between these positions, of course: Article V remains central to proponents of globalization, just as global issues figure on the regional NATO agenda. It is a question of emphasis. Still, emphasis in these matters is critically important, and we address the underlying controversies in respect first to political and then military issues.

2.1 Political NATO: Threats and Fundamental Security Tasks

The controversies pertaining to the Strategic Concept's political leg are likely to be the more serious ones. In particular, the wording of the critical Fundamental Security Tasks that condense the core priorities, as articulated in the document's strategic analysis, is destined to cause controversy. While some member states will urge the continuation of the Alliance's ongoing transformation from a provider of collective defense towards an expeditionary projector of stability made up of global partners and allies, others will call for what one NATO diplomat from a former Warsaw Pact nation called a 'rebalancing' of the portrayal of the organization's purpose and responsibilities in the Strategic Concept.²⁵ According to the latter position, the allies must reassess the threats to alliance security and re-accentuate the paramount importance of Article V.

At the heart of the matter is the fact that NATO has become different things to different nations. Indeed, NATO is presently plagued by an unhealthy strategic schizophrenia. Whereas all NATO members agreed on the overarching purpose of the Alliance prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, today they place the emphasis on

²⁴ Interview at NATO headquarters, October 30, 2008. See also Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, *Managing Global Security and Risk*, speech at the IISS Annual Conference, 7 September 2007, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2007/s070907a.html>, accessed 13 January 2009.

²⁵ Interview at NATO HQ, 30 October 2008.

different risks in different regions, and controversy ensues.²⁶ The divergent views on NATO's *raison d'être* are reflected in two closely interrelated issues of key importance to the formulation of a new Strategic Concept: the nature of the evolving security environment, and the appropriate responses to the challenges and opportunities presented by this environment.

In the minds of those member states who call on NATO to reorient its strategic focus on the Euro-Atlantic area, the previous weight given to the Alliance's role as 'the preserver of the strategic balance within Europe' needs to be revived in the new Strategic Concept: NATO should to some extent go back to basics. Most of the countries in this group, including Norway, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as most East European members of the Alliance, see a resurgent Russia as the principal threat to their security.²⁷ The August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia is 'taken to be a blunt proof of the collapse of the dream of an emerging post-modern security system in Europe where states reject the use of force for resolving their disputes.'²⁸ According to this analysis, traditional Realpolitik has made its re-entry on to the European scene, and the Alliance should adapt. Some of the new NATO allies, those admitted after the end of the Cold War, are thus calling for a re-thinking of the nature of the Alliance's deterrence policy. As a minimum, these countries insist, the current Strategic Concept's rather rosy description of NATO's relationship to Russia should be reformulated (paragraph 36). The fact that NATO has rhetorically emphasized the continuing relevance of the Alliance's so-called 'Musketeer Clause' (as, for instance, in the CPG, paragraph 4) has done little to comfort them.²⁹

While those member states in this category will probably hold back from demanding the explicit mentioning of Russia in the new Concept's analysis of current and future security challenges, they are likely to insist on a re-emphasis of the possibility of regional crises and conventional conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic area. Moreover,

²⁶ House of Commons, Defence Committee, *The future of NATO and European defence*, Ninth Report of Session 2007-08, pp. 11-23.

²⁷ Norway's likely choice of Lockheed Martin's stealth-armored Joint Strike Fighter as a substitute for the ageing F-16s seems to validate the view that the Norwegian political leadership regards Russia as the principal threat to the country's security; see Birgitte Marfelt, 'Stealth-egenskaber fik Norge til at vælge kampflyet JSF', *Ingeniøren*, 21 November 2008.

²⁸ Maria Mälkso, 'NATO's New Strategic Concept: What is at Stake for Estonia?', *Policy Paper*, International Centre of Defence Studies, p. 1.

²⁹ In the wake of the recent Russian-Georgian war, Poland even asked for – and obtained – bilateral American security guarantees as part of the agreement about the US missile defense shield located in the country: 'Poland signs missile shield deal with U.S.', <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/08/20/poland.us.missile/index.html>, accessed 6 January 2009. See also Karl-Heinz Kamp, 'After the Summit: Long-Term Consequences for NATO', *Research Paper*, NATO Defense College, p. 4.

given that many of these countries depend on a steady supply of Russian oil and – in particular – gas, they are likely to call for wording on the issue of energy security as well.³⁰ In fact, they argue, NATO will need to strike a new balance between security risks stemming from global instability and politico-military threats springing from state actors in NATO's 'near abroad'.

For those allies, including the US, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands³¹, who – although to different degrees – subscribe to the vision of an Atlantic Alliance intervening and integrating globally, crafting a '1991-Strategic Concept *lite*' would be a grave mistake. This group of countries is doubtless concerned about the recent developments in Russia, but they maintain that NATO should keep its eyes on the ball, which is to say the global threats to its members. In the words of US NATO ambassador Kurt Volker:

There's a lot been going on in the East. It's not all about Georgia, although that's a part of it. That put these agendas back onto NATO's burner. I hope we don't overdo it. I hope we don't think this is NATO's whole agenda. Even as I look at it now, I think of it as best maybe 40 percent of what we need to be thinking about because there are a lot of other things that are more important and more immediate, especially operations in Afghanistan and the new kinds of security threats we have to deal with like terrorism and proliferation and failed states, and the consequences of all that.³²

While the 1999 Strategic Concept clearly paid more attention to the risks and threats stemming from outside the Euro-Atlantic area than its 1991 predecessor,³³ the 'globalizers' urge the Alliance to give up its self-inflicted geographical restrictions altogether. These countries will press for an even more explicit acknowledgment of global threats – e.g. transnational terrorism, piracy, cyber terrorism, failed states, and the proliferation of nuclear material and technology – in the new Concept's important section on 'Security challenges and risks'.

³⁰ Interview at NATO HQ, October 30, 2008; Interview at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 October 2008.

³¹ House of Commons, Defence Committee, op. cit., p. 16.

³² US Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker, 'Launching NATO's Next 60 Years: Where Are We and Where Do We Need to Go?' speech given at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 9 December 2008, http://nato.usmission.gov/ambassador/2008/Amb_Volker_120908.htm, accessed 17 December 2008.

³³ Compare, for instance, paragraph 6 of the 1999 Concept with paragraph 15 of the 1991 Concept. Both paragraphs state the essential purpose of NATO, but in the 1999 Concept the following sentences are added: 'The achievement of this aim can be put at risk by crisis and conflict affecting the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. The Alliance therefore not only ensures the defence of its members but contributes to peace and stability in this region.'

How, then, should the Strategic Concept outline NATO's responses to a constantly evolving and ambiguous security environment? Not surprisingly, subscribers to the 'come home, NATO'-vision have generally been skeptical about the Alliance becoming involved in too many activities far beyond the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area, and even more reluctant to embrace the idea of an organization with global membership.³⁴ However, skepticism comes in different shades. For some allies, a global NATO should be avoided because it would amount to little less than an American instrument for preserving the current unipolar world order and the pursuit of US strategic interests. For others, NATO should hold back from acting and integrating globally, as it is assumed that further transformation would undermine the validity of Article V. Paradoxically, many of the allies in the latter category – as, for instance, Poland, Estonia, and Lithuania – have deployed relatively large numbers of forces to the out-of-area operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. This, of course, reflects these countries' realization that security against conventional threats comes in the shape of the Alliance, and in particular American security guarantees. Thus, the deployment of forces to far-away Afghanistan is an insurance premium and the best response to the perceived regional threats to territorial and political integrity. The interviews we conducted in NATO Headquarters, Brussels, indicated that this is indeed the logic driving many of the new member countries' decisions to deploy forces to Afghanistan and Iraq.³⁵

For the globalizers, the current mission in Afghanistan is a precedent for things to come. As stated by the British Defence Committee: 'Given the global nature of the threats we face, we believe there is no alternative to the Alliance fulfilling a global role. Its willingness and ability to act on a global basis to tackle threats where they arise is fundamental to NATO's continued relevance.'³⁶ This is also the view held by the British Government. In the 2002 New Chapter to the Strategic Defence Review, the Government underscored the fact 'that it is better, where possible, to engage an enemy at longer range, before they get the opportunity to mount an assault on the UK.'³⁷ In this conception of NATO's core purpose, the diminutive political content of the CPG constituted a minor move in the right direction, as it described the evolving security environment as 'complex and global'. Moreover, the CPG emphasized the

³⁴ For an investigation of these two different interpretations of 'global NATO' – NATO acting globally and NATO 'being global' – see Flockhart and Kristensen, 'NATO and Global Partnerships: to be global or to act globally?', *DIIS Report* 2008: 7, Danish Institute for International Studies.

³⁵ Interview at NATO HQ, 30 and 31 October 2008.

³⁶ House of Commons, Defence Committee, op.cit., p. 16.

³⁷ Ministry of Defence, *The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter*, http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/79542E9C-1104-4AFA-9A4D-8520F35C5C93/0/sdr_a_new_chapter_cm5566_vol1.pdf, accessed 29 January 2009.

threats stemming from ‘terrorism, increasingly global in scope and lethal in results’, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the strengthening of the Alliance’s ‘ability to meet the challenges wherever they may come.’³⁸ Based on our interviews in Brussels and Copenhagen, we have reason to believe that the group of countries that is promoting the vision of NATO as a global security exporter – spearheaded by the United States³⁹ – will work to place the fight against terrorism and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among the new Strategic Concept’s Fundamental Security Tasks.

Moreover, some of the advocates of the ‘globalize, stupid’ vision will seek to build into the Strategic Concept the prospect that NATO can engage in institutionalized global partnerships, and perhaps even open the door to global membership of the Alliance. The issue was initially raised by Washington prior to the Riga Summit in 2006, when the US called for more formalized forms of collaboration with some of the non-NATO and non-European countries contributing to the mission, such as Australia and Japan. According to the proposal, functionality, not geographical location, should be the organizing principle of the Alliance’s partnership and membership policy.⁴⁰ The proposal faltered because most allies continued to consider NATO a Euro-Atlantic defensive alliance. Neither the United States nor the United Kingdom have abandoned the idea, which is therefore likely to play a part once again in the continual contest to define the purpose of NATO.

Interestingly, like the Baltic and East European countries, at least some of the European globalizers’ support for a more outward-looking Strategic Concept seems to be triggered by fear of US disentanglement from Europe; i.e. NATO should go global not so much because it is the right thing to do, but because the Americans are asking for it. As seen from London:

If NATO limits itself to a regional role, it risks becoming marginalised. NATO’s willingness to fulfill a global role is critical to the continued support of the United States. Without US support, NATO has no future. But US support depends on NATO becoming more capable, deployable and flexible, and on the European allies contributing more.⁴¹

³⁸ Comprehensive Political Guidance, 2006, paragraph 2.

³⁹ Renée de Nevers, ‘NATO’s International Security Role in the Terrorist Era’, *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Spring 2007).

⁴⁰ Flockhart and Kristensen, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁴¹ House of Commons, Defence Committee, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

In sum, disagreements about the political leg of the Strategic Concept are likely to be stark. While the supporters of a global NATO will press for Fundamental Security Tasks that emphasizes global threats, risks, and partnerships, proponents of a regionally anchored Alliance will wish to emphasize the solidity of collective defense in the European context.

2.2 Military NATO: Preparing to Meet Future Threats and Challenges

The military leg of the Strategic Concept is doing comparatively well, and the reason is straightforward: whereas the Strategic Concept itself dates back to 1999, the military guidance was updated in 2006 with the CPG. Our background interviews indicate that the CPG continues to command allegiance within the organization. It would be obvious, therefore, for NATO to incorporate the essential parts of the CPG – the ‘implications’ and ‘guidelines’ – into the Strategic Concept.⁴²

The ‘implications’ (of the strategic context) make up Part 2 of the CPG and are flexible from a political perspective but fairly stringent militarily speaking, which is why Part 2 is unproblematic. Political flexibility is apparent in Articles 5 and 6 of the CPG: the former states that ‘collective defense will remain the core purpose of the Alliance,’ but then adds that collective defense challenges could be both conventional (which satisfies the regional camp) and globally asymmetrical (which satisfies the globalist camp); the latter merely lays out the obvious possibility that NATO may undertake non-Article V operations. Military stringency appears in Article 7, where the emphasis is on expeditionary warfare – as opposed to graduated forces that require greater preparation before deployment – and a comprehensive civil-military approach to crisis management. This combination of political flexibility and military stringency is a winning one.

Part 3 of the CPG, ‘Guidelines for Alliance Capability Requirements,’ could be more problematic, in two respects. The first concerns the Alliance’s ‘level of ambition’ (LoA), which is typically defined as the number of concurrent operations (Article V and non-Article V) that the Alliance must be able to undertake in a worst-case scenario. Article 11 of the CPG alludes to NATO’s LoA: ‘the Alliance must have the capability to launch and sustain concurrent major joint operations and smaller operations for collective defense and crisis response on and beyond Alliance terri-

⁴² All references in this section to the CPG can be located at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b061129e.htm>

tory, on its periphery, and at strategic distance.' Put differently, the CPG tells us that NATO must as a minimum be able to do '2+2'⁴³ (the reality is that since 2006 NATO has operated with a formula of '2+6,' where 'strategic distance' is defined as 15,000 km. from Brussels⁴⁴). What is novel in this context is the CPG's explicit mentioning of the LoA for the first time ever in the Alliance's history (historically, defense ministers define the LoA in their confidential bi-annual Ministerial Guidance). One national official suggested that the LoA would acquire greater prominence in the new Strategic Concept, partly because NATO would imitate the EU, where force planning is almost entirely driven by the EU's publicly defined LoA (the Helsinki Headline Goal of 50-60,000 deployable troops). Such a public commitment on the parts of the heads of state and government would openly tie governments to their own high-level ambitions.

This is where the problem begins, because right now NATO is undertaking operations akin to '1+1' (Afghanistan and Kosovo) and is at the point of exhaustion. Put differently, 2+6 requires massive investments in force transformation and big operational budgets. Most European allies, perhaps especially Germany, are reluctant to commit to such an agenda. Such reluctance in turn plays into the hands of 'regional NATO' proponents because NATO's global capability may simply not be there. It is probable that NATO heads of state and government will eschew the LoA debacle by keeping military guidance in the public domain vague (like in the CPG), and by letting their subordinates – their defense ministers – handle the LoA specifics. However, this will not erase the underlying problem of meeting an LoA challenge beyond 1+1, which is a requirement for a more global NATO.

This brings us to the second issue, which concerns the coherence of the military organization. The CPG tells the organization what to plan for. Article 16 of the CPG enumerates many capability requirements: from multinational joint expeditionary warfare to stability and reconstruction; and from the protection of populations and information systems to the protection of forces in WMD environments. The problem is partly that this agenda is very wide, but more fundamentally that it is really only anchored in Brussels (i.e., the International Staff and the Military Committee and its International Military Staff). The Brussels part of NATO tends to get bogged down by the many conflicting national views of capabilities that naturally co-exist within

⁴³ Two large and two small operations, where the large normally refers to Article V, though smaller operations can be Article V operations as well.

⁴⁴ Interview at NATO HQ, 30 October 2008.

an agenda as wide as the CPG. This situation is a distinct source of frustration for the operational command in Mons, Allied Command Operations (ACO), which is running Afghanistan. ACO is naturally attuned to lessons learned and operational needs, and when SACEUR feels that these lessons are not being heeded by the organization in Brussels, he has the right to intervene directly with the Secretary General – and he regularly does so. Multiple sets of military advice thus flow upwards. Meanwhile, ACT, the transformation command in Norfolk, is planning for tomorrow's force, the principal planning tool being a scheme entitled 'multiple futures.' We have encountered starkly contrasted views of 'multiple futures' – some find it useful, others irrelevant – but also a widely shared assessment that ACT is poorly integrated into the overall organization. Some expect the late-2007 appointment of General James N. Mattis as commander of ACT to produce a positive change in the work of the transformation command. Mattis is widely known as a 'doer,' and the expectation in some quarters is that ACT's products will be more relevant for ongoing operations in the years to come. In sum, and put crudely, NATO's military organization is bedeviled by multiple agendas and poor coordination: MC in Brussels is hostage to the national politics of capability planning; ACO is busy running operations and impatient with the MC; and ACT has so far been hanging loose, thinking about the future.

Policy-makers can do two things in this situation: they can tighten up the political guidelines that underpin the military requirements, which relates to the political section of the Strategic Concept, and they can reshape the organization. Neither option is easy. Organizational reform would notably bring ACT closer to ACO and make these two the driving force in an organization where operational lessons learned are given greater weight and inform future visions. In wartime, bottom-up learning must prevail over top-down planning. As already noted, this will not be easy because top-down planning is more hospitable to the politics of compromise that characterizes collective alliances. Still, if NATO means business, especially in a globalized world where security operations demand the real use of operational capabilities (as opposed to capabilities of deterrence in a regional context), then NATO must begin this type of reform.

Militarily speaking, the onus is on the globalist camp to move things forward: global engagement requires an improved de facto LoA and an improved ability to provide the proper forces for far-away operations. This is not altogether surprising, as NATO began as a regional alliance of collective defense/deterrence. What should we watch out for in this context? The LoA and operational lessons learned are obvious places to begin. The debate on resources and resource guidance might be an option. The

CPG lays out the 40/8 rule of thumb – focused on the ratio of deployable and sustainable forces in relation to the entire force structure (the figures have since been revised upwards to 50/10).⁴⁵ It is also likely that defense budgets once again become an issue in NATO diplomacy.⁴⁶ However, such resource guidance is ambiguous in our context of evaluating regional and global NATO: deployability and sustainability dovetails with ‘global NATO,’ but it will also be required for most regional Article V operations, as entailed by the principle of ‘double-utilization’ (say, in Turkey, the Baltic states, or Norway); increased defense budgets can be used for either regional or global NATO and have more to do with transatlantic burden-sharing. LoA and operational lessons learned are therefore the better windows to look through.

In the end, of course, whether the globalist camp can move things forward depends on political issues. It is therefore time to turn to the concluding discussion of where the Atlantic Alliance may be heading.

⁴⁵ 40% of land forces must be ‘structured, prepared and equipped for deployed operations,’ and 8% must be ‘undertaking or planned for sustained operations’ (Article 13 of CPG). These so-called ‘usability goals’ originated at the Istanbul summit in June 2004.

⁴⁶ As early as February 2007, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated that ‘the new strategic concept should confirm an informal target for all NATO nations to spend 2 percent of their national income on defense’; ‘NATO chief calls for new ‘Strategic Concept’, *International Herald Tribune*, 11 February 2007.

3. Conclusion: Global NATO or regional NATO?

Which vision will prevail in the diplomatic struggle in the coming months to define NATO's principal purpose and the core content of the next Strategic Concept? And what will NATO look like in the long run? Will the Atlantic Alliance be addressing security threats around the globe in 2015, or will NATO once again be confined to the Euro-Atlantic area? We predict that in the short run the current disagreements about the Alliance's key tasks and the primary threats to allied security are too profound to allow for a Strategic Concept that differs distinctly from the existing document. The default position will be the 1999 Strategic Concept. In the long run, however, we expect NATO to keep to the trajectory of globalization.

While it is likely that the United States – with the support of, among others, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands – will have some success in pushing for fewer references to the Euro-Atlantic area in the next Strategic Concept and thereby promoting global reach, substantial changes are improbable. Washington may be expected have some leverage to move the Alliance according to the globalist agenda due to its status as the principal security provider to the newer member countries – but only to a certain extent. If the regionalist camp perceives the American proposals to be undermining the value of Article V, they will veto them immediately. The Barack Obama administration will greatly influence this debate, of course. Extraordinarily popular in Europe, the new President could provide the impetus that is needed to reach consensus on a Strategic Concept embracing a more outward-looking role for NATO. Moreover, the French rapprochement with NATO – and the likely announcement of French reintegration into the Alliance's military structures at the April 2009 Summit – might strengthen the hands of the globalizers. Notably, during the past year France has been less inclined to obstruct Alliance initiatives that could be construed as furthering the globalizers' agenda.⁴⁷ We doubt, however, that the Strategic Concept's core ideas will change significantly.

If, as predicted, the allies fail to overcome their differences about the role and purpose of NATO, the content of the Strategic Concept is likely to lack clarity and instead to provide only ambiguous strategic direction. It will include a number of threats and

⁴⁷ Benoit d'Aboville, 'The Thinking Behind France's NATO Rapprochement', *Europe's World*, Autumn 2008, <http://www.europesworld.org/EWSettings/Article/tabid/191/ArticleType/ArticleView/ArticleID/21274/Default.aspx>, accessed 12 January 2009.

possible answers that are perhaps best described as representing the lowest common strategic denominator. As one senior NATO official told us: 'A main problem with the Strategic Concept is that it loses strategic clarity when the allies have to agree on so many issues. A lot of important themes have to be watered down. In effect, it becomes a "grand bazaar of watered down stuff"'.⁴⁸

However, in the longer run NATO is likely to continue down the path of globalized engagement. This prediction rests first and foremost on the assumption that a future Atlantic Alliance significantly restricted in geographical scope will be of little strategic relevance to Washington. As future threats to American interests are primarily perceived to originate from outside Europe – most importantly from the Middle East and Central Asia – the US will have little use for allies who are incapable or unwilling to project military power out of Europe. Thus, if NATO ceases to serve Washington's non-European interests for an extended period of time, although the United States might remain in NATO, it will do so without enthusiasm and substantial support – and without such support, the Alliance will be redundant. Since the greatest fear of most of the countries in the regional camp is exactly American disengagement from Europe, transformation is likely to continue.

This is not a new process, one should note. NATO has been globalizing since the early 1990s and in the process won renewed American commitments. As Karl-Heinz Kamp observes:

The popular view that with the demise of the Soviet Union Washington would no longer need Europe as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' served for many as an argument to build an autonomous European defense capability. This assessment has proven wrong. America will not reduce its engagement in NATO simply because the Alliance has constant evolved and is now in a shape the United States always wanted it to be: militarily usable and globally deployable. In that function, NATO serves as a key element in America's global strategy: a value based organization of likeminded countries able to act politically and militarily wherever and whenever necessary.⁴⁹

The globalist camp may lament that NATO is not doing enough in terms of global security operations or is not good enough at what it does, such as projecting forces

⁴⁸ Interviews at NATO HQ, 30 and 31 October 2008.

⁴⁹ Karl-Heinz Kamp, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

far and fast, or cooperating with non-military organizations to rebuild nations such as Afghanistan, but the fact remains that the current NATO – as previous Secretary General Lord Robertson put it – ‘ain’t your daddy’s NATO.’ NATO is globalizing, and operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, off the coast of Somalia and in the Mediterranean are likely to keep the transformation process advancing.

Regional NATO is still around, and Russia somehow nourishes the idea that old-style regional threats are more relevant than the globalizers realize. Moreover, regional NATO could be advanced by the Alliance’s performance in its first large-scale operation outside of the European theater, in Afghanistan. This operation is not going well, although its outcome remains uncertain. Pundits, scholars and commentators have long predicted that NATO will disintegrate if it loses in Afghanistan. NATO’s coming death is a favorite story that has been told in countless versions over the years, and it is of course possible that NATO can survive Afghanistan even in the absence of total success: it depends on the extent of its failure. What seems certain is that failure in the Hindu Kush will constitute a serious blow to global NATO.

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