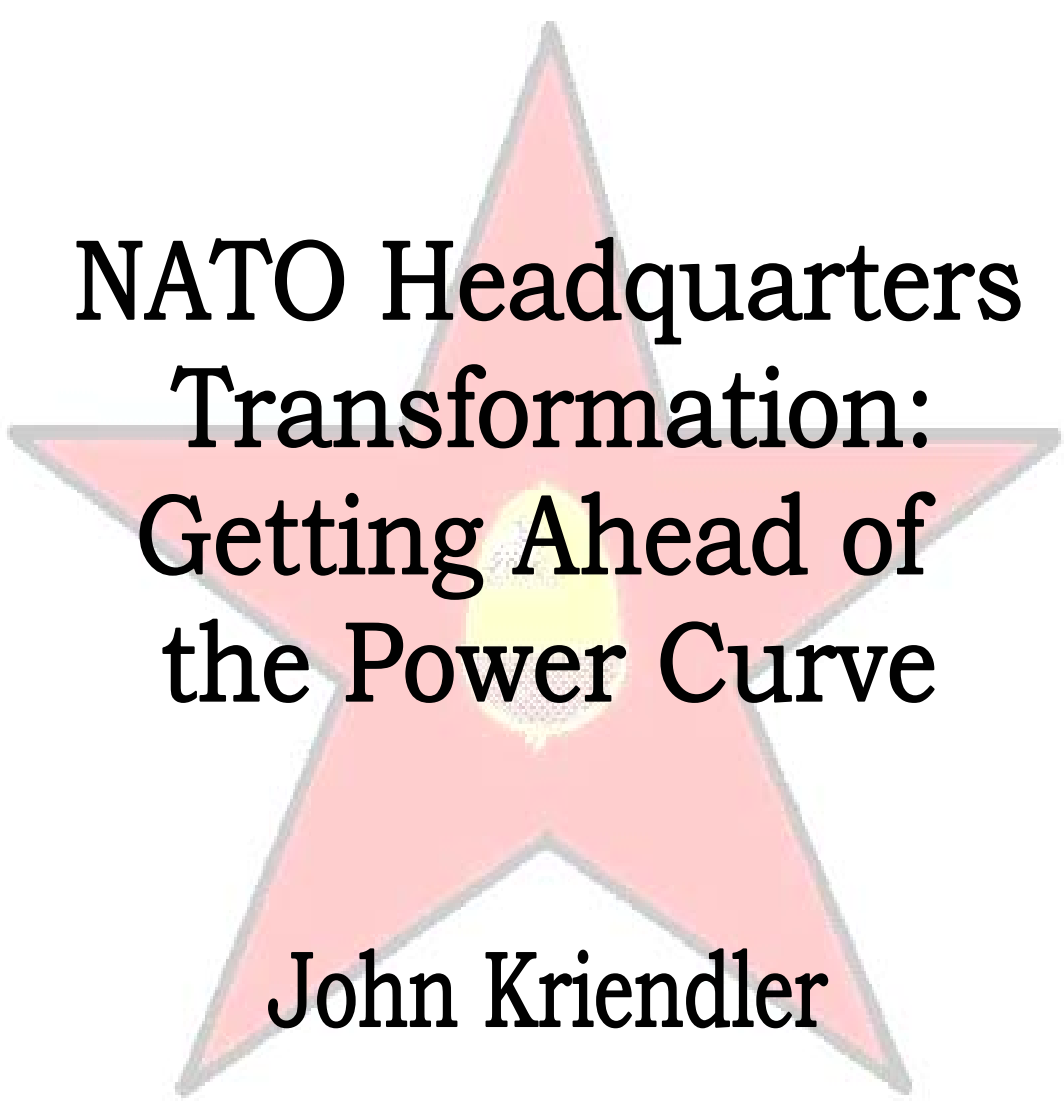


Conflict Studies Research Centre



**NATO Headquarters
Transformation:
Getting Ahead of
the Power Curve**

John Kriendler

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Key Points

These proposals are intended to contribute to the political and institutional changes needed at NATO Brussels for it to become more pro-active, agile and flexible:

- * "Vision" or theological debates should be avoided and differences should be bridged through pragmatic compromise and progress on concrete issues. This is not the time for a new Strategic Concept or Harmel Report.
- * No ally will agree to any derogation of the consensus principle, but there are a variety of ways to streamline decision-making and enhance its timeliness – where there are no significant political differences.
- * NATO's committee structure should be overhauled, including rationalizing the different formats in which the North Atlantic Council and Defence Planning Committee meet, establishing a lower-level Council to deal with day-to-day issues, drastically pruning the number of subordinate committees and assuring more efficient interaction between the remaining committees. Consideration should be given to including senior military representation in the North Atlantic Council and abolishing the Military Committee.
- * Changes to the International Staff, beyond the 2003 restructuring, should include: seeking personnel savings to increase staff dealing with substantive issues, increasing area specialization for non-European operations on a surge basis, separating science functions from public affairs and simplifying and rationalizing requirements of the new personnel management and output based budgeting systems.
- * Elements of the International Staff and International Military Staff dealing with the same or closely related issues should be merged as soon as possible.
- * Intelligence support for consultations and decision-making should be enhanced by assuring better articulation and coordination of requirements, increased access to civilian intelligence products and a centralized point of contact for all intelligence.

Contents

Introduction	1
Key Issues	2
Transformation	2
A New Strategic Vision	3
Possible Approaches	3
A New Strategic Concept?	4
A New Harmel Report?	4
Comprehensive Political Guidance	5
A High-Level Panel?	5
"Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge"	6
Not Now	6
Decision-Making	7
Consensus	7
DPC?	9
Committee of Contributors	10
Authority for Operational Planning	10
Other Proposals	11
The Bottom Line: Political Differences	12
Restructuring NATO Headquarters	12
Committee Structure	12
Subordinate Committees	14
The International Staff	14
Operations Division	15
Political Affairs & Security Policy & Defence Policy & Planning Divisions	15
Other Changes	16
Performance Management	16
Objective Based Budgeting	17
The Deputy Secretary General	17
The Private Office	17
Size of the International Staff	18
Assessment of Reorganization	20
Principles for Further Reorganization	20
Further Suggestions	21
IS-IMS Relations	21
Move SHAPE to Brussels?	24
Intelligence Support	24
Other Important Issues	26
Conclusions	26
References	28

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Introduction

Change has characterized the Alliance since its inception, but the post Cold-War era has been a period of radical reform, a process that continues. Change within the Alliance has had both political and military dimensions in an overall process commonly known as “transformation”.

While there is an expanding literature on NATO’s overall and military transformation, this paper will focus on non-military aspects of transformation at NATO Headquarters, a topic about which much less has been written. In particular, this paper will consider the political and institutional changes needed at NATO Headquarters Brussels if the full vision of NATO transformation is to be realized.

The agreement by NATO Ambassadors on 15 March 2005 to a far-reaching study of reform at NATO, which Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer announced to the staff on 17 March, clearly demonstrates the importance and topicality of the issues discussed in this paper. The Secretary General identified three major objectives of a review intended to address “all aspects of the processes that are undertaken in the NATO headquarters”: (1) ensuring that North Atlantic Council¹ consultations and decision-making are as efficient as possible, including looking at the committee structure; (2) bringing greater coherence to budgetary and resource processes, and (3) organizing the staff in the best way to support these processes.² (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a)

As there are few published studies concerning the aspects of transformation I address in this paper, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with senior officials at NATO HQ and SHAPE in mid- to late-2004 and subsequent follow-up exchanges by phone and e-mail. I sought their views on a range of non-military aspects of transformation (strategic vision, decision-making, restructuring, intelligence support). I selected the interviewees on the basis of their involvement with non-military aspects of transformation, their expertise and knowledge of NATO as an institution – in short, on their ability to provide an informed insider perspective. I interviewed over 60 civilian officials and military officers serving on the International Staff, the International Military Staff and at SHAPE and selected national delegations on the condition of anonymity. I also discussed these matters with a number of academics. Treating the data in confidence encouraged frank reflection rather than a recapitulation of the official line. In analyzing the data, I

¹ Hereafter referred to as the Council or NAC.

² The Secretary General has appointed Ambassador Jesper Vahr, former Danish Deputy Permanent Representative to NATO to lead the review.

sought to focus on ideas that went beyond the conventional approach to these matters.

Key Issues

This paper focuses on some essential non-military aspects of transformation by addressing the following issues, among others:

- The meaning of “transformation”
- The utility of seeking to develop a new strategic vision for the Alliance
- NATO’s decision-making process
- Restructuring NATO Headquarters (Brussels)
- Intelligence support for NATO decision-making.

My primary objective was to consider ways to make NATO more proactive and agile, better able to get ahead of the power curve to more effectively cope with the challenges of the current and foreseeable security environment. In addressing these issues, I focussed on what appear to me to be the most useful ways to contribute to achieving this objective.

Transformation

At least since the adoption by Heads of State and Government of the “London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance” on 5-6 July 1990, change in the alliance has been understood under the general rubric of “transformation”. NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, citing missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq, said in mid-February 2005 that the alliance “has seen more change and transformation over the past three or four years than in the many decades before. Let’s not say NATO is ill or terminally ill ... this alliance is very alive.” (Lumpkin 2005)

Transformation is a term with many meanings. As Daniel S Hamilton has pointed out, a variety of understandings of transformation exist that range from wholesale re-organization of US defence policies and priorities to simple “change”. (Hamilton 2004, 3) Hans Binnendijk describes transformation as “the process of creating and harnessing a revolution in military affairs. It includes new capabilities harnessed to new doctrine and new approaches to organization, training, business practice and even culture.” (Hamilton 2004, 4) According to Admiral E P Giambastiani, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, transformation is “bringing changes to doctrine, organization, capabilities, training education and logistics. It is not just about new weapon systems and improving capabilities but it is understood that transformation is a process and a mind-set. It is an interactive process that seeks to adapt and master unexpected challenges in a very dynamic environment. It is about managing the future in a joint and combined way.” (Giambastiani 2004a)³

Another way to look at transformation from the alliance military perspective is to consider the changes that the military and security establishment see in the conception of the battlefield. General James L Jones, Supreme Allied Commander

³ For a description of military transformation see Rumsfeld 2002.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

Europe, described these differences in the following terms: “agile rather than static; proactive rather than reactive; global rather than regional; manoeuvre rather than mass; precision rather than attrition; coherence rather than deconfliction; integrated, distribution-based logistics rather than supply point logistics; and NATO fused intelligence rather than national intelligence”. (Jones 2004a) General Jones has also stated that “transformation” is the “most overused and ill-defined term today”. (Jones 2005b)

While it is clear that Alliance transformation has essential military dimensions, it is also true that the transformation described and envisaged in the London Declaration and subsequent summits is much broader, touching on most aspects of the alliance, from identification of the risks that NATO faces and the roles that the Alliance should play to matters of organization and procedure. To reflect how broadly transformation is conceived, the chapter on transformation in the NATO Handbook includes everything from the new security environment and new institutions to the role of Alliance nuclear forces. This broad approach to transformation was clear at the Prague and Istanbul Summits where the focus was on transformation of the Alliance’s military forces as well a much broader array of non-military aspects, including organization and procedures.

The elusive nature of transformation is further accentuated because it is understood as a non-linear process that is by definition open-ended, with no foreseeable, identifiable end state. What is clear, however, is that the non-military and military aspects of transformation must be coherent and integrated and that more is needed on the non-military side. As Hamilton has pointed out: “If Alliance transformation is to be successful it must include and also go beyond the purely military dimension. NATO must transform its scope and strategic rationales, its capabilities, its partnerships, its very ways of doing business.” (Hamilton 2004, 7) The characteristics of transformation which are most relevant for NATO Headquarters and which should be fostered are agility, pro-activeness, coherence, integration and flexibility.

A New Strategic Vision

Transformation takes place on various levels, and the highest and most complex is that of strategic vision. One key impediment to transformation is that, while there are increasingly similar views about the challenges and threats that the Euro-Atlantic community faces, there are different views about how to respond to those challenges and the role that NATO should play. This problem is accentuated by some allies’ diminished commitment to the Alliance in a world where the existential threats of the Cold War have disappeared. As former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson pointed out, differences have always existed but tended to be kept under tight wraps during the Cold War to avoid “the spectre of Soviet troops pouring through the Fulda Gap”. (Hamilton 2004, 25)

Possible Approaches

In light of these differences, some analysts advocate the elaboration of a new “vision” document as a way to develop strategic coherence, which could reforge transatlantic solidarity and increase commitment to the Alliance. This could be undertaken in a number of ways. Some analysts have suggested that it would be useful to develop a new strategic concept. (Warsaw Reflection Group 2004) Others advocate a new “Harmel Report”. (Binnendijk and Kugler 2004a) A third approach that some consider could partially address these concerns is the comprehensive

political guidance (CPG) document mandated at Istanbul. It is also worth noting that there is already an interesting document prepared by the two Strategic Commanders which focuses on military strategic issues and which will be updated and revised and may help point the way ahead. (Giambastiani and Jones 2004)

A New Strategic Concept?

On the face of it, a number of arguments would appear to support an effort to develop a new vision statement – if one could not only be agreed upon, but be agreed upon without exacerbating transatlantic differences. The Alliance has undergone far-reaching changes since the end of the Cold War, but only two Strategic Concepts have been adopted, in Rome in 1991 and in Washington in 1999. Also the challenges the Alliance faces have changed dramatically since 1999.

However, seeking to elaborate and agree upon a new strategic concept would present a number of difficulties. First, on a number of contentious issues, such as NATO's role in combating terrorism, pre-emption, how to deal with proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the requirement (or lack of a requirement) for a UN mandate for NATO operations, agreement would be difficult and probably impossible to achieve. Moreover, there is a danger that the effort would increase rather than decrease alliance tensions.⁴

In addition, although there has not been a new strategic concept since 1999, NATO strategy has evolved significantly through summit and ministerial communiqués and ministerial guidance. To take one example, agreement to invoke Article 5 on 12 September 2001 was a significant evolution in NATO's approach to terrorism that "extended collective defence obligation to terrorist attacks by non-state actors" (Ruhle 2004, 3) and significantly altered NATO's focus. Another radical change was the reconfirmation of NATO's out-of-area vocation at the Prague Summit, that is, NATO's decision to act "wherever and whenever required".⁵ Despite some deficiencies in the 1999 Strategic Concept, it was both sufficiently prescient and adequately flexible to address current and foreseeable issues.⁶ As noted, it has already been modified by subsequent decisions and will no doubt be modified further by future decisions.

A New Harmel Report?

Another approach, short of a new strategic concept, would be a report that could recast the Alliance's approach. It could be prepared in a way similar to the 1967 Harmel Report on "The Future Tasks of the Alliance" (NATO 1967) which was a study of tasks the Alliance should undertake in the future, and procedures for fulfilling them. The report resulted in a dual-track strategy that partnered deterrence and defence with détente. The Harmel report enjoys "mythical admiration" in some states, as Michael Ruhle points out. (Ruhle 2004, 4)

Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler propose elaborating a new dual-track strategy of: (1) defence transformation, which is already in train, and (2) "political transformation for strategic realignment". As a first step, a new Harmel-style report would lay out "a common strategic vision of threats, goals and priorities, and standards for using military force and other instruments in the Middle East".

⁴ A senior German official conveyed Germany's lack of enthusiasm for taking up the Strategic Concept in an interview on October 22, 2004. Michael Ruhle points out the disadvantages of trying to agree a new strategic concept in Ruhle 2004.

⁵ This decision was taken at Reykjavik in May 2002.

⁶ Obvious weaknesses are the lack of prioritization and the treatment of terrorism, which has been overtaken by events.

(Binnendijk and Kugler 2004a, 38) Such a report could be written by a team of independent Americans and Europeans for eventual NAC review (as was the procedure for the Harmel Report). Initially, this approach would have a lower profile than a new strategic concept and therefore lower stakes in the event of failure. The difficulties, however, would be similar to those described above once the report was referred to Council for decision. In addition, current lack of a common vision, lessened importance attached to the Alliance, diminished trust among allies, and decreased confidence in NATO constitute a very different kind of crisis from that which the Harmel Report successfully addressed. Moreover, in light of the new tasks that the Alliance has taken on, it has already, to some degree, evolved a multi-purpose framework of action.

Comprehensive Political Guidance

Some see the comprehensive political guidance (CPG) mandated at the Istanbul Summit as a document moving in the direction of a new vision statement or with the potential of being developed into a partial revision of the Strategic Concept.⁷ The proposal for comprehensive political guidance, agreed upon at Istanbul, was to some degree a compromise. It was intended both to overcome the lack of consensus on NATO's level of ambition and lack of agreement to make the level of ambition public once agreed. The comprehensive political guidance, which is expected to go to defence ministers in June 2005, will be below the Strategic Concept but above ministerial guidance.⁸ It is intended to address the debate over the NATO level of ambition (that is the maximum military requirements that NATO should be able to address simultaneously) and also to harmonize the many different NATO planning disciplines and help make better use of scarce resources. (Boland 2004) Allies' insistence that the comprehensive political guidance not be a strategic concept or binding, for that matter, demonstrates the lack of appetite for a new strategic concept and the insistence by some allies to stick narrowly to the parameters laid down in the Istanbul Summit communiqué.⁹ It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that the comprehensive political guidance will address the kinds of issues normally contained in a strategic concept.

A High-Level Panel?

In addition to these approaches, German Chancellor Schroeder launched another at the Munich Security Conference in February 2005 when he said that NATO "... is no longer the primary venue where transatlantic partners discuss and coordinate strategies". In order to "... adapt our cooperation structures to the changed conditions and challenges..." he proposed that "the governments of the European Union and the US should establish a high-ranking panel of independent figures from both sides of the Atlantic to help us find a solution". (Schroeder 2005) In light of the curious timing of the proposal (on the eve of President Bush's visit to NATO), its ambiguous nature, the omission of NATO involvement in the high-ranking panel,

⁷ Views conveyed by a senior IS official.

⁸ Ministerial Guidance, adopted by Ministers of Defence, is the basis for the development of NATO force goals.

⁹ Paragraph 21 states: "We have directed the Council in Permanent Session to produce for our consideration comprehensive political guidance in support of the Strategic Concept for all Alliance capabilities issues, planning disciplines and intelligence, responsive to the Alliance's requirements, including for forces which are interoperable and deployable, able to carry out major operations as well as smaller ones, to conduct them concurrently if necessary, as well as to operate jointly in a complex security environment. The interfaces between the respective Alliance planning disciplines, including operational planning, should be further analysed." (NATO 2004a)

and the negative responses by Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer¹⁰ and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld,¹¹ this proposal is not likely to be adopted. In responding to criticism of his proposal, Schroeder said that he believes that speaking more openly on political issues “contributes to strengthening NATO and transatlantic relations”. (Reuters 2005)

“Strategic Vision: the Military Challenge”

Finally, in considering the utility of a “vision statement”, it is worth mentioning that “Strategic Vision: the Military Challenge”, issued by the two Strategic Commanders in 2004, was noted by the Military Committee and briefed to the North Atlantic Council. Although “Strategic Vision” is not official Alliance policy, it is expected to influence the elaboration of comprehensive political guidance. It is a thoughtful and interesting document, designed to “provide a long term vision of the way in which we expect future Alliance operations will be conducted, and, therefore, guide the transformation of forces, concepts and capabilities in the coming decades”. (Giambastiani and Jones 2004, 2)

Not Now

It is arguable whether a new “vision statement” would be needed even if NATO strategy had not evolved. Some NATO observers and officials think that it is more sensible to consider what NATO does, with agreement of all Allies, as the way to define the Alliance, and that abstracting this in some kind of vision statement would not be worth the effort, time and pain that would be required.¹²

In any case, however desirable a new “vision statement” might be, the time is not propitious to seek to develop one for a number of reasons. First, despite continuing efforts and some improvements in the tone of transatlantic relations, serious differences on some key issues, as noted above, and differences among European allies would make agreement difficult if not impossible.¹³ In addition, negotiating a new strategic concept or agreeing upon a new Harmel Report would be difficult and time-consuming at a time when the Alliance is more than fully occupied, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in the Balkans and with the EU as well as with issues related to the overall transformation of the Alliance. Capitals, delegations and the international staffs do not have the spare capacity to take on protracted and likely acrimonious negotiations that a new strategic concept or other vision statement would require. In addition the Secretary General made clear that he sees no need for a new strategic concept when he said in a recent conference “NATO’s problems do not have much to do with the Strategic Concept, which is alive and kicking”. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005b) For their part Allies made their lack of enthusiasm to elaborate a new strategic concept clear on the margins of the Istanbul Summit. None of the officials or officers I interviewed supported elaborating a new strategic concept at this time.

In light of the above considerations, the best approach for the time being would be to avoid any unnecessary “vision” or theological debates and to seek to bridge alliance differences by pragmatic compromise and progress on the numerous difficult concrete issues on the agenda.

¹⁰ De Hoop Scheffer responded that “NATO is functioning fine and it doesn’t need a panel of experts to analyze and advise on what we are doing.” (Dombey and Spiegel 2005)

¹¹ Rumsfeld said that “NATO has a great deal of energy and vitality. I believe they are undertaking the kinds of reforms to bring the institution into the 21st century. The place to discuss trans-Atlantic issues clearly is NATO.” (Lumkpin 2005)

¹² Interviews at NATO Headquarters, November 8-12, 2004.

¹³ Michel takes a similar position in his article on NATO-EU relations. (Michel 2004)

Decision-making

Another significant non-military focus of transformation is NATO decision-making. In general terms, there is concern that NATO procedures are not up to the requirements of timely decision-making to meet contemporary security challenges, which could require very fast responses. As Lord Robertson noted, "...in an age where threats give little warning before they strike, NATO suffered from the perception in some circles that its consensual decision-making culture was too slow and cumbersome to deliver in time". (Robertson 2004, 28)¹⁴

NATO decision-making has a number of dimensions: 1) the requirement for consensus, 2) the decision-making process at NATO Headquarters, including support and staffing for that process, and 3) interagency processes in capitals and national parliamentary approval for certain kinds of decisions, primarily the deployment of forces abroad.

A related issue is assuring that allies make the necessary forces and capabilities available once they have agreed to undertake an operation. In contrast to the willing participation in NATO and NATO-led operations in the Balkans, allies have shown much less enthusiasm for taking part in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. A related second key difficulty concerns the degree to which the NAC micromanages operations. The last significant delegation of authority for the conduct of operations was during the Kosovo air campaign. Former US Ambassador to NATO Nick Burns addressed this issue in his valedictory remarks when he said: "Finally we should let the military do what it does best - plan and deploy without undue political interference." (Burns 2005)

Consensus

Although the Washington Treaty provides for "unanimous agreement" only in the case of extending invitations to new members, NATO has developed a long tradition of making decisions by consensus - with exceptions only in the defence-planning field and a few other cases.¹⁵ Other informal precedents for 'constructive abstention' include the Danish footnotes on nuclear policy in the 1980's and the Greek decision not to block the Kosovo air campaign, but not to participate.

Recognition that the Alliance needs to be able to make timely decisions has always existed. Although concern with NATO decision-making is not a new theme, it has come under greater scrutiny recently for a number of reasons. These included concerns that the process would not work effectively after the latest round of enlargement with seven new members; that divisions within the Alliance over Iraq would be repeated and block NATO action in other areas; and that effective (by definition rapid) use of the NATO Response Force (NRF) would be inhibited by slow consensus decision-making and the requirement for formal Council approval to undertake operational planning.

Another facet of the need for timely decision-making is its relationship to "decision superiority" identified by the Strategic Commanders as a capability that will be

¹⁴ For a comprehensive and interesting analysis of NATO decision-making see Michel 2003.

¹⁵ Force planning is one of the few areas in NATO where consensus is not required and where the convention of "consensus minus one" applies. In essence, there is a gentlemen's agreement not to object to reports on the degree to which the ally in question has met (or not met) its force planning commitments.

required by NATO forces. They define “decision superiority” as “the state in which better-informed decisions are taken and implemented faster than an adversary can react, allowing the future joint force commander to shape the environment to best fit his needs and objectives”. (Giambastiani and Jones 2004, 16) Decision superiority depends, among other things, on rapid decision-making at the political-military level when that level is involved.¹⁶

Issues related to decision-making for use of the NATO Response Force arose at a Crisis Management Study Seminar, “Dynamic Response 07”, held at the informal meeting of Defence Ministers in Colorado Springs on 8-9 October 2003. During consideration by Defence Ministers of a scenario using the NATO Response Force set in 2007 (when the NRF will be fully operational) decision-making was inhibited, among other reasons, by the need by some allies to obtain prior parliamentary approval for the deploying the NRF. In the cases of Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Turkey, among others, parliamentary approval is required to send troops into action. In October 2003, a Hungarian official said Budapest would require three weeks to reach a decision to use the NRF. Subsequent changes make it possible for the foreign affairs committee to be called for a faster decision in an emergency. A subsequent NRF exercise “Allied Reach” in January 2004 also identified decision-making as a problem area that needed to be addressed (Smith 2004, 6), and in Crisis Management Exercise 2004 (CMX 2004) decision-making was again an issue, in this case related to the difficulties in developing a coherent situation assessment which could take numerous disparate and apparently unrelated events into account.

Procedures for national decision-making in capitals and the provision of instructions can also slow Alliance decision-making. Soon after the 1999 round of enlargement, the Czech Ambassador was unable to get necessary guidance from Prague on issues related to NATO operations in Kosovo and agreed to the required decision on his own authority so as not to delay it. Subsequently these difficulties with inter-ministerial coordination were resolved. Related issues include intelligence support for decision-making and ways to accelerate decisions required to begin operational planning, which are addressed below.

Continuing concern with the decision-making process was reflected in the Istanbul Summit Communiqué which states: “At the same time we are determined to further enhance our political decision-making process through in-depth consultations facilitating a common sense of purpose and resolve, the definition of clear strategies and objectives before launching an operation, as well as enhanced planning to support nations’ contributions to operations - recognizing the sovereign right of each of our nations to decide upon the use of its forces”. (NATO 2004a, paragraph 20)

Although there have been proposals to abolish consensus decision-making (and to establish a process to suspend membership for allies who do not comply with NATO principles and commitments) (Binnendijk and Kugler 2004a) or for some form of weighted voting, these proposals, which would require unanimity for adoption,

¹⁶ “Decision superiority” for a field commander, once he has instructions, only depends on rapid political military decision making if he is forced to ask and wait for direction or guidance following a change in the circumstances or when restraint is imposed from above. The more room to manoeuvre the field commander has, the less relevant is consensus building at the higher level. Communication technology and media attention, however, have made continuing guidance from above almost inevitable.

stand no chance of agreement.¹⁷ In fact, there is agreement by allies that consensus decision-making will be preserved.

Moreover, consensus decision-making - which has evolved into a fundamental NATO principle - contributes directly and significantly to important Alliance strengths: cohesion and solidarity. I will therefore not consider abandoning the long and deep-rooted consensus tradition, but will consider measures (some of which have already been proposed and, in some cases, implemented) to enhance decision-making.

An effort to streamline ministerial meetings by reducing the formal statements and increasing interactivity of participants represents one approach to accelerate decision-making. For the first time in May 2002 at Reykjavik, for instance, Foreign Ministers' statements were circulated in advance to allow more time for unscripted, open-ended discussions. (UK Select Committee 2003) In addition, a number of steps have been taken regarding meetings of the North Atlantic Council in permanent session (that is, at the Ambassadorial level), including: changes to allow more active chairing, increasing use of "silence procedures", circulating speaking notes in advance and delegation of decision-making to deputies and to subordinate committees to leave more time for the Council to make strategic decisions. (UK Select Committee 2003 and Rühle 2004, 8) The number of committees meeting at NATO has been reduced by approximately 30% (from 467). The assumption is that fewer committees mean fewer items that eventually percolate up to Council to be taken note of or agreed upon.¹⁸ Focusing NAC discussions on key strategic issues and avoiding detailed discussions of day-to-day activities as the Secretary General has suggested would probably have an even greater effect. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a) Changes to the committee structure (discussed below) could also have a significant impact on decision-making.

In addition to trying to find new ways to speed up the process, it is useful to continue to use already existing mechanisms to increase the speed and flexibility of consensus decision-making. While the "silence procedure" (a process in which a decision is reached if no written disagreement is submitted within a specified time period) does not amount to an abstention, it does enable an ally to allow a consensus to emerge without having to make an affirmative statement of support.¹⁹ Another practice, referred to above, used more frequently in the past to foster consensus, was the addition of footnotes for Allies who had reservations about a decision and wanted those reservations reflected but did not wish to block the decision. In addition language such as "the allies concerned" has been used for decisions related to the integrated military structure in which France does not take part to indicate that France was not involved in the decision.

DPC?

Another proposal to circumvent Council difficulties in arriving at a consensus is to move decisions, when required, from Council to the Defence Planning Committee (DPC), in which France does not participate. This strategy worked successfully in reaching an agreement in 2003 on NATO support to Turkey in the event of an Iraqi attack. This approach is limited in that it only provides a way to avoid a French

¹⁷ Michel identifies a range of options in his paper on decision-making (Michel 2003).

¹⁸ Some consider that the reduction in committees was largely cosmetic, shedding low-level meetings using NATO "facilitation and good offices" and some already moribund committees. There is reportedly no evidence that fewer meetings are being held since the reduction in the number of committees.

¹⁹ Binnendijk and Kugler (2003) have a different view on this.

veto and can be used only when all other Allies agree to move an issue to the DPC.²⁰ Such agreement would be unlikely in the future.²¹

Committee of Contributors

An interesting proposal could provide another alternative: the Council could reach a consensus on carrying out an operation and then empower a coalition to carry it out on behalf of the Alliance. The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) provides a model, which reportedly works well. Michel has developed the most detailed version of this idea. He suggests that a NATO committee of contributors (NCC), chaired by the Secretary General and including those making substantial contributions to the operation, would take on tasks now performed by Council. These tasks would include approving the concept of operations, rules of engagement and activation orders. The Secretary General would report to Council, but Council would not run the operation, and the operation mandate could only be reopened if there were support by some designated portion of the NCC. (Michel 2003, 6) This could speed up decision-making by keeping it in the hands of those allies who were conducting the operation. Not only would other allies be able to opt out, as they can with any non-Article 5 operation, but they would also not be involved in the decision-making process once the initial decision has been taken. The issue of determining what constituted a “significant contribution” and mechanisms for exercising influence commensurate with contributions would pose practical difficulties. A more serious difficulty is the possibility such procedures would diminish Alliance solidarity and make it too easy to opt out of operations.

Authority for Operational Planning

Because operational planning requires long lead-time, attention has focused on the related issue of the requirement for Council approval before the NATO military authorities (NMAs) can undertake formal operational planning. Some analysts believe it would not be possible to deploy the NRF within the prescribed deadlines (5-7 days following a Council decision) unless formal operational planning could be undertaken very quickly, well in advance of the Council decision approving the operation.

The complex NATO operational planning process includes the following key steps: Council discussion of the crisis based on intelligence and strategic warning provided by the NATO Indications and Warning System (NIWS); an assessment of the situation and development of response options; and implementation of the NAC Initiating Directive (NID) as the basis for decision-making and initiating operational planning.²² In response to the NID, the NMAs prepare a draft concept of operations (CONOPS) for Military Committee (MC) and Council consideration and approval, as well as an operation plan (OPLAN) for both the MC and the NAC to consider, possibly revise, and then approve.²³ The initiation of formal operational planning is not authorized until Council has agreed to the NID.

A number of factors, however, can accelerate the operational planning process. Based on the many crisis response operations that NATO has planned and the smaller, but still substantial, number it has conducted, NATO planners have the

²⁰ This does not obviously apply to issues normally on the DPC’s agenda.

²¹ There has been a discussion of using the DPC to take decisions on NRF deployments to avoid possible French opposition.

²² This is an abbreviated description of a complex process.

²³ Council considers sensitive aspects of the OPLAN, which can run to thousands of pages. Related issues that also require Council consideration and approval include rules of engagement for the operation.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

experience and tools for rapid and effective operational planning as well as a large inventory of plans, including generic contingency operation plans (COPS), that can be drawn on and adapted as required. In addition, the military authorities have the leeway (and are encouraged) to undertake “military thinking” when the situation warrants. This can begin to look like and, indeed, can expedite formal planning after Council has authorized it. Finally, allies have agreed upon special provisions for the NRF. These drop the concept of operations, and accelerate the process, moving directly from the NAC Initiating Directive to the operation plan.

Other Proposals

Proposals regarding the defence planning process could also affect decision-making. For instance, the Secretary General has proposed that allies should look at the resource implications of operations before they approve them. This would not necessarily speed up the initial round of decision-making - and could even slow it down. However, subsequent decisions may be reached more easily and quickly and Allies may feel a greater obligation (from a resource perspective) to operations to which they have agreed - a highly desirable result. On the negative side, the proposal could possibly delay planning before a commitment and produce a *de facto* low level of ambition based on affordability considerations.

In considering decision-making, it is important to keep in mind two related issues: the importance that allies have attached to NATO serving as a forum for transatlantic debate and proposals for NATO to play a greater political role. Concerning allies’ views on transatlantic debate, the Istanbul Communiqué made this point, in a somewhat different way than it had been made in the past, when allies “reaffirmed today the enduring value of the transatlantic link and of NATO as the basis for our collective defence and *the essential forum for security consultation between Europe and North America*”.²⁴ (NATO 2004a, emphasis added.)

For some time, the Secretary General has been advancing a proposal to give NATO a greater political role. He made the point as follows: “NATO must become a more political forum, and it must engage more as an alliance in the relevant political bodies.” (Reuters 2005) He made progress, and in December 2004 on the issue of Kosovo allies agreed “... that NATO should remain engaged not only operationally in the region but politically as well, including through participation in the Contact Group”. (NATO 2004b) The Brussels summit in February 2005 “endorsed the importance of giving the Alliance a stronger political role, where political subjects of importance to transatlantic security would be discussed at NATO. The Secretary General told reporters that he would put forward specific proposals for enhancing NATO’s political agenda.” (NATO 2005c)

Adopting such an approach would refocus Alliance consultations on a broader range of transatlantic issues, which would enhance the scope and quality of the consultation process. The approach’s disadvantages are: an increased agenda would involve longer, more complex discussions and could lead to increased tensions if the likely differences are not taken in stride; and NATO’s military credibility could be undermined if it were perceived to be turning into a talking shop.

²⁴ The 1999 Strategic Concept contained the following language on consultations: “To serve, as provided for in Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, as an essential transatlantic forum for Allied consultations on any issues that affect their vital interests, including possible developments posing risks for members’ security, and for appropriate co-ordination of their efforts in fields of common concern.”

The Bottom Line: Political Differences

Proposals to accelerate decision-making, other than changing the consensus principle, merit serious consideration. However, decision-making delays are fundamentally related to political differences (sometimes very serious) among allies on the issues at hand rather than to the mechanisms and procedures of decision-making. Assuming that rapid and authoritative national guidance is possible (and here there are clearly improvements to be made, particularly where parliamentary approval is required) and that differences among allies are not irreconcilable, decisions can be (and have been) reached very rapidly. The following two examples demonstrate this. On 12 September, Article 5 was invoked in only six hours, a historic and complex decision, predicated only on the condition that the attacks came from outside the US, which the US later demonstrated convincingly. Another example of very rapid decision-making under severe time pressure was the decision in March 2004 to deploy the strategic reserves in response to the eruption of violence in Kosovo. Forces from the Italian-led Multinational Specialized Unit (MSU) were dispatched to Kosovo within 12 hours, and a full company was deployed within 24 hours. (Smith 2004, 10) In total, four SFOR companies were dispatched and arrived within hours of the request by the KFOR commander. (Johnson 2004)

Finally, one other aspect of NATO decision-making deserves comment: some observers expected problems to be created by the large increase in NATO membership (to 26) after the Prague round of enlargement in 2002. Despite the widely accepted hypothesis that more allies would make consensus decision-making more difficult, this has not been the case, although the process of consultations takes somewhat longer due to the additional speakers in Council debates.²⁵

Restructuring NATO Headquarters

A key area of transformation concerns reorganizing NATO Headquarters in Brussels, including the committee structure, the International Staff (IS), the International Military Staff (IMS) and the relationship between the IS and IMS.

Committee Structure

NATO reform efforts are now focusing on the role of the NAC and the committee structure. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a) There are at least two aspects of this: (1) how the Council and other Council-level committees are organized and (2) the number, organization and interaction of committees subordinate to Council or other Council-level committees.

Fewer permutations in which the NAC or DPC meet could contribute to rationalizing NATO HQ. The present plethora of meetings is confusing and inefficient. For example, in 2004 the NAC met at the level of heads of state and government, in formal and informal sessions of foreign ministers and in formal and informal sessions of defence ministers. The Defence Planning Committee also met in ministerial session. In 2003 allied defence ministers also met in Defence Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group formats. Almost all of the different committees of allies (except the informal sessions) issued statements or communiqués on the same or closely related issues. To add to the confusion high-level meetings also take place in NAC-EU Political Security Committee, NATO

²⁵ This is the view of virtually all IS and delegation officials which I interviewed.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

Russia Council, NATO Ukraine Commission, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Mediterranean Dialogue formats.

This confusing proliferation of Council formats derives partially from the fact that France is not a member of the integrated military structure and therefore does not participate in meetings related to the integrated military structure or Alliance nuclear policy, that is the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group. (France, however, is now a member of the Military Committee.) If the goal is to develop clear and consistent policy and to reduce demands on the time and attention of Alliance leaders, the formats and frequency of senior NATO committee meetings should be streamlined and rationalized - if this can be achieved, however, without significantly diminishing participation by heads of state and government, foreign ministers and defence ministers, which greatly enhance the Alliance's profile, cohesiveness and credibility.

One option would be to consolidate as many of these formats as possible into a single format, which would also include senior military representatives. Instead of changing committees to address different topics, when meetings deal with topics in which France is not involved, France could absent itself, or better yet, remain as an observer, without the right to speak or participate in the decision-making process. (Remaining as an observer would enhance Alliance transparency, but might encourage France to remain outside the integrated military structure.) Meetings would continue to take place in defence or foreign minister formats as required. The different decision-making configurations could be reflected, as they have been in the past, by terminology such as "the allies concerned" or words to that effect where required. The appropriate division(s) of the IS/IMS would support the Council in preparing the item and assure its implementation, as is now the case.²⁶

A proposal to terminate the Military Committee and to incorporate military representation in the Council would be highly controversial, but if adopted, could contribute to efficiency and effectiveness.²⁷ The facts that the primary function of military authorities to undertake defence planning has evolved significantly and that the political considerations of Alliance action have become predominant make this proposal more feasible than it would have been during the Cold War. At such a consolidated Council, each delegation could be responsible for incorporating its national military views into a consolidated position that would be represented by the Ambassador (at the level of the Council in Permanent Session), but with a seat for military representatives to provide views or advice as appropriate. (The Policy Coordination Group, which provides advice and supports the Council on the political-military aspects of crisis response operations, was intended to function in this way, but few delegations took advantage of the opportunity to have military officers at the table.)

Subordinate committees could function in the same way; the chair of the meeting could shift depending on which division was responsible for the agenda issue under discussion. The advantages of this radical proposal would be simplification, streamlining, diminished resource requirements at the Council and subordinate committee levels, greater transparency and facilitating consolidation of the IS and IMS. When the Council needs "independent" military advice, it can call upon the

²⁶ IMS officials who have dealt with Military Committee meetings that shift from one format to another note that organizing these meetings can pose difficulties.

²⁷ This is discussed in more detail under IS-IMS relations.

Strategic Commanders to provide it. The Council has the inherent right to invite the Strategic Commanders to attend for just that reason.

Subordinate Committees

I have already noted both that the number of subordinate committees has been reduced by 30%, and that this has had minimal impact. A much more radical culling of the number of non-essential or peripheral committees could diminish time required by Council to review their work and also diminish requirements for staff support. There is also a need to rationalize the subordinate committee structure and enhance sharing of information among committees dealing with different aspects of the same issues or, in some cases, the same issues.

Although decreasing the number of committees should improve the decision-making process, creating one new committee could also make an important contribution. Establishing a lower-level Council, chaired by the Deputy Secretary General, with allies represented at the level of Deputy Permanent Representatives, could address issues, such as management, budgetary and support issues (including questions such as the new headquarters), relieving the Council of the burden of considering day-to-day matters. This would support the Secretary General's efforts to focus the Council on strategic issues, reduce the number of issues, particularly day-to-day ones, for Council consideration and also provide a clearer role for the Deputy Secretary General.

The International Staff

Lord Robertson described his extensive reorganization of the IS, implemented in mid-2003, as the "most radical internal change agenda in NATO's history". (Robertson 2003) He noted that the enlargement of NATO's membership and mandate required changes in its working methods, "NATO needs to be less bureaucratic, and more flexible". (Robertson 2004) "NATO's missions and roles have changed drastically over the years, while the headquarters structure has remained essentially the same." (NATO 2005a)

According to a senior staff member who worked closely with Lord Robertson on his restructuring initiative, his frustration with "stove-piping"²⁸ at NATO headquarters and clashes between divisions with overlapping responsibilities, which he then had to resolve, provided primary motivations for the restructuring. He was also aware of restiveness among the staff due to the sclerotic personnel system,²⁹ which had no provisions for career development, very few opportunities for promotion or even lateral changes, and which created uncertainty for some categories of International Staff personnel as to how long they could expect to remain at NATO.³⁰ In addition, through budgetary reform, the Secretary General hoped to obtain greater freedom of action to reprogramme funds within the budget and hoped to demonstrate clearly to allies how small the NATO budget was in the hope of obtaining additional resources.³¹

²⁸ "Stove-piping" means dealing with an issue within one chain of command or element, without interaction with related chains of command or elements.

²⁹ Telephone interview with former senior NATO official, 7 September 2004.

³⁰ This applies primarily to A grades on the international staff as other staff generally have permanent contracts and non-civilian members of the International Military Staff are normally assigned for fixed periods of time.

³¹ Lord Robertson noted that "there has been no effective increase in the budget for 20 years". (SHAPE 2003)

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

This initiative was reflected in the Prague Summit Communiqué, in November 2002, which stated: “As NATO transforms, we have endorsed a package of measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the headquarters organisation. The NATO+ Initiative on human resources issues complements this effort.” (NATO 2002a)

Efforts to address these matters took a number of forms: (1) a restructuring of the International Staff at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, (2) a new Objective Based Budgeting (OBB) system, (3) a new “performance management” system to improve evaluation and personnel management and (4) other elements of the NATO+ Initiative designed to improve working methods, staff interaction and information technology support. Working groups focusing on working methods, personnel issues, budget and IT support, as well as other areas, were established to foster NATO+ reforms.³²

The aim of the extensive 2003 restructuring of the IS was described by NATO in the following terms: “... to ensure a fairer distribution of responsibilities among divisions, strengthen management of the staff and improve coordination on key issues and programmes”. (NATO 2005a) The restructuring did not involve the separate IMS, which had undergone an earlier review.

Although a number of aspects of the restructuring affect how NATO Headquarters supports consultations and decision-making, I will only address those aspects which have had or are likely to have the greatest impact: (1) establishment of a new operations division and (2) shifting of some responsibilities between the Political Affairs and Security Policy (PASP) Division (formerly Political Affairs) and the Defence Policy and Planning (DPP) Division (formerly Defence Planning and Operations). In addition to shifting responsibilities among the IS divisions and creating a new Operations Division, it was also decided to enhance the roles of the Deputy Assistant Secretaries General (DASGs) and to increase the utilization of task forces to improve coordination and cooperation within the IS. (UK Select Committee 2003)³³

Operations Division

The establishment of a new Operations Division to deal with all NATO operations was the most important and useful change. It reflected the increased number and tempo of NATO and NATO-led operations and the overly large span of responsibility of the Assistant Secretary General for Defence Planning and Operations prior to the restructuring. The tasks of the new Operations Division are “to provide the operational capability required to meet NATO’s deterrence, defence and crisis management tasks. Responsibilities include NATO’s crisis management and peacekeeping activities and civil emergency planning and exercises.” (NATO 2005a) Additional personnel were assigned to the Operations Division in late 2004.

Political Affairs & Security Policy & Defence Policy & Planning Divisions

The rationale for shifting tasks between PASP and DPP was less clear. Political Affairs and Security Policy now has the “lead role in the political aspects of NATO’s fundamental security tasks, including regional economic and security affairs, relations with other international organizations and partner countries”. It is

³² I chaired the working group on working methods and submitted the final report prior to leaving NATO in January 2002.

³³ For an organization table and description of the current international staff see NATO 2005b.

responsible for much, but not all, Partnership for Peace (PfP)-related work. Some PfP tasks remain in DPP, and it would be useful to give further consideration to the division of labour and resources.³⁴

Defence Policy and Planning took over responsibility for the Weapons of Mass Destruction Centre (which had been in Political Affairs) as well as the Logistics Section and some elements of the Arms Control Staff. DPP is now responsible for "... the lead role in the defence policy aspects of NATO's fundamental security tasks. This includes defence planning, the Alliance's nuclear policy and defence against weapons of mass destruction." (NATO 2005a) DPP retained PfP tasks related to defence planning aspects of PfP, in particular the Planning and Review Process (PARP), which is closely modelled on the Alliance's own defence planning process, and all defence policy aspects of PfP and defence policy and planning issues related to Ukraine and Russia.

Among other benefits hoped for in this reorganization was a clearer division of labour among the PASP, DPP and Operations divisions than had existed previously between Political Affairs and DPAO, but it is too early to be sure that result will be fully achieved. In some ways, matters are now more complicated, with three divisions dealing with closely related issues instead of two. An additional disadvantage is that while previously the natural links between the former Political Affairs Division and foreign affairs ministries and between the former Defence Plans and Operations Division and defence ministries were clear, creating the new Operations Division complicated the situation.

Other Changes

Other significant changes included merging the Office of Information and Press and the Division of Scientific Affairs into a new Division of Public Diplomacy, an odd amalgam for which the benefits are not obvious. Reportedly there were two rationales: 1) to give France a higher profile as the French Assistant Secretary General (ASG) heads the new enlarged division and 2) the hope that some of the substantial resources available to the science programme could be put to other use. In addition, the Defence Investment Division took over the tasks from the former Defence Support Division and incorporated the Security Investment Programme and the Senior Resource Board Staff. Much of the Executive Secretariat, which supports the work of committees, was disbanded with the personnel shifted to substantive divisions. An Executive Management Division was established with an eventual significant increase in personnel. As a result of NATO+ and restructuring, officials dealing with personnel issues increased from 39 in 2001 to 53 in 2005. In total there was a net increase of about 58 posts devoted to overhead activities at a time of significant increase in substantive work and continuing zero real budget growth. On March 17, 2005, the Secretary General announced that he would propose to the Council that this new management division be restructured or reorganized in favour of an organizational structure similar to what had existed previously, but with an increased focus on IT. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a)

Performance Management

Two other changes adopted as part of the restructuring deserve brief mention because of their impact on headquarters efficiency. NATO had in place a simple, user-friendly personnel evaluation form that was designed to accommodate a cross-cultural approach to assessment and took only moments to complete. NATO

³⁴ Comments are based on interviews with IS and IMS officials at NATO HQ from 8-12 August 2004.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

replaced this with a much more complex personnel evaluation system requiring establishment of overall objectives for the organization, objectives for each staff member and a complex performance appraisal including a reflection of how each staff member contributes to the overall objectives. There are in general four to five objectives with no prioritization or relationship to available resources, and a catalogue of competencies that are not appropriate for all employees.

I raise this because of the heavy administrative burden that the new performance management system places on already overburdened managers and because of the impact on personnel resources. The Secretary General referred to difficulties with performance management in his 17 March 2005 remarks when he noted that "Performance management is beginning to bed down – though we have a way to go". (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a)

Objective Based Budgeting

The main element of the new OBB system is an effort to link budgetary requirements to strategic objectives and, by demonstrating how funds are used, to obtain agreement by allies to budget increases. OBB is considerably more complicated and labour intensive than the line item budget that had been in use at NATO. Also, the nature of NATO's strategic objectives makes OBB a complex and imprecise process. In interviews in mid-November 2004, senior managers complained that the process was difficult, artificial and time consuming. Problems derive from the time required to provide the necessary information. Nor has the new budget process had the desired impact of moving allies away from their zero-growth budget approach. One positive benefit has been that the Secretary General has been given freedom to use up to ten percent of the approved budget as he deems necessary without seeking prior approval from allies as had been previously required.

The Deputy Secretary General

At least since 1990, the post of Deputy Secretary General has been filled by senior Italian diplomats, but other than the important tasks of standing in for the Secretary when he is absent and occasional special tasks, the role of the Deputy Secretary General has not been clearly defined. This means that a significant resource is not always used to full capacity. In addition to chairing the lower-level NAC, as described above, it would be useful to consider giving the Deputy Secretary General a portfolio of issues. These could include management and budgetary issues as well as substantive tasks requiring senior, high profile engagement.

The Private Office

Part of the restructuring was the establishment in the Private Office of the Secretary General of a Policy Planning Unit to deal with strategic planning issues, including headquarters reform.

The Private Office plays a key role in the work of NATO Headquarters. It controls the flow and modifies recommendations and documents provided to the Secretary General by the substantive divisions; it addresses and seeks to resolve differences among the substantive divisions on policy matters and on which divisions should be responsible for various issues;³⁵ and it oversees the implementation of the Secretary General's and Council's decisions.

³⁵ This requirement would be greatly attenuated with effective co-ordination between divisions.

John Kriendler

The seniority and number of deputy directors of the Private Office have increased in recent years, and currently five deputy directors serve under a senior director reporting to the Secretary General. Most are relatively junior civilians, from national ministries of foreign affairs or defence, although frequently with some, not always NATO-related, political-military experience. They are usually assigned divisional, geographic and functional responsibilities. They work long hours under considerable pressure.

Since these officers are responsible for tasking and substantive vetting of work coming from the Assistant Secretary Generals, who are very senior and highly experienced officials, there is frequent tension between the substantive divisions and the Private Office. There is often resentment when work sent forward by an ASG or a DASG is changed by the much more junior and less experienced officials in the Private Office.³⁶ On the other hand, the work coming up from the divisions may not always reflect the Secretary General's thinking and is not always coordinated with other divisions. Furthermore, the ASGs obtain their positions as the result of support by their national authorities and may not in every case feel the same sense of loyalty to the Secretary General that senior officials would in a national bureaucracy. The members of the Private Office are hired by the Secretary General and serve at his pleasure.

Short of overhauling the Private Office system, which is worth considering, providing ASGs increased access to the Secretary General (or Deputy Secretary General when he has the lead role on substantive issues) could assure that ASGs' views are taken more fully into account than is the case.³⁷ However, the Secretary General's very demanding schedule constrains increased access. Another approach would be to insist that the deputy directors of the private office confer with the ASGs on substantive changes that they propose to documents sent forward by the ASGs.³⁸ The high operational tempo would be an inhibiting factor.

Size of the International Staff

The size of the IS, another matter related to NATO HQ restructuring, also merits attention. With the end of the Cold War, allies expected a significant "peace dividend", in part from the anticipated drawing down of national military establishments as well as NATO, including both NATO military headquarters and NATO Headquarters (Brussels). Staffing levels at NATO military headquarters were substantially reduced, and the process continues, in fact, as a result of the changes to the NATO Command Structure, particularly at the level of strategic headquarters, Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation. At SHAPE, the targeted decrease is 30%, most of which has already been achieved. These reductions have taken place against a background of an increasing operational tempo and increasingly complex, if relatively small, crisis response operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan and the NATO Training Mission in Iraq.

For a variety of reasons, the picture has been substantially different at NATO Headquarters. In 1990, the IS had 1232 staff members; the total had changed very

³⁶ I can attest to this tension and resentment based on my own experience as Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs from 1990 - 1993.

³⁷ Currently the Secretary General meets weekly with the ASGs as well as on an ad hoc basis.

³⁸ I can remember my own surprise and chagrin on many occasions in Council when I heard speaking notes I had provided to the Secretary General turned on their head without having been consulted or informed in advance.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

little by 2004 when the staff numbered 1221,³⁹ with some decreases and increases along the way and some shifts in staff functions.⁴⁰ The principal reason the expected and desired “peace dividend” at NATO Headquarters did not materialize is attributed to a decision made in 1990 at the London Summit: the post-Cold War NATO would develop into a more political alliance with an increasingly active diplomatic role vis-à-vis the East. This decision increased the Alliance’s political role. (Kugler 1993, 527) Also, since the 1990s NATO’s operational role, nonexistent during the Cold War, has grown and continues to increase.

The overall figure for the size of the IS does not convey a clear idea of the staff available for substantive tasks at NATO Headquarters. In round numbers there are approximately 500 staff members in the Executive Management Division, which is responsible for running the Headquarters and supporting all elements operating there. These functions are essential, and little could be accomplished without these personnel, but they are not involved in substantive work. Other labour-intensive essential services include the Office of Security with approximately 150 staff. In total, the number of managerial and professional staff (A grades) that focuses on substantive issues rather than support is about 340, with little change since 1990. Of these, approximately 50 do administrative work, leaving less than 300 for substantive tasks. This is a small number for the volume and complexity of work to be done.

Numerous factors have increased the nature, pace and volume of the work of these A grades with only limited shifting of staff resources and augmentation. In particular, NATO was dealing with an increased range of issues, including transformation, NATO and NATO-led crisis response operations, Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Council, enlargement, and NATO-Russia, NATO-Ukraine and NATO-EU relations. Further, the number of Council and high-level meetings in different configurations has substantially increased. These meetings are supported by committees and working groups at NATO Headquarters and place heavy demands on the IS.

With the experience of having served on the IS for 11 years and having followed NATO closely since my departure in early 2002, I believe that the IS is hard pressed to keep up with the increased volume of work. A current example illustrates my point: IS staff supporting the recently beefed up Mediterranean Dialogue and the newly-launched Istanbul Cooperation Initiative consists of two IS officials and another official on loan from an ally. Both initiatives entail high-level visits and meetings at NATO Headquarters. The newly instituted personnel management system and OBB (described above) exert additional administrative demands on staff and decrease time available for substantive work. In launching the latest reform of NATO, the Secretary General repeatedly emphasized that it is not “targeted” at staff. He also noted that changes to how NATO does business will have an impact on the staff. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a) Hopefully reform will decrease duplication and overlap and free additional staff for substantive work.

While the size of the IS will be an increasing constraint, as NATO Headquarters is currently structured, another limitation is the kind of expertise available. NATO is now engaged in operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans and the Iraq Training Mission and could be involved in other operations well outside the Euro-Atlantic

³⁹ Data provided by NATO Headquarters on 13 January 2005.

⁴⁰ The Secretary General noted that 32 new posts were added in 2004’s budget. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a)

area. However, the IS lacks essential area and language specialists, who can provide the necessary expertise in dealing with these areas. (Giambastiani and Jones 2004, 19) (There are some area specialists in delegations and IMS officers with experience in NATO and NATO-led operations in these areas.) It would therefore be useful to consider recruiting area specialists for the IS on a short-term, non-renewable basis to address current requirements in Afghanistan and Iraq and be prepared to undertake similar recruiting in the event of further operations outside Europe for which expertise is not currently available.

Assessment of Reorganization

While a definitive judgment on the 2003 IS reorganization would be premature and changes are underway to address some of the problems, preliminary comments are in order. On the positive side, creating a new Operations Division has permitted an increased focus of high-level attention and additional resources on NATO's crisis response operations. Unfortunately, the reorganization has not solved the problems of stove-piping and overlapping responsibilities of the substantive divisions as Lord Robertson had hoped. IS officials interviewed for this study noted that these problems not only remain but also have somewhat increased due to the now three-way tug of war that sometimes characterizes the relations between Political Affairs and Security Policy (PASP), Defence Policy and Plans (DPP) and the new Operations Division (OPS). In addition, the transfer of some PfP responsibilities from DPP to PASP and the consequent division of responsibilities and personnel need further study and adjustment. The logic or benefits of combining public affairs with science in the new Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) remain elusive. The Secretary General's mid-March proposals to the Council for restructuring reflect difficulties with management and resources issues. De Hoop Scheffer was expected to propose downgrading and downsizing the Executive Management Division and moving some of its new functions back under direct Private Office supervision (including the Financial Controller and the Council Secretariat. Instead of an ASG, an A-7 level Director of Management will be appointed, along with 4 A-6s to head personnel, budget and finance, HQ support and information technology.

It is not surprising that the shifts in responsibilities and extensive office moves, which the restructuring entailed, at a time of a continuing heavy workload and the complexities of the new budget and personnel management systems, have had a negative impact on staff morale in many cases. The Secretary General noted that the changes had been "painful for some, disruptive for many, and have taken time to get used to..." (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a)

Principles for Further Reorganization

The "painful" and "disruptive" NATO+ and 2003 reorganization and continuing heavy workload need to be taken into account as further changes are considered. In addition, in developing further changes, it would be useful to apply, to the extent applicable, the principles used to develop the new SHAPE organization.⁴¹ In general terms these were: (1) avoid duplication, (2) reduce the number of layers of management, (3) shift responsibility to the lowest level possible, (4) concentrate resources in operational areas (this has a different connotation at NATO HQ, where support for Council and subordinate committees and the Alliance's political initiatives are also "operational"), (5) assure robust manning that can be surged when required and (6) create a fluid labour pool that can be adjusted as tasks require, based on a project team approach.

⁴¹ Interview with senior SHAPE officer on November 12, 2004.

Further Suggestions

In addition to changes to reflect a revised committee structure (above) and merging of the IS and IMS (below), the following would enhance NATO HQ effectiveness.

- Utilize any personnel savings obtained from merging the IS and IMS to increase A grade staff dealing with substantive issues;
- Seek additional personnel and resource savings in support functions, perhaps through outsourcing of additional support tasks, to increase A grade staff dealing with substantive issues;
- Simplify and rationalize the requirements imposed by the new budget and personnel management systems;
- Regardless of whether proposals below related to the IS and IMS are adopted, continue the trend towards increased utilization of task organizations and task forces, with tasking authority for all participating elements;
- Separate science functions from the public affairs division;
- Reconsider and clarify the division of PfP tasks between PASP and DPP, including shifting resources as required.

IS-IMS Relations

One of the oddities of NATO Headquarters' organization is the existence - in the same building - of two separate staffs, both supporting the Secretary General and dealing, in many cases, with the same or closely related matters.⁴² These are the International Staff (IS, addressed above) and the International Military Staff (IMS). The separate status of the IMS reflects the role of the Military Committee (MC) as the senior military authority in NATO as well as NATO's historical evolution.⁴³

Although the possibility of merging the two staffs has been considered from time to time, this issue was explicitly excluded from the 2001/2002 discussions of NATO Headquarters restructuring. This reflected both the sensitivity of the issue as well as the Military Committee's and the IMS Director's strong objections to raising it. Even discussions of issues that were related but stopped short of merging the staffs, such as co-location of IS and IMS staffs dealing with related matters and increased use of joint IS-IMS task forces, were difficult.⁴⁴

The Secretary General has now placed this matter squarely on the reform agenda. In addressing the staff on March 17, 2005, he noted: "I imagine that it might also

⁴² Some on the military side of NATO HQ would disagree; in their view, the IMS supports the Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC), which represents the Chiefs of Defence, and only indirectly the Secretary General as Chair of the NAC, a view to which I do not subscribe.

⁴³ The Military Committee, which the IMS supports, was originally located in Washington, with SHAPE in Paris and the Council in London. IMS officers consider that the MC is a military headquarters and at the same time a committee of HQ NATO and that it is the first role that warrants an independent military staff.

⁴⁴ The IS and IMS nuclear planning staffs have been successfully co-located for some time, but this has not proved to be the model for further co-location that might have been expected. Other examples of less far-reaching efforts and less successful efforts at co-location include the HQ, NC3 Agency staff and logistics.

be frustrating for you that the IS and IMS are not better integrated. We have to eliminate duplication and ambiguity from NATO and examine the relationship between the IS and IMS; do they still need to be as separate as they are today?" He suggested that greater synergy between the two could be reinvested in priority areas. (de Hoop Scheffer 2005a)

The IMS "is responsible for planning, assessing and recommending policy on military matters for consideration by the Military Committee, as well as ensuring that the policies and decisions of the Committee are implemented as directed". (NATO 2002b) The most frequently heard justification for a separate military staff is the requirement for the military committee, which represents the Chiefs of Defence, to provide independent military advice to Council. To do so, it is argued, requires a separate staff independent of the civilian staff and therefore 'untainted' by the political considerations which predominate there.

The status of the IMS is directly related to the role of the Military Committee itself, a topic of even greater sensitivity. As the senior military body located at a political-military headquarters, among other tasks the Military Committee advises the political authorities on military policy and strategy, provides guidance and direction on military matters to the NATO Strategic Commanders and is responsible for the overall conduct of Alliance military affairs under Council authority. Some IMS officers consider that the MC is a military headquarters and at the same time a committee of NATO Headquarters and that it is the first role that warrants an independent military staff.

Supporters of a separate IMS believe that merging the IS and IMS would diminish the authority of the Director of the International Military Staff (DIMS), decrease the status of the MC and undermine the independence of the IMS by overwhelming it with political considerations and reduce staff support available to and needed by the Military Committee.⁴⁵

Some observers consider that the Military Committee has become overly politicized. Instead of serving as a forum for providing independent military advice, some delegations use the Military Committee to advance political agendas that would be more difficult to advance in the Council. Then, in subsequent Council discussions, these delegations seek to advance these same positions using leverage resulting from MC decisions. Some delegations also use the MC, as well as other committees, as a mechanism to delay decisions that would be embarrassing to address in Council. The MC does sometimes serve as a forum where difficulties can be resolved, obviating the need for them to be debated in Council. This role could be enhanced if the Military Committee would seek to develop better consensus guidance for its working groups. Now issues are frequently moved directly into working groups without the provision of broad guidance, which gives capitals and staffs time to set their positions in concrete before MC consideration.

In fact, the degree to which the military advice provided by a particular national military delegation is "independent" depends on the relationship between the chief of defence and his national authorities. In many cases, probably most, the views expressed by MC representatives already reflect political considerations factored in through the national interagency process.⁴⁶ Ambassador Burns, the former US

⁴⁵ These views reflect interviews held at NATO Headquarters from 8-11, 12 August 2004 and subsequent interviews and exchanges.

⁴⁶ See van Eekelen 2002.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

representative to NATO, addressed this issue in his valedictory address to the NAC on 2 March 2005, when he noted that, “The NAC and Military Committee are carefully balanced instruments. We need advice from the Military Committee that is untarnished by political constraints. This is an acute concern of many of our military leaders.” (Burns 2005)

The existence of two separate staffs presents a number of disadvantages. The IS and IMS sometimes provide conflicting views and advice and create friction that the Private Office or the Secretary General must resolve. In addition, the resulting “stove-piping” is inefficient and does not facilitate taking all relevant positions into account. Having two staffs inhibits and slows necessary staff interaction. These differences are exacerbated by the separate and different personnel policies of the two staffs. Except for new IS officials and some seconded by their national authorities, IS officials have usually been in their positions for longer periods of time than their IMS colleagues and are usually highly expert in their areas of competence. IMS officers usually serve three-year tours. While many arrive with or develop high levels of expertise, they are frequently at a disadvantage in comparison with their IS colleagues. On the other hand, their frequent, direct experience with conflict and crisis response operations is a significant advantage. In the final analysis, retaining two staffs is duplicative and inefficient and some - perhaps only limited - personnel economies could be achieved by merging the staffs.⁴⁷

While some senior members of the IS advocate merging the two staffs, the Military Committee and DIMS do not support such an approach.⁴⁸ An interesting aspect of this issue is that, in the context of planning for the new NATO HQ building, senior IS and IMS officials agreed that IS and IMS elements would be co-located to the maximum extent possible in the new building as a step towards eventually merging the staffs.⁴⁹ The IMS hopes that by then the IS will have improved its infrastructure and business management processes to the level that the IMS has now reached.⁵⁰ The IMS is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its organization and interaction with other staffs and headquarters, which should be completed by July 2005.

On balance it would be desirable to merge those elements of the IS and IMS dealing with the same or closely related issues as soon as possible for the following reasons: (1) the Secretary General and NATO committees would receive consolidated advice more effectively and quickly; (2) reduced overlap and duplication; (3) greater synergy between the IS and IMS staff components; (4) adherence to the principle of a single chain of command; (5) some, perhaps only modest, savings in personnel and support costs could contribute to a more cost-effective organization. If agreement to merge the staffs cannot be reached, an effort should be made to maximize co-location and to rely on task forces with unambiguous tasking authority for both IS and IMS participants.

⁴⁷ It is argued that personnel economies would not be significant for two reasons: (1) in contrast to the IS, nations pay the salaries of IMS officials, so savings would accrue to individual allies and not the Alliance, and (2) many allies would resist cuts in their nationals serving on the IS, whom some view as enhancing their influence.

⁴⁸ Interview with senior IMS official, September 2004.

⁴⁹ IS officials who were involved informed me about this agreement, but it was not in writing.

⁵⁰ The 2004 Deloitte Study of Registry and IT Services at HQ NATO notes a discrepancy in the service available.

Move SHAPE to Brussels?

A significant impact on both how the IS and IMS interact and how NATO Headquarters functions would derive from a proposal to move Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) from Mons, Belgium to Brussels and co-locate it with NATO HQ. This would establish a permanent SACEUR presence in NATO Headquarters, greatly enhance synergy between NATO HQ and Allied Command Operations, and result in some significant personnel and cost savings. It would be possible, for instance, to merge the staffs of the NATO military delegations with the National Military Representatives at SHAPE. SHAPE is in the process of looking for a new building to replace its current facilities, and it has been suggested that perhaps SHAPE could consider taking over NATO's current building after that organization moves to new headquarters, probably in eight or nine years. The very significant disadvantage of this proposal is that co-locating the political-military headquarters and the strategic operational headquarters would increase the level of micromanagement in military affairs. In addition significant and expensive reconstruction would be required at NATO HQ, which is in poor condition and does not meet Belgian building standards.

Intelligence Support

Intelligence support for decision-making is another area where changes are needed. Accurate, timely, reliable intelligence is an essential ingredient for consultations and decision-making. As Admiral Giambastiani and General Jones point out in "Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge", "Intelligence collection, analysis, dissemination and sharing will be critical in reducing the decision time between recognizing a security risk and executing the desired course of action". (Giambastiani and Jones 2004, 4) Allies recognized the need for change at the Istanbul Summit when they called for "improved intelligence sharing between our nations, including through our Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit and a review of current intelligence structures at NATO Headquarters". (NATO 2004a)⁵¹

Admiral Johnson, former CINCSOUTH, addressed this issue in the following terms: "Another area critical to the success of every crisis-management operation where NATO must improve its capabilities is that of intelligence collection, analysis, dissemination and sharing. The Alliance cannot simply sit back and hope that once a crisis develops, nations will come forward with the necessary information and intelligence. Rather, it is up to NATO to develop its own intelligence and regional expertise to support ongoing operations as well as potential future missions."⁵² (Johnson 2004)

⁵¹ The comprehensive political guidance called for in Istanbul also focuses on intelligence: "We have directed the Council in Permanent Session to produce for our consideration comprehensive political guidance in support of the Strategic Concept for all Alliance capabilities issues, planning disciplines and intelligence, responsive to the Alliance's requirements, including for forces which are interoperable and deployable, able to carry out major operations as well as smaller ones, to conduct them concurrently if necessary, as well as to operate jointly in a complex security environment." (NATO 2004a)

⁵² For intelligence sharing for operational purposes NATO nations have established the NATO BICES Agency. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, Admiral Johnson also describes establishment by Joint Forces Command (JFC) Naples of the Joint Information and Analysis Centre (JIAC) to bring together intelligence collected from all NATO operations to provide an integrated intelligence product.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

It is therefore important to consider briefly how intelligence sharing at NATO Headquarters is organized. NATO has no mandate or capabilities for intelligence gathering, except when during NATO or NATO-led force deployment, when the deployed forces perform normal military intelligence functions. NATO depends on nations for intelligence, which is then shared with all allies and, as appropriate, with PfP partners and other countries contributing forces to NATO-led operations or participating in PfP activities.⁵³

Although intelligence sharing at NATO HQ has increased since 9/11, several factors continue to inhibit this process. Traditional concerns about revealing methods of intelligence gathering and sources are compounded by worries that not all allies provide the necessary protection to intelligence they receive. Further, NATO HQ has not adeptly articulated its precise intelligence requirements nor provided clear justifications for its intelligence needs (decision-making support, support for operations, security, defence planning, among others). In addition certain organizational characteristics at NATO HQ inhibit intelligence sharing.

NATO HQ's single focus of intelligence, other than security intelligence for defensive purposes,⁵⁴ is the IMS Intelligence Division which, among other tasks, acts "as a central coordinating body for the collation, assessment and dissemination of intelligence within NATO Headquarters. ..." It "manages and coordinates the production and dissemination of NATO strategic intelligence estimates, intelligence policy documents and basic intelligence documents, as well as the maintenance of selected data bases and digital intelligence information services ... and performs strategic warning and crisis management functions". (NATO 2002b) It is staffed almost entirely by military personnel who may be - but are often not - intelligence professionals.

One difficulty is the absence of comparable focus on intelligence on the civilian side of NATO HQ despite the fact that various divisions and offices utilize intelligence, when it is available, and perform analytical or assessment functions. For instance, the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, including the Economics Directorate, engages in extensive assessment and analysis. In general terms, the Alliance has been relying too heavily on specific capabilities of allies' military intelligence agencies, which is out of sync with the current strategic and security priorities. Virtually all of the substantive divisions could benefit from increased access to intelligence from civilian intelligence agencies. In addition to the separation of civilian and military intelligence, the approach to intelligence at NATO HQ is, in general terms, too disparate, ad hoc, uncoordinated and, to some extent, duplicative.

Various proposals to rationalize existing processes and units have been considered but allies have not yet agreed upon them. The following principles would offer guidance when considering how to enhance intelligence support for consultations and decision making: (1) provide overall coordination of intelligence sharing at NATO HQ including both civilian and military intelligence, (2) enhance the ability of the civil and military authorities to seek intelligence from both civilian and military intelligence agencies, (3) clearly identify where responsibilities for intelligence

⁵³ For a detailed description of how intelligence is dealt with at NATO HQ see Kriendler 2004. For an overview of NATO early warning see Kriendler 2002.

⁵⁴ The Special Committee, which is the advisory body to the Council on matters of espionage and terrorist or related threats that might affect the Alliance, is a forum for active intelligence exchange.

sharing functions reside (4) enhance synergy and (5) rationalize staff time to avoid duplication.

These principles could be implemented as follows: (1) establish a single office, at an appropriately high level, tasked to provide overall coordination of intelligence and address the other issues listed above; and (2) establish a clear lead on the civilian side (as exists in the IMS) to address intelligence issues, including identifying intelligence requirements and providing a point of contact for nations to provide intelligence. A less desirable alternative would be to make the IMS Intelligence Division the focus of a joint intelligence office, mirroring the NATO HQ C3 Staff, which has reporting lines to both the IS and IMS.

Other Important Issues

Although beyond the scope of this paper, other important aspects of non-military transformation are crucial for effective Alliance engagement, including:

- Changing the defence planning process to increase its effectiveness, decrease its labour intensiveness, and assure that nations are aware and committed to providing the necessary forces before decisions are made on whether to undertake a new mission;
- Allies' willingness to increase common funding for NATO operations;
- Improving NATO's acquisition system to make it faster and more efficient and consideration of increased common funding;
- Eliminating, if possible, or at least reducing to the maximum extent possible, national restrictions on how forces may be used when assigned to NATO or NATO-led operations;⁵⁵
- Overcoming some nations' refusal to allow their personnel at NATO Headquarters to participate in operations to which the Alliance has agreed, such as the Iraq Training Mission. (Miles 2004)

Finally, it would be useful to establish a NATO think tank along the lines of the EU Institute for Security Studies to make available more detailed current information on NATO developments, enhance analysis of these developments and encourage a better-informed transatlantic dialogue and exchange of views.⁵⁶

Conclusions

The suggestions advanced in this paper are offered in the spirit of positive contributions to an organization that I hold in high esteem. Allies are actively

⁵⁵ In his analysis of SFOR, Admiral Johnson described this problem as "one of the greatest operational difficulties" to be faced on the ground. It effectively "eats away" at the usability of the forces. (Johnson 2004) Some progress has been made in reducing national restrictions. In the final analysis, it may be necessary in the force generation process to reject proposed national contributions that come with unacceptable restrictions.

⁵⁶ Although the research function of the NATO Defence College has recently been enhanced, it does not appear to be performing all of the functions suggested.

NATO Headquarters Transformation: Getting Ahead of the Power Curve

considering many of these ideas, and some have already been the subject of agreement.

The suggested changes can help NATO Headquarters become more pro-active, agile and flexible but, in the final analysis, what is most important is that allies consider that the Alliance is serving their fundamental security interests and are committed to it. If this fundamental perception is absent, it is unlikely that allies will undertake or sustain commitments, and the difficulties that the Alliance has been experiencing in recent years are likely to continue.

A key variable in how these issues will play out is the US commitment to the Alliance. In July 2004, Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer sharply criticized what he described as the Bush administration's abandonment of NATO and a penchant to use it when it suits Washington's interests. He said, "If the mission defines the coalition, then you don't need NATO. You will then see the Europeans falling into each other's arms." (Sciolino 2004). During his visit on 22 February 2005, President Bush stressed the importance of NATO as the "cornerstone" of the transatlantic relationship and the US commitment to NATO. In responding to Chancellor Schroeder's proposal for a high-level study, widely understood to reflect a desire to enhance the EU role in transatlantic relations and on security issues, President Bush said, "I think NATO is vital. NATO is a very important relationship as far as the United States is concerned. It is one that has worked in the past and will work in the future just so long as there is a firm commitment to NATO." (Russel 2005) It would be premature, however, to predict how the US commitment and that of other allies will be reflected under the pressures of continuing trans-Atlantic differences.

What is clear, however, is a widespread realization that substantial changes are needed in the way NATO does business to ensure that it can cope with the security challenges it faces - when there is the political will to do so.

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⁵⁷ All URLs were current at the time this paper was sent for publication.

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