

From Kosovo to Kabul and beyond

Contents



2 Change and continuity

Lord Robertson looks back on his time as Secretary General and reflects on Alliance history, transformation and prospects.



7 Reviving European defence cooperation

Charles Grant examines the evolution of Europe's Security and Defence Policy and its impact on NATO and transatlantic relations.



11 NATO's Balkan Odyssey

Robert Serry analyses the evolution of NATO's presence and activities in the former Yugoslavia since the Kosovo campaign and considers future prospects.



15 Debating security strategies

David S. Yost examines the implications for NATO of US strategic thinking and urges an Alliance-wide debate



20 Debate

Are the challenges NATO faces today as great as they were in the Cold War?

Andrés Ortega versus Tomas Valasek



Profile

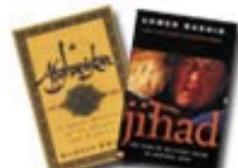
Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Robert Van de Roer profiles NATO's new secretary general.



25 Interview

General Götz Gliemerth: ISAF Commander



28 Book review

Understanding Afghanistan and its neighbours

Osman Yavuzalp reviews two of the best recent books to appear on Afghanistan and Central Asia.



31 Special

Aspiring to NATO membership

Zvonimir Mahecic analyses Croatia's relationship with NATO and its Alliance membership aspirations.

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*Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

Change and continuity

Lord Robertson looks back on his time as Secretary General and reflects on Alliance history, transformation and prospects.

In 1949, the Washington Treaty on which the Atlantic Alliance is based, was being written. The authors' aim was for the language to be as clear and concise as possible. Most writers claim this. Few deliver. This time, however, one of the authors had a benchmark. The Treaty should be written so that it could be understood by a milkman from Omaha.



Sarajevo walkabout: Bosnian children can grow up in peace because of NATO (© NATO)

That Nebraskan dairyman turned out to be an excellent target audience. The Washington Treaty is a model of clarity and brevity. Better still, it has survived half a century of extraordinary change, and the efforts of experts to deconstruct or reinterpret it, in excellent shape. It proved its enduring relevance on 12 September 2001 when Article 5, the collective-defence clause designed to protect Europe from the Soviet Union, was invoked to help the United States respond to the new and evil scourge of mass terror.

But what about the Omaha milkman? How would the Alliance's original target audience react to the new NATO, 54 years on? What would he understand? Or, indeed, fail completely to comprehend?

First of all, the milkman would probably be surprised to find that the Alliance was still in business. Based on his own experience, he would have expected the

Americans to go home and the Europeans to fall out. Neither has happened.

More recently, historians told us that alliances between free nations do not survive the disappearance of the threat that brought them together. NATO disproved that argument. The Warsaw Pact disintegrated but NATO retooled. It retooled first to help spread security and stability Eastwards across Europe, then to use its unique multinational military capabilities to bring peace to Europe's bloody and chaotic Balkan backyard, and now to confront the new threats of our post-9/11 world.

New challenges, new NATO

The challenges have changed. So has NATO. The Omaha milkman would understand and approve. He would look at the mathematics. Twelve members in 1949, nineteen today and twenty-six next year gives a clear message of success. He might, however, wonder what had happened to the old adversary, the Soviet Union. Here, however, his perspective would be different from ours. Only four years after the end of the common struggle against fascism, and with the Iron Curtain only beginning to fall across Europe, he might not be that surprised to hear that we were once again partners with Russia.

But for those of us who are children of the Cold War, the journey from the shadow of mutual extinction to a NATO-Russia Council in which Russia sits as an equal with 19 NATO members to deal with the common threats of the 21st century, is nothing less than epic. Many of our young people are only hazily aware of the details. For them, the Cold War is almost as remote as the Great War, a different world, barely relevant and hard to understand. Yet when you explain to them what was done and why, they are enthralled. This is because this journey, from 40 years of ideological hostility and head-to-head global military confrontation, to a working partnership and real cooperation, is one of the main platforms on which their very different world is based.

We still have our differences with Russia. But they are the stuff of politics and diplomacy, not mutually assured destruction. We must therefore do more to explain all of this to a new generation so that the NATO-Russia Council and other mechanisms for cooperation get the credit and support they deserve.

Lord Robertson is Secretary General of NATO.

The same applies to NATO's other partnerships, with Ukraine, and with new democracies and old neutrals in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and Partnership for Peace. Never before have 46 countries, as diverse as the 19 NATO members, Russia, Ireland and Switzerland, the Baltic Republics, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, made common cause in peacetime. That they do so on the basis of our common values, and that their partnership extends beyond political jaw-jaw to practical military cooperation, against terrorism and on the ground in NATO-led missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan, is another extraordinary but too little known achievement.

As the name says, this really is a partnership for peace. More than that, it is the world's largest permanent coalition, which works through and because of NATO. This is another clear and concise message that the milkman would understand and endorse.

Nonetheless, some critics argue that the real comparison is not with the NATO of 1949 but with the NATO of 1989, before the Berlin Wall fell, or the NATO of 1999, before al Qaida struck the Twin Towers. NATO may have done a decent job in those days but what added value does the Alliance have today? Is it anything more than a political talking shop?

To begin with, no one should disparage talking shops. Jaw-jaw is always better than war-war. And ours is jaw-jaw of the highest quality. Frank and open debate within a close but diverse family. At their December 2003 meetings, Alliance defence and foreign ministers tackled the most difficult current issues head-on: Afghanistan; European defence; and Iraq. We made progress in every area because NATO is the tried and tested forum for debate, decision and then action.

Alliance transformation

More importantly, in the past two years, NATO has been truly transformed. The initial impulse came from 9/11 but the process rapidly became much deeper and much wider.

During 2001 and 2002, NATO sent AWACS aircraft across the Atlantic to help protect US cities, reversing the expectations on which the Washington Treaty had been based. We ditched a decade of sterile argument about whether NATO could operate out of area by agreeing that threats would be met from wherever they might come. We created the NATO-Russia Council. Then the Prague Summit began to pull the Allies towards even more radical change. An enlargement summit became a transformation summit.

Prague was so important a watershed because it encompassed transformation across the whole spectrum of Alliance business. This extended from new members and new partnerships with the European Union and Russia through new capabilities and new missions to the most radical reform ever of the Alliance's internal processes and structures.

The decision to admit seven new members, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, was highly symbolic. Yet it was also eminently practical. All of the new Allies will add value to our collective security. Sceptics need only look at the ceremony to stand up NATO's first multinational chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defence battalion in early December. This new battalion, which is a key capability in today's military armoury, is being led not by a traditional NATO heavyweight but by the Czech Republic, one of the first wave of new members, now self-confident and capable enough to take the lead in one of our most important projects. Another Ally to have joined in 1999, Poland, is now leading a multinational stabilisation division in Iraq.

The CBRN battalion was just one of the many military capability improvements that we were able to generate at Prague. Some, like the cutting-edge NATO Response Force and the new command structure, were the fruit of national thinking. Others, especially the Prague Capabilities Commitments, needed additional input from NATO's International Staff and my own interventions around, behind and under the North Atlantic Council table.

The overall result was a major package of military transformations, more far-reaching than past initiatives, and underpinned by the strongest possible commitments by presidents and prime ministers that their governments would deliver. At the heart of these decisions was the new Allied Command Transformation. This is NATO's motor for continued change and a vehicle for ensuring the future compatibility of European and US armed forces.

The Prague Summit did not close the transatlantic capabilities gap about which I have made myself such a pest in so many capitals. But the gap is narrowing. European governments really are transforming their forces. And Allied Command Transformation now provides the carrot of compatibility to add to the stick of marginalisation.

Compared to the delivery of new strategic airlift aircraft, air tankers, precision weapons and the like, overhauling the Alliance's internal processes may seem mundane. It is not. NATO Headquarters in Brussels is

the Alliance's heart, brain and central nervous system. It is the forum for political and strategic planning and discussion, consensus-building, decision-making, public and private diplomacy. The Headquarters has worked with 19 members because hard-pressed civilian and military staffs are committed to the organisation and have been able to stretch a small civil budget to make do. Every person working in NATO Headquarters, military and civilian, shares the credit for what this great Alliance has achieved. However, with 26 members and major new responsibilities, but no new money, it was a case of change or collapse.

In the run-up to the Prague Summit, I therefore persuaded the nations to accept the most radical internal change agenda in NATO's history. We fundamentally restructured the International Staff to reflect the outputs of 2003, not the Cold War. We streamlined the Committee Structure and the decision-making process. We gave the post of Secretary General new delegated powers to manage the organisation effectively. We introduced objective-based budgeting and new, fairer and performance-related employment conditions for civilian staff. Now we are examining decision-making processes in capitals and in NATO from end to end. Most important of all, we demonstrated to the sceptics that NATO as an institution could change, could change itself, and could change quickly and for the better.

The Alliance became the focal point for developing military capabilities to deal with the threats posed by terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Our new Czech-led CBRN battalion is just one example. Cooperation with Partners on terrorism and with Russia on theatre missile defence are others. All of the Prague improvements in focused military muscle, turning NATO from a sumo wrestler to a fencer, would of course be for nothing if they were to remain on training grounds rather than in crisis zones. So the most important of all the Prague transformations was NATO's adoption of new missions.

Impact of Iraq

In early 2003, when the international community and every other multilateral institution were split and paralysed over Iraq, NATO was able both to agree

and to act. It did take us 11 difficult days to meet our Washington Treaty commitments and reinforce Turkey. But we did so when others failed. Indeed, some people will recall that it took NATO longer still to reach a similar decision in politically less difficult circumstances at the time of the first Gulf War.

Moreover, in building agreement, we confounded the critics who said that this crisis would shatter NATO's cohesion forever. Only weeks later, our supposedly crippled Alliance took two previously unthinkable

decisions: first, to take over the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul; then to provide support to Poland in setting up a multinational stabilisation division in Iraq.

I have seen very few attempts to analyse how and why NATO went so quickly from the brink of going out of business to agreement to go out of area instead. In part, I think the reason was that nations peered into the abyss of a world without the transatlantic alliance, and recoiled. But I also sense that too many people underestimated the

deep consensus that exists across Europe and the Atlantic on post-9/11 threats and how to deal with them. NATO's Prague Summit statement and the European Union's new security strategy do not reflect divergent worldviews.

Of course there were – and still are – differences inside Europe and across the Atlantic on Iraq. But the differences were about how to handle Saddam Hussein in 2003. They were not on the big picture of the global and continuing threats from apocalyptic mass terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and failed or rogue states. If the differences had been as fundamental as the pessimists believed, NATO would not today be in Kabul and preparing to move beyond of the Afghan capital. Nor would it be supporting Poland in Iraq, and discussing calmly a potentially larger role in 2004.

Prague has set in train a genuine and profound transformation, one that is already firmly embedded in the Alliance's culture and being implemented on the ground from Kosovo to Kabul. The Omaha milkman would, I am certain, understand and approve. But he

NATO is the tried and tested forum for debate, decision and then action

might still have one or two questions to ask. How, for example, will an Alliance created to defend Cold War Europe fare beyond the Hindu Kush?

The answer is that NATO will succeed because it has no alternative. All of its members understand and agree that if we do not go to Afghanistan, and succeed in Afghanistan, Afghanistan and its problems will come to us. Worse still, we would have to deal with the terrorists, the refugees and the drug traffickers with a much weaker international security structure because NATO would have been severely damaged and the concept of multinational security cooperation, whether in NATO, the European Union, the United Nations or coalitions, would have been dealt an equally heavy blow.

I am, however, optimistic, firstly because NATO has an unbroken record of success. Second, because nations have woken up to the need for more usable and more deployable forces for operations of this kind, and are beginning to do something about it. My efforts in the autumn of 2003 to provide helicopters and intelligence teams for ISAF were well reported in the newspapers. There were fewer reports of our success in December in meeting the requirement – exceeding it in some respects. The mood has changed. I hope that next year we will be able to change the process as well so that my successor, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, can spend less time than I have been obliged to on persuading nations to make the necessary forces available.

My third reason for optimism is NATO's record in the Balkans. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* are no longer in the headlines because NATO acted, and because NATO learned lessons and put them into practice. We helped stop civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We acted to prevent ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. We intervened to prevent a civil war in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.* In each successive crisis, our involvement came at an earlier stage and was therefore increasingly effective in saving lives and preventing overspill. And we were prepared to stay the course.

During December's ministerial meetings, the foreign ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro sat side by side to my right at a working lunch of the EAPC countries. They are not NATO Partners yet, but only eight years after the Srebrenica massacre, they are well on the way towards Europe's mainstream. Most extraordinary of all, the strongest voice raised among the existing Partners in favour of their early membership was that of Croatia. If NATO can succeed so spectacularly in the Balkans, the great challenge of the 1990s, we can succeed in Afghanistan today.

European defence

A final question from the milkman might be: what is this row about European defence all about? Will the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) really damage NATO?

My answer is an emphatic no. I have been as robust as anyone in my opposition to unnecessary duplication between NATO and the European Union. We need more capabilities, not paper armies and wiring diagrams connected neither to soldiers nor to reality. But that does not mean I do not welcome a stronger European security and defence role, including the ability to conduct autonomous EU missions where NATO decides to stand aside and the arcane but essential "Berlin-Plus" arrangements prove inappropriate.

I therefore welcome the agreement reached recently among the EU members on strengthening ESDP because it involves no unnecessary duplication. I am also reassured by the commitments to a strong Atlantic alliance, and to complementarity between NATO and the European Union, being made on all sides of the debate not least because governments know that genuine institutional duplication and competition would cost much more to produce much less. No government likes that kind of deal.

My message is therefore that everyone should take the long view. Put proposals to the acid test of whether they deliver real capabilities, real added value, but do not turn a Euro-drama into an Atlantic crisis. NATO and the European Union both have more than enough to do without a new round of theological nit-picking.

The intricacies of European defence apart, I suggest that the 1949 milkman from Omaha, and his European equivalents from Oslo to Oporto, Oban to Oberammergau, would come quite easily to understand and applaud the new NATO. Our world is not his. But his NATO is our NATO, transformed to deal with a new generation of threats yet based firmly on the same shared transatlantic history, culture, values and interests. It was not then, nor is it now, an alliance marked by homogeneity. Diversity is a strength, not a weakness. We do disagree. We will disagree. But in NATO – and now with Partners and with Russia – we work out our differences and move on, together. On 1 January, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer takes over the reins. Those who know him well already know his mettle. Those who do not will soon learn. The face at the top will change but it will be the same transformed NATO.

As Secretary General, I have seen the successes of our new NATO in the villages of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia* where the children can now look forward to peace and prospects, not war and exile, because of the commitment of half a million or more NATO soldiers who have served in the Balkans since the mid-1990s. I have seen the final divisions and stereotypes of the Cold War smashed around the new NATO-Russia Council table in Rome, and by NATO's largest ever enlargement at the Prague Summit.

I saw what the terrorists could do in the rubble of the Twin Towers and then how NATO could retool to help defeat them. I saw Alliance troops bringing hope to the streets of Kabul, a continent and a half away from the old Iron Curtain. Most of all, I have seen a transformed Alliance doing what it has done best since 1949: delivering safety and security where it matters and when it matters. This is a simple message that everyone should understand and welcome. ■

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

Reviving European defence cooperation

Charles Grant examines the evolution of Europe's Security and Defence Policy and its impact on NATO and transatlantic relations.



Friends again: President Chirac (left), Chancellor Schröder (centre) and Prime Minister Blair have put aside their differences over Iraq to revive European defence cooperation (© Reuters)

The fortunes of Europe's Security and Defence Policy have resembled a roller-coaster ride for much of the past year. When Europe's most powerful countries failed to achieve consensus on policy towards Iraq, they fell out badly and subsequently pursued divergent agendas. Now, as a result of a new deal between France, Germany and the United Kingdom, they may have prepared the groundwork for more effective EU defence cooperation. But some in Washington still have to be persuaded that this is in both US interests and those of NATO.

The agreement on the future of European defence, which was endorsed by the European Council, is good news for those who believe that the European Union should focus more on military capabilities than institutions. Now that the European Union has agreed to set up a civil/military planning cell – an item which will make little difference in the real world, despite the highly charged negotiations surrounding it – it can move ahead with what matters. That is not

only boosting Europe's military capabilities, but also preparing to take over NATO's peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The defence agreement, which was reached in spite of the deadlock on a European constitution, is one fruit of the increasingly close cooperation on foreign and defence policy between Berlin, London and Paris. Yet it is only six months since France and Germany, together with Belgium and Luxembourg, hatched plans for a "core Europe" defence organisation that excluded the United Kingdom. That scheme deepened the divisions caused by the Iraq War and convinced many Americans that France and Germany were determined to undermine NATO.

Emotions have subsided since the spring. French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder have abandoned their plans for a defence core. They now believe that European foreign and defence policies cannot be built without the United Kingdom. For the sake of an agreement with the British they have diluted their original plan for a military headquarters to run EU operations. Instead, a small planning unit with civil/military components is to join the existing EU military staff.

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UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, too, has had to compromise, by accepting the principle that the European Union may need to do its own operational planning, and by agreeing that this unit may one day evolve into a real headquarters – if everybody agrees that it should do so. In return, France and Germany have agreed to change two contentious parts of the EU draft constitution: the article committing members to defend each other if attacked is to be greatly watered down, and that allowing a group of countries to move ahead with a defence *avant garde* is to be focused on increasing military capabilities.

More importantly, Prime Minister Blair has reasserted British leadership in European defence, one of the few areas where the United Kingdom is well qualified to set the European Union's agenda. Following the Iraq War, Prime Minister Blair had a credibility problem in some parts of Europe, being seen as US President George Bush's lackey. His new commitment to EU defence should help to dispel that image and to restore British influence in the European Union.

Since Prime Minister Blair came up with the idea of an EU role in defence, five years ago, he has often had to expend energy on persuading first President Bill Clinton, and then President Bush, that European defence would not damage NATO. This time, Prime Minister Blair will find the task more difficult, for Washington has become increasingly sceptical about EU defence. That is in part a consequence of a hardening of attitudes towards Paris, especially in the Pentagon, where European defence is sometimes wrongly viewed as a French invention.

The gang of four

The summit on 29 April of the leaders of Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg did a great deal to sour opinion in Washington. The four leaders agreed to cooperate more closely on defence matters in seven ways. Six of these were not particularly controversial. But the seventh was the Belgian idea for the establishment of an EU operational planning staff in the Brussels suburb of Tervuren.

The argument for this initiative is that if, as the 15 current EU members have agreed, the European Union

should be able to conduct autonomous operations, it will need its own operational planners. The argument against, put by those governments excluded from the 29 April summit, is that the European Union can rely on NATO planners at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) for a so-called "Berlin-plus" operation, like that in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,* when it decides to work with NATO; or the European Union can use a national headquarters, duly modified to reflect the nationalities of those taking part in the mission, as it did for the mission to Bunia in the Congo, when a French headquarters directed the operation.

The counter-argument is that only the larger EU countries have suitable national

headquarters, and that many smaller members would like to participate in an EU planning group, rather than second staff to a headquarters run by a big country. The more sceptical response is that if the European Union had a very small headquarters of just a few dozen people, it would lack the capacity to manage a military mission, while if the European Union had a large operation it would duplicate and in the long run rival SHAPE.

These technical arguments, however, were not the issue. For the Belgian proposal, strongly backed by President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder – against the advice of their foreign and defence ministries – was of huge political importance. The four governments involved were the same four that had blocked NATO aid for Turkey early in the year. That the ring-leaders of the European Union's anti-war camp should try to set up a core European defence organisation, with its own operational planning staff, had an obvious message in American, British, Eastern European, Italian and Spanish eyes. This appeared to be an initiative designed to undermine NATO – and exclude the British from the principal area where they are able to play a leading role in European integration. Moreover, this initiative was not just about defence: the French and German governments had for years toyed with the idea of establishing some sort of core Europe, which would provide leadership to an enlarged European Union. They hinted that such a core Europe should exclude those who were not committed to putting

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to make ESDP
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Europe first, a category which included both the British and the Eastern Europeans.

The gang of four denied that their initiative was intended to bring about these consequences. But they did see it as historically significant, in the way that earlier initiatives on the single currency had been. Indeed, they viewed defence as the next big area for European integration and were not prepared to let hostility in London or Washington deflect their purpose.

The concept of an EU staff of operational planners is, in itself, not particularly significant. It is probably desirable, if in the long term the European Union is to engage in medium-sized autonomous operations. But given the context in which the Tervuren initiative was launched – with Europe split into two hostile camps – the timing was extraordinarily poor.

In Washington, senior figures viewed the Tervuren proposal as an attempt to create an alternative to NATO, and thus to weaken the Alliance. Moreover, it was followed by further developments they found objectionable. The manner in which the European Union embarked on the mission to Bunia, for example, irritated US decision-makers. This is because EU ministers did not discuss the operation with NATO, to work out which organisation was better suited to send the troops, but unilaterally decided to dispatch peacekeepers. And the constitutional convention has been a particular bone of contention. The draft EU treaty contains a mutual assistance clause that seems to imply that the European Union could become a collective-defence organisation to rival NATO. Moreover, it has provisions for “structured cooperation”, which would allow a sub-group of members to move ahead with defence integration. In Washington, that looked like a way of formalising the results of the 29 April summit. In short, during the course of this year opinion in Washington has shifted against the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Europeans should worry about this; it will be hard to make ESDP work if the Americans are actively opposed to it.

Big three cooperation revives

Meeting in Berlin in September, Prime Minister Blair, President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder sketched out the framework for a compromise on European defence, and in late November the details were finally agreed. The deal involves three elements.

First, the European Union is to set up a small cell of operational planners at SHAPE, NATO’s planning headquarters near Mons. This cell is to work on

ensuring a smooth relationship between the European Union and NATO on “Berlin-plus” missions, when the European Union borrows NATO assets. There is also to be a new planning unit with civil/military components for the European Union’s military staff, which currently consists mainly of “strategic planners” (whose job is to advise EU foreign ministers on the operational plans that may come out of SHAPE or a national military headquarters). The new unit is to help with the planning of EU civilian operations as well as civil/military missions. It has been agreed that, when the European Union conducts an autonomous EU mission, a national headquarters will normally be in charge. However, if there is unanimous consent, the European Union may ask its military staff to play a role in conducting an autonomous mission, in particular where a joint civil/military response is required and no national headquarters has been identified. It would need to be reinforced before it was able to run a mission on its own.

Second, the inter-governmental conference should amend the treaty articles on “structured cooperation”, so that the rationale of the *avant-garde* group becomes the enhancement of military capabilities. A separate protocol is to describe what the structured cooperation will do. This is, in effect, to set up a capability-enhancement club. The criteria required for entering the club will not be too stringent — for example countries concerned must have forces ready for action in 5 to 30 days, which can be sustained on a mission for 30 days or longer — which means that it will not be exclusive. While neutrals or others uninterested in boosting their capabilities may wish to stay out, most member states are likely to join. The way the protocol is drafted, structured cooperation cannot be about military operations, nor about a small group of countries establishing new institutions or headquarters. London is therefore happy with these arrangements, which is why it has agreed that the European Council should be able formally to trigger the structured cooperation by qualified majority voting.

Third, the treaty articles on mutual military assistance are to be amended. The mutual defence clause in the detailed part three of the draft constitution has been deleted altogether. The more general article in part one of the draft constitution has been watered down, with references to members aiding each other “in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter”, and to NATO remaining “the foundation of members’ collective defence and the forum for its implementation”. In this way, the European Union will not be making claims to be a collective-defence organisation of the sort that could rival NATO.

Blair's central role

Prime Minister Blair's role in the revival of European defence cooperation has been crucial. For the British government has not been firmly behind his efforts to promote EU defence. Much of the Ministry of Defence and even parts of the Foreign Office were not enthusiastic about compromising with France and Germany on planning staffs, concerned, above all, by Washington's possible reaction. But 10 Downing Street has led on this dossier, forcing the other Whitehall departments to follow.

Prime Minister Blair will now have to play an equally important role in reassuring other interested parties that big three cooperation on defence is not harmful to their interests. There is probably no one else who is capable of reassuring Washington that EU defence will not damage NATO or US interests. He has a powerful argument to use with the Americans. If the United Kingdom blocked any EU role in operational planning, France and Germany would probably go ahead – with a few like-minded countries – to set up some sort of multinational military headquarters. And that could develop in a way that harmed NATO. But if the British are part of the new EU planning arrangements, they can steer them in a NATO-friendly direction.

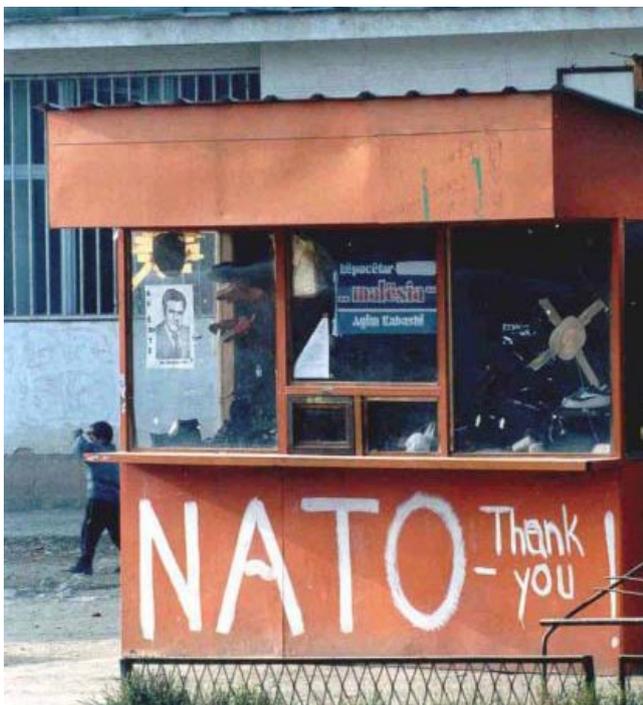
Other European countries will also need reassurance: the smaller ones tend to be concerned when the big three concoct a deal and the neutral ones worry about the implications of a clause on mutual military assistance. The Central and Eastern Europeans, in particular, have misgivings about an EU role in defence and are concerned by any development that might be seen to undermine NATO. But when Prime Minister Blair – whose Atlanticist credentials cannot be doubted – tells them that they need not worry, they are inclined to believe him.

The concept of EU defence is five years old this month. Conceived by Prime Minister Blair and President Chirac at their St Malo Summit in December 1998, it came close to a premature end this year as a result of the very different positions towards the Iraq War taken by President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder on the one hand and Prime Minister Blair on the other. Prime Minister Blair's pursuit of a policy of compromise with France and Germany this autumn has helped breathe new life into EU defence. The concept would, nevertheless, benefit greatly from US support. And if EU countries are going to convince Washington of its merits, they must now begin to deliver new military capabilities and demonstrate that they are equipped to take responsibility for peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ■

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

NATO's Balkan Odyssey

Robert Serry analyses the evolution of NATO's presence and activities in the former Yugoslavia since the Kosovo campaign and considers future prospects.



In gratitude: NATO's decision to intervene in Kosovo was controversial but today it is clear that it was courageous, principled and far-sighted (© NATO)

It is sometimes remarkable how rapidly even the most acrimonious relationship can change for the better. Less than half a decade ago NATO waged an air campaign against Yugoslavia for the best part of three months to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Today, Serbia and Montenegro, the successor state to Yugoslavia, aspires to join the Alliance's Partnership for Peace programme and has even volunteered soldiers to serve alongside their NATO peers in the Alliance-led peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan.

The turnaround in relations between NATO and Serbia and Montenegro is probably the most spectacular security-related development to have taken place in the former Yugoslavia since the 1999 Kosovo campaign. But progress has been encouraging almost everywhere in the intervening period. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is also a candidate for the Partnership for Peace (PfP); Albania, Croatia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* aspire to Alliance membership and are already contributing personnel

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to NATO operations beyond the Euro-Atlantic area; and it will probably be possible to reduce the number of troops in the NATO-led operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo to around 25,000 next year — little over a third of the figure deployed in 1999.

To be sure, the challenges that remain should not be under-estimated. Serbia and Montenegro's international rehabilitation may only become irreversible when it has met all the requirements for PfP membership and is admitted into the programme. The future political status of Kosovo has not been resolved and a robust international security presence remains necessary. The peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet self-sustaining and some form of international security presence will have to remain there as well. In addition, the violence that threatened the stability and integrity of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in 2001 may return unless the peace process is managed intelligently and tactfully. And stagnant economies undermine even the most determined international peace-building efforts and have been contributing to a revival in the fortunes of some of the nationalist political parties responsible for conflict in the first place.

Serbia and Montenegro

Nevertheless, relations between NATO and Serbia and Montenegro have improved to such an extent that Lord Robertson was able to visit Belgrade at the end of November 2003 on his farewell tour of the former Yugoslavia. This milestone event — the first visit to Serbia and Montenegro by a serving NATO Secretary General since the 1999 campaign — immediately followed the first high-level, military-to-military talks between the Alliance and Belgrade. These took place in Naples, Italy, and involved Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, Commander in Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe, on the NATO side and Defence Minister Boris Tadic and Chief of Staff Branko Krga on the Serbian and Montenegrin side.

The reform process in Serbia and Montenegro still faces important internal challenges, which should not be overlooked. Parliamentary elections have been brought forward to the end of December and may have an impact on the country's international outlook. Whatever the outcome, it is very much hoped that the next government in Belgrade will stay on the path of reform.

To Serbia and Montenegro's credit, the country has made considerable progress in the field of defence reform in the recent past. Belgrade is already participating in a tailor-made Security Cooperation Programme with NATO, consisting largely of Alliance-sponsored workshops designed to inform Serbs and Montenegrins about Euro-Atlantic security structures and the Partnership for Peace. And it has been cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, most notably in the surrender of former President Slobodan Milosevic. But several requirements must still be met.

Belgrade has to deliver the most notorious indicted war criminals that it is harbouring — in particular Ratko Mladic — to the ICTY. And it must drop its lawsuit against seven Allied countries and their leaders at the International Court of Justice, which is also in The Hague. These two issues are non-negotiable. If Belgrade meets these conditions, Serbia and Montenegro can expect to join the Partnership for Peace at next June's Istanbul Summit, though the Allies will continue to monitor the political situation there closely as well as Belgrade's attitude towards and involvement in Kosovo.

The incentive to meet NATO's requirements is the potential assistance that Belgrade can look to in the Partnership for Peace. NATO is already assisting neighbouring countries in security-sector reform with, among other initiatives, programmes aimed at retraining military personnel to help them adjust to civilian life and at converting former military bases to civilian uses. Similar programmes would clearly help smooth military downsizing in Serbia and Montenegro. Moreover, by becoming a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Belgrade would have taken the first step on the ladder of Euro-Atlantic integration and acquired a voice in a NATO forum. The benefits to NATO and the international community of Serbian and Montenegrin membership of the Partnership for Peace are also considerable, as it would be difficult to rebuild long-term security and stability in the region without Belgrade as a constructive partner.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina can also expect to join the Partnership for Peace at the Istanbul Summit, if it maintains the reform momentum of recent months. Moreover, given sustained improvements in the overall security situation, it should be possible to reduce the number of troops deployed in the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) there to between 7,000 and 8,000 by next June compared with a current level of about 12,000 and an initial deployment of 60,000 troops in December 1995.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's security architecture at the end of hostilities in 1995 — which consisted of three rival armed forces — was not conducive to long-term stability, security and prosperity. In the intervening years, therefore, NATO and other international organisations have worked together with the various Bosnian authorities to reform the country's defence structures.

This year, the reform process bore fruit following sustained work by a special defence committee set up by High Representative Paddy Ashdown and chaired by Jim Locker, a former US deputy assistant secretary for defence. Bosnia and Herzegovina's three-person Collective Presidency formally endorsed the programme proposed in the so-called Locker Report, which includes creation of a single state-level Defence Ministry, in September. The Bosnian Parliament ratified it in December.

The turnaround in relations between NATO and Belgrade is probably the most spectacular security-related development to have taken place in the former Yugoslavia since the Kosovo campaign

The High Representative has drawn up a series of benchmarks to measure implementation of the programme. These consist of legislative measures, including the passing of various constitutional amendments; personnel measures, such as the appointment of a state-level Defence Minister and two deputies; institutional measures, including the establishment of a Parliamentary Security Committee; and restructuring and budgetary measures, including establishing a budget system at both state and entity levels, preparing the 2004 budget and reducing the size of the armed forces.

If Bosnia and Herzegovina can demonstrate that it is implementing the reform programme by meeting the

benchmarks and that it is cooperating to the best of its ability with the ICTY, PfP membership should be assured.

While no formal decision has yet been made, the improvements in Bosnia and Herzegovina's security environment which make troop reductions possible also potentially pave the way for the European Union to deploy a follow-on mission, in addition to the police-monitoring mission it is already running. This eventuality, which is currently being discussed and could be realised by the end of 2004, would not involve a complete NATO withdrawal. Rather the Alliance would continue to provide a security back-up for any EU-led operation and would, in all likelihood, set up both a NATO military headquarters and a civilian representation in Sarajevo to help oversee further military reforms. In effect, the nature of NATO's engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina will be changing. In the months and years ahead, the operational aspect will become less important, while political engagement, particularly through the Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, will become more important.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

The model for EU-NATO cooperation is that established in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,* where the European Union took over responsibility for the NATO-led mission in April 2003. The hand-over of command followed agreement of the so-called "Berlin-Plus" package of measures, setting out the terms under which the European Union is able to borrow NATO assets. And the ultimate commander of a future EU-led Bosnian operation would be the most senior EU officer at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) who is also the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (DSACEUR).

The effective partnership between the European Union, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United States in crisis management in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* provided one of the most remarkable success stories of international involvement in the Balkans. NATO's role was crucial in brokering the cease-fire and securing an amnesty in 2001, disarming the National Liberation Army (NLA) in Operation *Essential Harvest* and contributing to the return of security in former crisis areas in Operation *Task Force Amber Fox*. And NATO's intensive political dialogue with the former NLA leadership contributed to the rapid transformation of the former guerrilla movement into a political party.

After landmark elections in September 2002, a new moderate government was formed led by Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski and the former rebel

leader Ali Ahmeti. All this happened within a year of the end of hostilities. However, even here there is no room for complacency. The new government has already experienced difficulties in implementing the Ohrid Agreement, the framework accord establishing a stabilisation process, and the economy continues to stagnate. Though the government has made important strides towards addressing security concerns from the 2001 conflict — notably by increasing the numbers of ethnic Albanians in the police — minor security incidents continue to occur, especially in areas bordering Kosovo.

For this reason, the international community will have to remain engaged in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.* In this way, NATO is maintaining a military headquarters in Skopje to assist the process of security-sector reform and liaise with KFOR on border security issues. Meanwhile, the EU military mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,* Operation *Concordia*, ended in December and is being replaced by a police-monitoring and advisory mission.

Kosovo

The security situation in Kosovo is stable but fragile. Moreover, the political situation remains tense and, following a decision by the Contact Group in October 2003, discussion of the province's final status is not likely to begin before the middle of 2005 at the earliest. As a result, it will not be possible to reduce the Kosovo Force (KFOR) to the same extent as SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nevertheless, the numbers are scheduled to come down to some 17,500 by the end of 2003 from a current level of 19,500 and an initial deployment of 50,000 in June 1999.

Since Kosovo's status remains unresolved, the NATO mandate in the province is greater than in any other operation. In this way, the Alliance has, for example, responsibility for supporting border security efforts and has developed expertise and become increasingly involved in post-conflict management. Together with the European Union, the OSCE and the Stability Pact, NATO helped organise a conference on border security in Ohrid in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* last May, in which all countries in the region participated. In this way, the Alliance is helping put in place a regional framework for cross-border security cooperation.

For the past two years, as NATO has reduced the number of troops deployed in its various Balkan operations, it has effectively viewed the entire region as a single joint operations area. In this way, Allied Forces Southern Europe in Naples has directed all the Alliance's Balkan operations and prepared a single reserve force which could be deployed in any theatre

in the event of unrest. This force, which exercises regularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, would be able to assist EU-led and NATO-led forces, if such support were needed. Other key assets, such as satellite and intelligence support, and heavy airlift are also shared between the two missions, which have been connected logistically by an air corridor, agreed with Belgrade in December 2002. NATO is also discussing with Belgrade the possibility of using landlines of communication through its territory.

The Alliance's decision to intervene in Kosovo and to use force to halt an ethnic-cleansing campaign was controversial at the time. But just under half a decade on and despite ongoing difficulties, it is clear that that decision was courageous, principled and far-sighted. Prospects for the entire region are better than they have been probably since the outbreak of fighting in the former Yugoslavia in June 1991. Ordinary people of all ethnicities can aspire to a better future. And the chances of further large-scale hostilities are remote. As a result, NATO is able to focus on security-sector reform and continue reducing its presence, which is the clearest sign that progress is being made.

However, the job is not yet finished and experience shows that post-conflict management may be a long and arduous process. While respective roles and responsibilities may change, the European Union, NATO and other international actors must continue their effective partnership for as long as it takes to make reconstruction and stabilisation in the region self-sustaining and irreversible. The experience that the Alliance has acquired in the Balkans is also extremely relevant as NATO moves beyond the Euro-Atlantic. As the Alliance takes on new challenges in Afghanistan, possibly in Iraq and elsewhere, it should take heart from its achievements in the Balkans and the way it has succeeded in building security and changing attitudes in a remarkably short time. ■

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

Debating security strategies

David S. Yost examines the implications for NATO of US strategic thinking and urges an Alliance-wide debate.



US vision: The strategic thinking advanced in the United States since September 2001 could serve as a starting point for Alliance-wide debate on strategy (© US DoD)

In October 2003, during their informal gathering in Colorado Springs, NATO's defence ministers considered how their military forces might cope with a terrorist threat involving chemical and biological weapons. While details of the discussions remain classified, it seems that the defence ministers got a clearer picture of future operational and decision-making requirements, including the urgency of pursuing the development of the NATO Response Force and the rest of the transformation agenda approved at last year's Prague Summit.

The discussions were valuable because they may help to foster what the Alliance needs more of – wide-ranging and thorough debate about strategy, including strategic concepts and their practical requirements and political implications. The strategic thinking advanced in the United States since September 2001

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in various documents – above all, the *Quadrennial Defense Review*, the *Nuclear Posture Review* and the *National Security Strategy* – deserves critical analysis and could serve as a point of departure.

To date, the debate on new security concepts that has taken place in the United States has attracted more attention than that in Europe, though Europeans may be catching up following publication of an EU security strategy. Nevertheless, as disagreements over the Iraq campaign demonstrate, there is a need for the Allies to examine US concepts seriously and thereby carry forward an informed transatlantic debate. Three of these concepts deserve particular attention: dissuasion, deterrence by denial, and pre-emption.

Dissuasion

Dissuasion is of course the word the French use for deterrence, but the US Department of Defense gave dissuasion a specific definition in the *Quadrennial Defense Review*, a definition that has been used in subsequent documents. In short, "dissuasion" means to persuade other powers to refrain from initiating an "arms race" or competition in military capabilities with the United States. The official strategy documents suggest that dissuasion is to be achieved by convincing the adversary of the futility of competition with the United States, either on a general basis or in a particular category of military power, which could be nuclear weapons or fighter aircraft or attack submarines or anything else. The goal is to lead the adversary to conclude that it would be pointless to compete in the acquisition of military capabilities. In the May/June 2002 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld described the logic of the concept by giving an example. "We must develop new assets, the mere possession of which discourages adversaries from competing," he wrote. "For example, deployment of effective missile defenses may dissuade others from spending to obtain ballistic missiles, because missiles will not provide them with what they want: the power to hold US and allied cities hostage to nuclear blackmail."

If we consider this example, there is clearly a role for the Allies in dissuasion. Moreover, by this logic, the Allied role in dissuading potential adversaries from seeking ballistic missiles will grow to the extent that Allies and the Alliance as a whole develop and deploy missile defenses.

Some NATO Allies have been pursuing shorter-range missile defences for years. The United States has been working with Germany and the Netherlands on Patriot PAC-3 and with Germany and Italy on MEADS, the Medium Extended Air Defence System. The French-Italian Aster system has been deployed on the French aircraft carrier, the *Charles de Gaulle*; and France and Italy plan to deploy the first ground-based versions in 2005. Some Allies are also acquiring or intend to acquire Aegis radars and Standard Missile 3 interceptors for sea-based missile defence.

In addition, the Alliance as a whole has completed various Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) studies. In November 2002 in Prague the Allies went beyond TMD for the protection of deployed forces when they decided “to examine options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and population centres against the full range of missile threats”. The feasibility study for this is expected to be complete in the first half of 2005.

The fact that Allies are pursuing missile defenses – actual capabilities as well as studies – does not, however, mean that they accept the US theory of dissuasion. In fact, a number of Allied observers, like some US observers, have expressed caution, if not actual scepticism. The usual comment is that, even if NATO or the United States dissuades adversaries from pursuing one type of military capability, determined adversaries will pursue other options, including asymmetrical warfare; and we must be as well-prepared as possible to deal with this threat. The US administration has, however, been concerned about this risk as well, as discussions of asymmetrical threats in the United States indicate.

With regard to Secretary Rumsfeld’s specific example, critics have asked, to what extent will NATO or US missile defenses discourage missile-builders and missile-buyers that are interested in being able to launch missiles against non-NATO countries? If the immediate targets of their missiles are regional antagonists outside NATO territory, the strike capability that could be redirected on command against NATO is a bonus. By this logic, greater utility for NATO resides

in the capacity of missile defences actually to defend against missile attacks than in their potential effect on missile acquisition decisions. The US government is, however, interested in operational effectiveness as well as in trying to achieve dissuasion, if possible. Indeed, achieving dissuasion depends on attaining such practical effectiveness. Even if the capabilities fail to prevent military competition, US strategy documents suggest that they may complicate the adversary’s planning and shape the competition in directions advantageous to the Alliance.

Critics have raised further objections. If the purpose of dissuasion is to persuade potential adversaries not to compete in the accumulation of military capabilities, could this not be achieved by methods other than – or in addition to – publicising Allied and US military superiority? As various

Allied and US observers have pointed out, other activities could contribute to the aim of discouraging arms competitions, and these activities generally involve cooperation with allies and other security partners. They include shaping the security environment by upholding export controls, legal norms, and non-proliferation regimes; cultivating positive political relations to lessen incentives for military competition; promoting regional political stabilisation and security to reduce motives for competition with neighbours; and nation-building and state-building, notably to support democratisation and the free market.

While such cooperative activities have not been highlighted in some US strategy documents, the US position has been evolving. In practice, it seems, the United States is increasingly disposed to accept an expanded definition of how to achieve dissuasion. The clearest signs of this include the interest in nation-building and state-building in Afghanistan and Iraq and the efforts to carry forward the peace process in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Deterrence by denial

If dissuasion does not work, arms competitions and conflicts may follow, and the goal then will become deterring aggression or coercion. US strategists have for years advocated supplementing the Cold War’s

The Alliance needs more debate about strategy, strategic concepts, their practical requirements and political implications

dominant form of deterrence – deterrence by threat of punishment – with deterrence by denial. Deterrence by denial means persuading the enemy not to attack by convincing him that his attack will be defeated – that is, that he will not be able to achieve his operational objectives.

In January 2002, US Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy J.D. Crouch made a reference to this approach to deterrence when he discussed the findings of the *Nuclear Posture Review*. Crouch suggested that the United States could employ missile “defenses to discourage attack by frustrating enemy attack plans”. In other words, if the missile defences do not discourage an enemy from acquiring missiles (the goal of dissuasion), they might discourage him from using them (the goal of deterrence by denial).

The deterrence by denial theory is not limited to missile defences, of course. The theory applies to any capability that can deny an enemy success in achieving his objectives. For example, passive defences such as decontamination equipment and suits and gas masks for protection against chemical and biological weapons might help to convince an enemy not to use such weapons. The *National Security Strategy* suggests that “consequence-management” capabilities for responding to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attacks may contribute to both dissuasion and deterrence by denial. It states: “Minimizing the effects of WMD use against our people will help deter those who possess such weapons and dissuade those who seek to acquire them by persuading enemies that they cannot attain their desired ends.”

To be sure, it is hard to prove the validity of any theory of deterrence or dissuasion since it is not possible to demonstrate conclusively why something did not happen. The absence of arms race activity does not prove that a competitor has been dissuaded, just as the absence of aggression does not prove that a hypothetical aggressor has been deterred. Moreover, even if we were correct about a deterrence arrangement working for a while, we could not be sure of its permanent reliability.

Pre-emption

In other words, deterrence may fail and war may come with little warning. This possibility brings us to the controversial topic of pre-emptive action, which is linked to doubts about the reliability of any kind of deterrence. The *National Security Strategy* states that: “Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose avowed tactics are

wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents; whose so-called soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most potent protection is statelessness. The overlap between states that sponsor terror and those that pursue WMD compels us to action.”

“We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries,” the document continues. “Rogue states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means. They know such attacks would fail. Instead, they rely on acts of terror and, potentially, the use of weapons of mass destruction – weapons that can be easily concealed, delivered covertly, and used without warning.” It concludes that: “The United States has long maintained the option of pre-emptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction – and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively.”

The concept of “pre-emptive action” is controversial partly because the US administration has elevated it to the status of a doctrine, instead of an option available to all governments in extreme circumstances. Moreover, definitional issues have exacerbated the controversy. The US government has chosen to call “pre-emptive” what many Americans, Europeans, and others would call “preventive” war. Many observers would make the following distinction: *Pre-emptive attack* consists of prompt action on the basis of evidence that an enemy is about to strike. In contrast, *preventive war* involves military operations undertaken to avert a plausible but hypothetical future risk, such as an unacceptable imbalance of power, a situation of increased vulnerability, or even potential subjugation – or the possibility of a transfer of WMD to a terrorist group. The latter risk was one of the main justifications advanced by the US government for the military campaign against Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq in March and April 2003.

On the whole, even Allied governments that opposed the US-led action to end Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq have no objection to the idea of pre-emption on the basis of evidence that an enemy is about to attack. In fact, that principle appears explicitly in the most recent and authoritative expression of French security policy, the military programme law for 2003-2008. This document states that: “The possibility of a pre-emptive action could be considered, as soon as a situation of explicit and known threat was recognised.”

Allied and US critics of US policy argued that there was no evidence that Saddam Hussein was about to attack the United States or to transfer WMD to terrorists, so this was not a pre-emptive action but a preventive war – a war on the basis of a hypothetical future threat. Critics condemned the idea of preventive war as a violation of international law. Both critics and supporters of the use of force against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq asserted the need to uphold the authority of the United Nations Security Council. Critics also argued that the US approach amounted to a prescription for permanent war, unless the United States could somehow dominate the entire world.

The critical analyses sometimes failed to acknowledge the problem that in some exceptional cases pre-emptive or even preventive action may be the wiser choice – that is, in some cases, notably involving WMD, pre-emption or preventive intervention may be more prudent than waiting to be attacked. The challenge is identifying which cases truly require pre-emptive action, and which cases may even justify preventive war. This is not a new problem. It goes back at least as far as Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War, but it has been rendered more acute by modern technologies.

The draft EU security strategy paper presented in June 2003 by EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana pointed out that WMD-armed terrorist groups could “inflict damage on a scale previously possible only for states and armies. In such cases, deterrence would fail.” By way of prescription, Solana suggested, among other points, that: “Pre-emptive engagement can avoid more serious problems in the future... With the new threats the first line of defence will often be abroad. The new threats are dynamic. Left alone, they will become more dangerous. The risks of proliferation grow over time; left alone, terrorist networks will become ever more dangerous (we should have tackled *al Qaida* much earlier)... This implies that we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early... We need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention.”

While some of these formulations are ambiguous, they could contribute to an Alliance-wide debate on strategy, notably with regard to pre-emption and preventive intervention. There will, however, be no easy solution to the problem of assessment and choice.

Debate

It is constructive to debate the issues in general terms. It is useful to discuss, for instance, questions

such as the following: Under what circumstances may the resort to pre-emption or even preventive war be justified? Should the international legal regime be explicitly modified to provide in extreme situations for new defensive options, even preventive war, that take into account unprecedented vulnerabilities arising from modern technologies? How should the classical criteria for pre-emption of “necessity” and “proportionality” be construed in light of modern technologies and strategic options? What principles in addition to “necessity” (or “imminence”) and “proportionality” should govern the decisions? What might be the consequences for international order of recognising such new precedents and principles in international law? How could risks of precipitate and/or ill-founded actions be diminished? To what extent might policies of pre-emption or preventive intervention encourage adversaries to adopt similar policies and thus lead to more volatile crisis situations? To what extent could the responsibility for undertaking pre-emption or preventive intervention (and dealing with its consequences) be shared? While the US government has recognised the obvious desirability of multilateral legitimisation, notably via the UN Security Council, for preventive or pre-emptive action, such legitimisation might not be available in all circumstances. If it is not available, what constraints should states and coalitions observe in exercising the right to self-defence recognised in Article 51 of the UN Charter? To what extent, and in what ways, should the Alliance’s decision-making structures and capabilities be modified to enhance the ability of Allies, acting under NATO auspices or in other coalitions, to assess evolving threats and to conduct pre-emptive actions?

Discussing such questions may well deepen understanding of the risks and responsibilities in policies of pre-emption or preventive intervention. At the end of the day, however, we will be forced to make decisions about specific cases.

The US *National Security Strategy* offers a point of departure. It recognises that: “No nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations.” NATO holds an exceptional role in US policy, because “There is little of lasting consequence that the United States can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe.” When it comes to contingencies in which “pre-emptive” action may be required, the *National Security Strategy* suggests three guidelines for action. It states: “To support pre-emptive options, we will build better, more integrated intelligence capabilities to provide timely, accurate information on threats, wherever they may emerge; coordinate closely with allies to form a common assessment of

the most dangerous threats; and continue to transform our military forces to ensure our ability to conduct rapid and precise operations to achieve decisive results.”

The second guideline – to “coordinate closely with allies to form a common assessment of the most dangerous threats” – is most important if we are to preserve Alliance cohesion. As we saw in the Iraq case, Allies may differ sharply in their assessments of the gravity of the threats in specific cases, and in their views about the right way to deal with them. Given the likelihood that the Allies will face more challenges of comparable gravity, the need for close coordination in making assessments and defining policy choices is increasingly imperative. Concepts will carry us only so far. In the end, we will be forced to deal with messy realities that do not fit into tidy conceptual categories.

Accordingly, to complement the decisions on NATO’s transformation taken in Prague, the Allies should initiate a determined effort to develop a common assessment of the most dangerous threats to Alliance security and possible responses, on the occasion of NATO’s next summit, scheduled to be held in Istanbul in June 2004. ■

Are the challenges NATO faces today as great as they were in the Cold War?

Andrés Ortega VERSUS Tomas Valasek

NO



Andrés Ortega is a columnist for *El País* and author of various books on European integration and NATO.

YES



Tomas Valasek is a Slovak security analyst and director of the Center for Defense Information's Brussels office.

Dear Tomas,



Can you remember the time when the threat that Europe faced was one of total war with the real possibility of such a conflict escalating to a nuclear confrontation? In the early years of the Cold War before *détente*, part of Europe was effectively hostage to the policy of deterrence, and much of the rest lived under the Soviet boot. Today, it seems all too easy to play down the danger of the unthinkable actually happening. But there were times – such as during the Berlin airlift and the Cuban missile crisis – when the threat of Armageddon appeared very real indeed. At the time, NATO's role could not have been clearer, namely in words attributed to its first Secretary General Lord Ismay "to keep the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down". The transatlantic Alliance was the heart of Europe's security architecture, critical to managing crises, both *vis-à-vis* the *other* side – presenting a united front – and within our side, cementing relations among Allies.

I think we have two issues to discuss. The first is whether that threat was greater than those we face today or may face in the foreseeable future. The second is whether NATO is equipped to address today's challenges and the most appropriate institution for the task. When most people talk of modern security threats, they think, above all, of that posed by terrorism, or rather terrorisms. I use the plural because there is no agreed definition of terrorism and clearly terrorism

comes in many different forms, each of which must be treated in a different way.

Let's face it, terrorism has been around for a very long time and certainly pre-dates the end of the Cold War. But while terrorists have been responsible for many outrages, they have never posed an existential threat to the world. In its most sinister form, the terrorist threat must be viewed together with that posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD), even though terrorists have never actually deployed such weapons. At least not yet. Clearly, the sinister combination of terrorism and WMD does pose a formidable threat. But the difference between it and the Cold War threat of mutually assured destruction is that the latter placed our very existence in question.

For the above reasons, I consider today's threats to be of a lesser magnitude both for Europe and for the United States than the threat we faced during the Cold War and especially in the 1950s and 1960s. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the threat of Armageddon disappeared, the United States was the only super-power and Americans came to enjoy an almost unparalleled feeling of security. Europeans, by contrast, have never had that luxury and even in the wake of the Cold War remained conscious of their vulnerability as a result of the wars of Yugoslavia's dissolution and acts of terrorism in several countries. While the terrorist attacks of 9/11 came as a shock to the entire world, the shock was clearly that much greater in the United States. Hence today's feeling of

insecurity. Even so, 9/11 did not pose an existential threat to Americans. Rather it exposed both their vulnerability and that of the rest of the Western world to asymmetric and unconventional threats.

Since the terrorist threat cannot be addressed primarily by military means, NATO, which is a political-military alliance, is not necessarily the most appropriate institution to coordinate responses. This is not to say that there is no military component to a comprehensive anti-terrorist strategy. Clearly, military power can be used effectively, for example, to intervene in failed states such as Afghanistan to prevent terrorist groups like *al Qaida* turning them into centres for their operations. But the only effective, long-term approach to combating terrorism must be, wherever possible, to seek to address the root causes. This must include the use of social, economic and political instruments, as well as effective policing, all of which will yield greater long-term results than the exclusive use of military force. Indeed, to talk of a “war against terrorism” or to militarise thinking about and responses to terrorism might even prove self-defeating.

Effective policing and intelligence sharing, including more international cooperation, are critical to combating terrorism. Here, countries like France, Italy and Spain may be better prepared than most, including the United States, as a result of the existence of *Gendarmerie*, *Carabinieri* and *Guardia Civil*, police units with a military dimension that operate throughout the country. In Spain, for example, we have developed effective anti-terrorist strategies as a result of our experience with ETA. That said, the threat posed by ETA is clearly very different from the suicidal terrorism we see on an almost daily basis in Israel and now in Iraq. Moreover, experience of these conflicts appears to indicate that the more military solutions are relied on, the greater the terrorist threat.

Today’s security threats are certainly serious and should not be underestimated. As in the Cold War, they cannot be solved without effective transatlantic cooperation and NATO has an important role to play in this area. But our very existence is no longer in danger. The security challenge today is not, therefore, as great. But, as a consequence, the challenge of holding the Alliance together and building consensus on how to address today’s threats is that much greater.

Yours,
Andrés

Dear Andrés,



You’re right. Today’s threat is not on a par with that of the Cold War. It doesn’t hold the promise of the utter destruction of mankind, which the super-power rivalry of that era did. But so narrow a comparison is largely meaningless. Though the existential threat has gone, today’s challenges may still be greater.

To the leader of any civilised country, the idea of terrorists setting off just one nuclear or biological device in a metropolis is as grotesquely unacceptable as a full-blown missile exchange. There is no such thing as tolerable nuclear damage. Ten, twenty or fifty thousand dead is just as absurdly wrong as 100 million.

These, on the high end, are the stakes today. What are the chances that terrorists may successfully use a weapon of mass destruction? Three factors determine the equation: enemy intentions, their offensive capabilities, and the defensive capabilities of the potential target – in this case NATO member states.

Intentions are the easiest to assess. Few would disagree that had *al Qaida* possessed a nuclear bomb on 9/11, it would have used it. The nature of the new terrorism is unprecedented in that it is essentially nihilistic. Extremists of the Osama-bin-Laden school of thought have no intention of embracing modern values and becoming part of the international system, and hence no incentive to curb their violence. “Traditional” terrorist groups such as ETA and the IRA always held their fire to some extent to preserve a measure of respectability and keep the door open to a future arrangement with the “enemy”. The stewards of the old nuclear threat – Soviet *apparatchiks* – were wholly unwilling to die for the cause, and could thus be deterred from attacking with a credible threat of a nuclear response. But to terrorists bent on undermining the West’s economic and political foundations, the more destructive the attack the better. Far from dreading the possibility, they view dying in the attack as a virtue. In the case of *al Qaida*, to cite former NATO Secretary General Javier Solana’s draft EU security strategy, “deterrence would fail”.

Concerning offensive capabilities, the greatest danger lies in a combination of suicide terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). A number of different types of WMD exist but arguably the most worrisome are tactical nuclear weapons, several thousand of which remain in Russia and the United States. Rumours of missing Russian tactical nuclear weapons have circulated in the past, only to be denied by the Kremlin. Most open-source reports agree that the weapons

seem to be secure for the time being, but questionable safety standards at Russian nuclear installations point to a risk of theft in the future. By some accounts, suspected terrorists have already scouted Russian nuclear facilities, presumably to acquire bombs or bomb-making material. If obtained, how difficult would it be to transport tactical nuclear weapons to the West? No one knows for certain but the task seems worryingly within reach. Only about three per cent of all containers entering the United States are inspected at the port of entry, and the United States has the relative luxury vis-à-vis Europe of being separated from the likely source of WMD by an ocean.

The jury is still out on the effectiveness of our defences against the new threats. For all practical purposes, we only began to take measures to counter catastrophic terrorism after 11 September 2001. The first line of defence lies in places that NATO refers to as “out-of-area”. Denying terrorists access to WMD is key to preventing future attacks, and most likely sources of such weapons lie in the neighbourhood of the former Soviet Union. But intercepting threats overseas is a policy born as much out of a lack of alternatives as of reasons of effectiveness. There is, frankly, only so much that Western societies can do to improve security domestically without destroying the free and open nature of their economies.

Today’s terrorism is a potentially catastrophic threat by any definition of that word. Its probability and acuteness are devilishly hard to assess, partly for the sheer newness but also for the complexity of the challenge. However, it offers the distinctly bleak possibility of WMD being used against Western towns. Given the stakes, the campaign against terrorism calls for the same focus and unity of purpose that NATO countries exhibited during the Cold War (if not, thankfully, the same military and financial expenditure). By this measure, catastrophic terrorism is in the same league as the Soviet threat.

Yours,
Tomas

Dear Tomas,



I prefer not to enter into a discussion about whether “ten, twenty or fifty thousand dead is just as absurdly wrong as 100 million”. That said, there remains a difference and that is existential.

You say “intentions are the easiest to assess”; that “few would disagree” that if *al Qaida* had possessed a nuclear bomb on 9/11, it would have used it; and

that the nature of the “new terrorism” is “essentially nihilistic”. I disagree with all three points. The debate on “intentions” or “capabilities” is as old as NATO itself, indeed much older. If we judge intentions, we will never feel sufficiently secure. As for capabilities, the most diabolic – not the more catastrophic – aspect of 9/11 is that the attackers did not use weapons in the traditional sense. Rather they used our own technology against us by turning passenger airliners into flying bombs. Had *al Qaida* possessed and used a nuclear bomb, much of Afghanistan would no doubt have been destroyed in retaliation.

It has become fashionable to describe these terrorists as nihilists. But this may not be the case. I’ve been impressed by the research of Professor Robert Pape of the University of Chicago who analysed all 188 suicide attacks between 1980 and 2001. He concluded that the use of terror in this way is extremely effective, not primarily linked to religious fervour, and does have a strategic aim. Nothing to do with nihilism.

In the future, the threat posed by WMD, whether in the hands of terrorist groups or states, will have to be addressed. This will require preventive action, but not in the way that Washington currently appears to understand it. Rather, it will be important to reproduce the kind of approach that the United States adopted after the disintegration of the Soviet Union to persuade Ukraine and other post-Soviet states to give up their nuclear weapons, or even that which Europe is currently pursuing towards Iran. We will also have to reinforce international regimes. Refusing to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and similar international agreements is not setting a good example. And, to paraphrase UK Prime Minister Tony Blair in the wake of 9/11, we have to be tough on terrorism, but also on the causes of terrorism, the former in the short term, the latter in the longer term. Areas such as police cooperation, international development and even improving the way that immigrants are integrated into our societies are key to this task, none of which can be fully addressed by a political-military organisation. To militarise the struggle against terrorism may be a mistake. Indeed, one consequence of the Iraq campaign is that terrorism used not to be a serious problem there and now it is.

Yours,
Andrés

Dear Andrés,



You wrote that: “If we judge intentions, we will never feel sufficiently secure.” I couldn’t agree more, which is why in my initial piece I look carefully at capabilities, of both offensive and defensive types. Seen through

these lenses, the combination of terrorism and WMD represents a classic low-probability, high-impact event. Its destructive potential is important, as much as you try to play it down. It elevates the possibility of a WMD strike against a Western city into the realm of the utterly unacceptable, a category previously occupied by Soviet nuclear weapons.

Concerning intentions, I’m afraid you ignore your own advice in citing Professor Pape’s work as evidence of *al Qaida*’s limited goals. We both agree that there are different types of terrorism. Having read the study, you should be aware that no more than six of the 188 bombings that Professor Pape analysed were carried out by *al Qaida*. The vast majority were Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets and Tamil Tiger strikes against Indian forces during the Cold War, mostly in the 1980s. They say little to nothing about *al Qaida*’s intentions today. Very different goals, very different time period.

I don’t share your faith in our ability to deter terrorists from using WMD, and neither do the authors of the European Union’s draft security strategy. Deterrence is a big, clumsy stick of limited use against non-state actors with a death wish. Fifteen of the 19 attackers on September 11 were Saudi nationals. Had they used WMD, would you propose that the United States attack Saudi Arabia with nuclear weapons? What about Pakistan, whose lawless eastern frontier may be the current base of operations for Osama bin Laden? You see the problem. More often than not, retaliation is a non-starter. Any threat of a devastating, possibly nuclear response will always be empty. You know it. I know it. The attackers know it, which is why deterrence is not likely to work.

This is not a call to arms, even though you seem to equate warnings of threat with a quest for a “military solution”. I, too, think that we need to be tough on both terrorism and the causes of terrorism. But the transatlantic stereotype of a jingoistic Washington that you unfortunately employ does not hold water when it comes to addressing root causes of terrorism, such as rebuilding failed states. In the case of Afghanistan, for example, the United States is – according to World Bank figures – the single largest contributor to the country’s post-war reconstruction.

The danger inherent in the combination of WMD and terrorism should be a call for unity of purpose. NATO’s greatest strength has historically been in building converging security strategies. It worked against the Soviet menace. And it remains the key to defusing the threat of catastrophic terrorism.

Yours,
Tomas

Dear Tomas,



I feel that you are misrepresenting what I am trying to say. For example, I never talked about “deterrence” as far as terrorists are concerned, but about prevention. On that note, the term “preventive engagement”

has replaced “pre-emptive action” – which is not only difficult to translate into other languages but is usually associated with the use of military force – in the EU strategy paper. This latest version has been revised in the light of the difficulties involved in trying to win the peace in Iraq and is already different to the document presented at the Thessaloniki Summit in the wake of military victory.

I certainly don’t subscribe to a “stereotype of a jingoistic Washington” and firmly believe good transatlantic relations are essential to Europe and good global governance. I mention Pape’s paper to illustrate that most suicidal terrorists – including that global terrorist franchise called *al Qaida* – have a strategic aim, not the “limited goals” you claim I attribute to them.

Capabilities? Anything can become a capability for these terrorists, like hijacked civilian aircraft on 9/11. This is one reason why the struggle against terrorism cannot be exclusively, or even primarily, a military affair. Wars have to be finished sooner rather than later. This struggle, I am afraid, will go on for a very long time.

In my view, prevention, stronger international regimes against WMD proliferation, and tackling the root causes of the violence are key to addressing the terrorist threat. But solutions can only be achieved on the basis of deep understanding – albeit with disagreement – between a more united Europe and the United States within a framework of “effective multilateralism” – to quote yet again from the draft EU strategy paper – and, ultimately, sensible policies. This is a challenge for the European Union, for NATO and for the United States.

I feel you still haven’t answered my initial questions, which should have been the meat of this debate. Are the threats that NATO and we face today greater

that they were in the Cold War? And is the Alliance equipped to address today's challenges or even the most appropriate institution for the task? In both instances, my answer is a qualified no. That does not mean that NATO is not useful. It is. But its use today is very different to what it once was.

Yours,
Andrés

Dear Andrés,



I will let the readers decide whether I have misrepresented your views. But let it be said that the crux of the difference lies in whether *al-Qaida*-type terrorism should be viewed as an old menace in a new guise or a new threat altogether. I maintain that it is different in both its goals and, more importantly, the destructive means potentially at its disposal. A recent report by the *al-Qaida* and Taliban Sanctions Committee of the United Nations (an organisation not known for warmongering) warned that: "The risk of *al-Qaida* acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction also continues to grow. They have already taken the decision to use chemical and bio-weapons in their forthcoming attacks. The only restraint they are facing is the technical complexity to operate them properly and effectively." I think those words speak for themselves.

That said, we probably see eye to eye on many more issues than it appears. I am particularly pleased to see that you believe that: "Good transatlantic relations are essential to Europe and good global governance."

NATO is an expression of only one, albeit important, dimension of this relationship – military cooperation. I think you do the topic a disservice by asking whether the Alliance is the answer to terrorism. The effort must clearly be much broader than anything NATO has ever set out to achieve. As we both pointed out earlier, action on multiple fronts such as intelligence, foreign policy and development aid is required. But NATO is better equipped than any alliance in history to organise joint military action against terrorism when needed. It has made remarkable progress in adapting its policies and capabilities to the new challenge, despite all the recent tensions and disagreements. That in itself is testimony to the gravity of the threat.

Yours,
Tomas



General Götz Gliemerth: ISAF Commander

General Götz Gliemerth is the first NATO officer to command an Alliance-led operation beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. He has been in Kabul, Afghanistan, since NATO took responsibility for the International Security Assistance Force in August 2003. A 60-year-old German, he came to Afghanistan from NATO's Joint Command Centre in Heidelberg, Germany. Before taking up his NATO appointment in March 2001, General Gliemerth held a series of senior posts in the Bundeswehr, which he joined in 1963 as a paratrooper.

Nato Review: To what extent has the challenge of commanding ISAF lived up to your expectations and how great is the task of rebuilding peace and stability in Afghanistan?

General Götz Gliemerth: There are significant challenges involved in all "nation-building" operations. Afghanistan's war-torn history, the nature of the country and its rich cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, its harsh economic environment and an almost total absence of modern communication networks are all complicating factors.

From the perspective of those who support the Bonn Agreements of December 2001, these challenges are significant. There are many people, however, who oppose the Bonn process. They resist UN-sponsored change because it threatens their own grip on power. They are ready to take up arms against democracy because the lack of central authority leaves them with the freedom to grow rich through criminal activity, to act as local power brokers or to promote religious fundamentalism. It is also clear that these forces are prepared to use violence and terror to impede the growth of a democratic central government.

Afghanistan is probably the most heavily mined country in the world. Reconstruction cannot take off until the de-mining programme has made substantial progress. Ongoing combat operations in the south and east of the country, where Taliban and al-Qaida forces have increased their activity in recent months, threaten Coalition forces both directly and indirectly and undermine reconstruction efforts. In addition, there are some 100,000 members of various Afghan militia, many of whom are still armed. Predicting the intentions and political moves of the warlords who control these men and an array of heavy weapons is extremely difficult. However, progress is being made. One example is



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the movement of heavy weapons from the Panjshir Valley to the Pol-E-Charkhi Afghan National Army Compound in Kabul, an agreement that was brokered by the Afghan defence minister. This deal is one of three initiatives – the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process, the cantonment of heavy weapons from the Panjshir Valley and the cantonment of heavy weapons in Kabul – that give cause for optimism.

NR: How has the fact that NATO has taken responsibility for ISAF changed the nature of the mission? And what relationship does ISAF have with the US-led Operation *Enduring Freedom*?

GGG: ISAF's mission remains the same now as it was when led by individual countries or groups of countries: to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority in providing a stable and secure environment in Kabul and its surrounding areas. NATO has, however, brought coherence and leadership to ISAF's mission. In the past, the international community struggled to find new lead nations every six months. Moreover, six-monthly rotations of personnel and equipment undermined mission continuity and made it difficult to develop an effective framework within which to address the complexity of Afghanistan's stabilisation. The Alliance now provides the necessary continuity and is building structures to ensure that ISAF is equipped to address Afghanistan's long-term needs.

The character of Operation *Enduring Freedom* is different from that of ISAF. *Enduring Freedom* is best described as a combat-focused mission aiming to counter resurgent Taliban and *al-Qaida* threats. Nevertheless, the end state for both missions is the same: to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan under the auspices of an elected and democratic government.

This is “nation-building” in a very broad sense and ISAF and *Enduring Freedom* have to work together to achieve their objectives. The framework of cooperation is defined under a formal Military Technical Agreement and is applied on a day-to-day basis through the liaison effort of embedded staff officers.

NR: How much did Afghans know about NATO before your arrival in August and what image do they now have of the Alliance? Given high levels of illiteracy and few indigenous media outlets, how are you seeking to communicate with the local population?

GCG: Understanding of NATO among the population at large is modest, but this state of affairs is changing as NATO builds its profile in Afghanistan. What is encouraging is that the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) is very aware of what NATO is and how the Alliance can help it rebuild the country. The image of ISAF troops is good in the eyes of the people of Kabul. They have been received with affection and treated with courtesy and respect by the overwhelming majority. Soldiers in the Kabul Multi-National Brigade, who patrol the city and maintain a powerful interdiction presence to counter the terrorist threat, seek to integrate themselves as much as possible in the local community.

Communication networks around the country are embryonic and only 31 per cent of the population is able to read and write. Although there are more than 250 newspapers in Afghanistan, circulation outside the capital and major cities is modest. Radio is a popular medium. Indeed, its potential was recently recognised when the United States announced that it is to distribute 200,000 wind-up radios throughout the country. That said, parts of Afghanistan are too remote to receive signals. ISAF has its own radio station, which is popular among Kabulis, more than a quarter of whom tune in. Soldiers also seek to spread “key messages” among the population through their own contact with Afghans with whom they talk to gain a better understanding of the issues that affect them. In addition, ISAF produces poster campaigns and other initiatives to inform locals about the arrival of new troops and other issues as they arise.

ISAF also conducts regular polls to assess opinion in the local community. A recent survey indicated that almost 70 per cent of those polled believe that Kabul is more secure today than it was a year ago. This compares with about 5 per cent who believe that Kabul is less secure today. In addition, almost 70 per cent believed that they enjoy greater security

today than they had when the Taliban were in power, though 10 per cent thought that life under the Taliban was more secure. It is clear that Afghans are eager to see ISAF expand its role beyond the capital so that those who live in more remote areas can enjoy the same degree of stability and security as the residents of Kabul. Given such support, the risk that ISAF will be perceived as an occupation force is minimal. Indeed, the planned extension of the geographical scope of ISAF’s operations is perceived as a tool to provide an enhanced and more visible sense of security to the population as well as a signal of NATO’s long-term commitment to the country’s reconstruction.

NR: How involved is ISAF in reconstruction?

GCG: ISAF is aware that many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) voice concerns over the military’s close association with reconstruction and the delivery of humanitarian aid, as they believe this may undermine their own efforts. Clearly, reconstruction is not a military task. As a result, the most significant contribution that ISAF can make in this area is to provide a secure environment in which NGOs and other organisations are able to do their work in safety and without hindrance. ISAF does, nevertheless, assist the reconstruction process in some critical areas through our Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) teams, whose current activities fall into three categories: education, health, and water/sanitation.

NR: How great a threat do *al Qaida* and the Taliban still present both to ISAF and to the future of Afghanistan?

GCG: The *al-Qaida* and Taliban threat remains significant. Combat operations are being conducted in the south and east of the country. A central function of Operation *Enduring Freedom* is to engage the enemy in these areas, attacking its cohesiveness and applying direct and indirect pressure to its centres of gravity. This provides the ATA, which does not yet possess the means to counter the *al-Qaida* and Taliban threat, with the breathing space it needs to consolidate its authority. The enemy’s strategic objective is to disrupt Afghanistan’s democratic transformation and to undermine international cohesion. The motivation of *al-Qaida* and Taliban forces is straightforward. They derive their power and influence in today’s Afghanistan as a result of the lack of effective central state authority. Put simply, their influence will diminish as central government grows in confidence and authority. In this way, these groups will do everything in their power to disrupt that process and their tactics are likely to become more desperate as their own position deteriorates.

NR: In what ways does NATO's experience of peace-support operations in the former Yugoslavia help you and ISAF in your daily work?

GGG: The ISAF mission is best defined as an assistance mission. As such, it is different from the NATO-led peace-enforcement operations in the Balkans. Nonetheless, ISAF does possess a robust mandate, which provides it with significant political and military clout in its daily interface with Afghan authorities. Key ISAF members of staff have participated in earlier NATO-led deployments, including IFOR, SFOR and KFOR, and experience gained in these operations has been of tremendous assistance in setting up an operational headquarters. It has proved crucial to establishing effective command and control systems and helped optimise the flow of data and information. In this way, it was possible to create a fully functional headquarters in an extremely short period of time.

NR: In addition to NATO forces, ISAF includes contributions from Partner nations and even countries from beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. How have you managed to bring these forces together?

GGG: Currently, 17 NATO nations and 13 NATO Partners contribute troops to ISAF. New Zealand, which is not a NATO Partner, is the 31st contributing nation. While in theory it should be difficult to build cohesion among the various contingents, in practice the many nations work extremely well together. This is because NATO has a long experience of bringing forces from many countries together. Moreover, all soldiers are professionals and many have already served in many parts of the world. They are trained to do a particular job and motivated by the challenge of the Afghan mission.

NR: NATO nations are considering ways of extending ISAF's mandate beyond Kabul to cover more of Afghanistan via, for example, becoming more involved in the work of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). How might this be done in practice?

GGG: Clearly, ISAF's first priority was to bring a degree of stability to Afghanistan's political and administrative capital. This has now been achieved. As the ATA gains authority and influence elsewhere in the country, ISAF's role and presence need to reflect these changes and to evolve so that the entire country can benefit. UN Security Council Resolution 1510 recognises this necessity and, from a legal perspective, paves the way for it to happen. NATO, too, has agreed in principle to the need for the mission to be expanded. In reality, however, the manner in which this can be achieved is complicated. PRTs provide one possible solution. Small force components dispersed throughout the country in

strategic locations, backed up by rapidly deployable Quick Reaction Forces and Close Air Support, would create platforms to boost security throughout the country. This is an effective way to extend influence and bring stability to remote areas without committing many thousands of troops on the ground. Ultimately, it represents a valuable vehicle to nurture a process of good governance in the provinces under the legitimate and accountable ownership of the central government. Moreover, this strategy minimises the risk of ISAF being perceived as an occupying force. Nevertheless, NATO planners are also examining alternative approaches and have yet to determine the best course of action. A detailed plan cannot be finalised until nations have decided on enhanced contribution levels over and above the troops, resources and capabilities that they are currently committing.

NR: The development of the Afghan National Army as a capable force and, in parallel, the pursuit of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process are seen as critical to the success of the overall Bonn political agenda. How are these progressing and what role is ISAF playing in both?

GGG: Both the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the DDR programme are moving forward. To date, some 7,000 troops and officers have been trained and a significant number have been successfully involved in counter-insurgency operations along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. The role of the police is also critical to the success of the ANA. As more police are placed on the streets, ANA soldiers, who are currently performing policing tasks, can focus on soldiering, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the ANA. The pilot DDR programme in Kunduz and Gardez has already been completed. Additional ideas, centred on the establishment of PRTs, are currently on the drawing board. The DDR programme in Kabul began in early December and we are working closely with the ATA to ensure that it comes together in a timely manner. It is a slow process, but one that needs to take place if the country's various militia are to be disarmed and reintegrated into society. This is but the first step. ■

Understanding Afghanistan and its neighbours

Osman Yavuzalp reviews two of the best recent books to appear on Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Before 11 September 2001, Afghanistan was for most Westerners a far-away country about which we knew little. The brutality of the Taliban regime and the safe haven that it provided to al Qaida primarily affected surrounding and nearby countries. That changed as a result of the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington DC of that fateful day. As the United States launched a military campaign to oust the Taliban and destroy al Qaida's terrorist training centres in Afghanistan, the country was propelled for several months to the very top of the international agenda.

The welcome demise of the Taliban brought with it a formidable challenge for the international community: Afghanistan's reconstruction. This requires, among other things, the building of a viable state structure, the extension of central authority throughout the country and the development of a constitution providing safeguards for human rights and religious tolerance. Since August 2003, NATO has been directly involved in this endeavour, leading the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the UN-mandated peacekeeping mission responsible for providing security in and around Kabul, the Afghan capital.

Although mainstream media have increased coverage of Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours in the past two years, the history, traditions, culture and politics of the region are still little known in the West. Given the prospect of long-term NATO involvement, anyone with an interest in the Alliance and security matters will likely find that time invested in reading on that part of the world today will pay dividends in the years to come. Both *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics*

(HarperCollins Publishers, 2002) by Sir Martin Ewans and Ahmed Rashid's *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (Yale University Press, 2002) would probably make welcome though sobering additions to many stockings this Christmas.

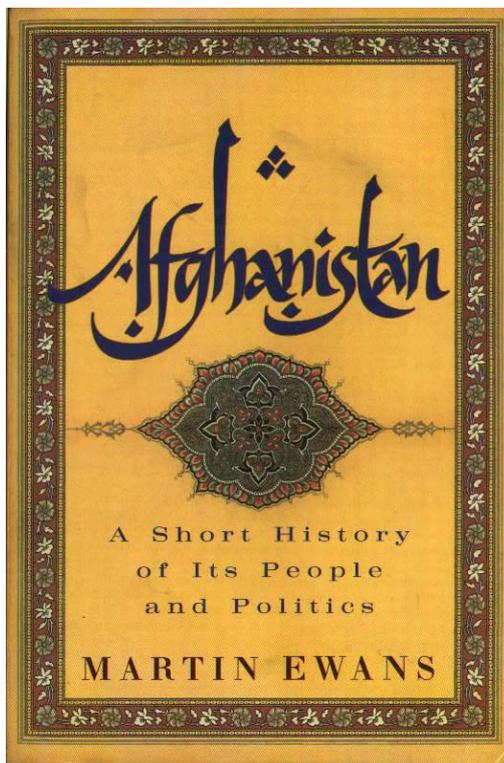
Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics is a must-read study providing useful insight into the shortcomings of earlier attempts at consolidating Afghanistan's unity and reforming its society and the scale of the challenge that the country and the international community faces today. Sir Martin, a

British diplomat and former head of the British Chancery in Kabul, provides a detailed chronicle of Afghanistan's history from the emergence of the Afghan Kingdom in the 18th century to the fall of the Taliban. And he concludes that: "If there has been an overriding feature of Afghan history, it is that it has been a history of conflict — of invasions, battles and sieges, of vendettas, assassinations and massacres, of tribal feuding, dynastic strife and civil war."

Today, close to 6,000 NATO-led soldiers are deployed in ISAF. Moreover, NATO is currently seeking to increase its presence in Afghanistan and expand the mission to help build stability in more of the country. As a result,

arguably for the first time in their history, Afghans have genuine cause to hope for a better future and, with international support, the opportunity to turn the tide of history. Nevertheless, the international community should not lose sight of why previous reform efforts in Afghanistan have failed.

One of the most fascinating chapters in Sir Martin's book covers Afghanistan's earlier drive for modernisation, which took place during the ten-year reign of Amanullah Khan. Crowned on 27 February 1919, Amanullah was the first Afghan leader to seek



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to transform the country. In the process, he oversaw the drafting of a constitution for the first time in Afghan history. Amanullah's constitution was based on that of Turkey, where Kemal Ataturk had successfully set up a secular state. In Afghanistan, Amanullah sought to create a similar secular framework within which the monarchy and the government could operate and to define the relationship between religion and the state.

Amanullah also attempted to reform the legal system. He did this by creating an independent judiciary, building a network of courts and developing a secular penal code. In addition, he oversaw legislation to improve the rights of women, invested heavily in education and attempted to overhaul and reorganise the tax system. While Amanullah was genuine in his attempts to modernise Afghan society, his reforms inevitably came up against deep vested interests and eventually led to tribal uprisings. In response, he was forced to abdicate in January 1929.

Amanullah may simply have been ahead of his time and his reform programme too ambitious for Afghanistan early in the 20th century. But his fate and that of his reform programme do not bode well for today's efforts to build a viable Afghan state and draw up a constitution in which all ethnic communities are fairly represented. Indeed, the challenge of balancing the need to modernise, on the one hand, and respect for tradition, on the other, remains formidable.

An assembly of tribal leaders, or *Loya Jirga*, is meeting in December 2003 to review and agree a constitution. By all accounts, the draft text is moderate yet progressive. It includes guarantees for all faiths to worship and allows political parties to be established as long as their charters "do not contradict the principles of Islam" and that they do not have any military aims or foreign affiliation. Pashtoo and Dari are to be the official languages. Hopefully, it will be possible to find the right balance this time because, if approved and implemented, a new constitution should be a major step in bringing stability to Afghanistan.

Chapters devoted to the rule of Mohammed Daoud Khan also make fascinating reading. Daoud, one of

Afghanistan's most dynamic leaders, led the country in the 1950s and early 1960s, and then again between 1973 and 1978. An autocrat, who sought a close relationship with the Soviet Union, Daoud was able to bring tribal leaders in line and to assert central authority over the entire country. He resigned in March 1963 as a result of an unwinnable conflict with Pakistan and growing opposition to his ever-more autocratic rule. He regained power in July 1973, only to be overthrown and killed in 1978.

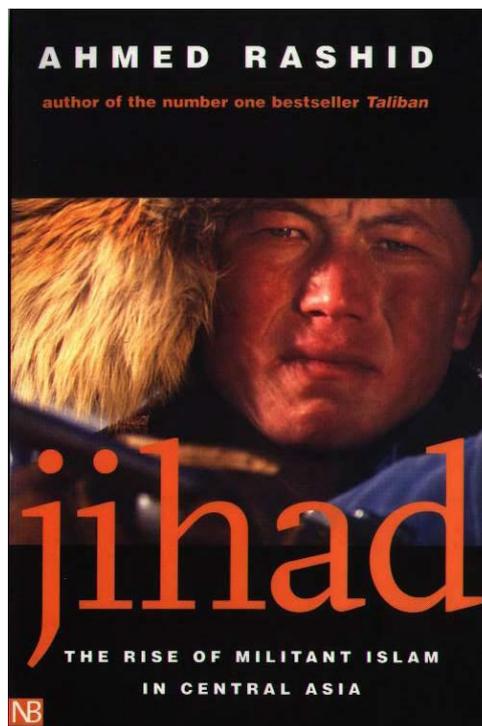
While Daoud's policies, during both of his periods in power, were highly autocratic, his principal achievement was to have built, for the first time in his country's history, a sufficiently well-trained, well-equipped and mobile Afghan Army to be able to maintain stability throughout the country. The international community is effectively

facing the same challenge today. Disarming, demobilising and reintegrating former *Mujaheedin* into a disciplined and efficient Afghan National Army is one of the prerequisites for successful implementation of the December 2001 Bonn Agreement, the international accord setting out a reconstruction process for Afghanistan, and a *sine qua non* for a stable country.

Afghanistan is by no means the only country in Central Asia where religious fundamentalism has been on the rise in recent years and should not be viewed in isolation. Socio-economic conditions in its neighbours may provide equally fertile ground for militant Islam to flourish, a point that comes across clearly

in *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*. Ahmed Rashid's latest book is a sequel to *Taliban*, in which he provided a detailed account of how this movement came to power in Afghanistan and of the brutality with which it ruled the country for five years. In his latest book, Rashid is seeking to draw similar international attention to Central Asia, which he views as the new frontline for militant Islam.

Rashid provides an insightful and comprehensive analysis of how both Islam and the political environment have evolved in Central Asia in recent years, with particular emphasis on the period immediately following independence from the Soviet Union.



He argues that the combination of the transitional policies adopted by all Central Asian states and the unleashing of fundamentalism, which had been kept under check during the Soviet era, helped to create a climate of fear and suspicion. And he focuses on how the *Hizb Ut-Tahrir* and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, two fundamentalist movements, flourished in Central Asia and especially in Uzbekistan in the years following independence from the Soviet Union.

The high point for the Islamic movements in Central Asia was probably 1999. That year, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and, to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan experienced first hand the dangers posed by Afghanistan's Taliban regime with a series of incursions into the first three countries by terrorists linked to *al Qaida*. Since then, the Central Asian states have systematically sought to use international forums — including the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council — to draw the world's attention to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. Specifically, they wished to highlight the way in which the country had become a training ground for terrorism, a hotbed of extremism and, by fuelling fundamentalist tendencies, a threat to the security of the entire region.

In view of the tragic Afghan experience under the Taliban, the most poignant message which Rashid's book conveys is the alarming situation of the Ferghana Valley, an impoverished region straddling the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Here, Rashid highlights a study published by Anthony Lake, former National Security Adviser to US President Bill Clinton, in which the Ferghana Valley is identified as one of the world's three most likely crisis areas of the future. And he urges the West, and in particular the United States, to develop a strategic vision for the region and a framework within which to encourage and assist local regimes in carrying out democratic reforms.

Given the scale of international investment in reconstruction in Afghanistan, the importance of Central Asia cannot be over-emphasised. The region clearly faces significant difficulties, some of which stem from the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the many problems associated with the transition from a command economy and communism to a market economy and democracy. And it clearly requires international assistance to make a successful transition. Hence the importance of many of the Partnership mechanisms that NATO has developed in recent years such as the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism and Individual Partnership Action Plans, both of which complement the assistance and reform programmes of other international institutions.

As Rashid makes clear, the countries of Central Asia are at a critical crossroads. They can take advantage of the global community's new engagement with the region to rebuild their countries. Or they can look inward and risk a similar fate to that of Afghanistan. Indeed, accelerating the pace of reform remains the only antidote against the perils that Rashid skilfully highlights and which Central Asian states must overcome, not just for their own sakes, but for the stability of a much wider region, including Russia and the West beyond. These may still be far-away countries but we can no longer afford to know little about them. ■

Aspiring to NATO membership

Zvonimir Mabecic analyses Croatia's relationship with NATO and its Alliance membership aspirations.



New horizons: Croatia intends to maintain the pace of military reform in the expectation that one day soon the country will be invited to join NATO (© NATO)

Croatia's January 2000 elections represented a watershed in the development of the country's security and defence structures. They brought to power democrats committed to promoting the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties and aspiring to deeper and closer relations with the European Union and NATO with a view to eventual membership in both organisations. In the intervening period, Croatia has come a long way, but the country still has even further to travel if it is to meet these goals.

The change was immediate and manifested itself in improved relations and increased cooperation both with neighbouring countries and the wider international community. Moreover, this new state of affairs was rapidly recognised by NATO, with the result that Croatia was able to join the Partnership for Peace programme and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in May 2000. Two years later, Croatia joined the Membership Action Plan (MAP) — too late to be invited to join the Alliance at last year's Prague Summit.

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Today, Croatia actively participates in many regional security initiatives. These include the Quadrilateral Initiative, together with Hungary, Italy and Slovenia, and the Adriatic Charter, together with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,* as well as the South East Europe Defence Ministers Meeting and the South East Europe Brigade. And Zagreb is host to the Regional Arms Control and Verification Implementation Centre. This is a regional forum for security dialogue, enhanced cooperation and confidence building that is now deepening and expanding its involvement in regional security and defence cooperation.

Representatives of the state and its political institutions as well as much of the public are aware that our credibility as a partner remains to a large extent dependent on ongoing cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. While the administration is committed to such cooperation, some Croats and certain political parties resent the intrusion of a foreign court in internal matters. As a result, opinion-formers in all institutions have to renew efforts to explain the importance of war-crimes trials to reconstruction, reconciliation and the

embedding of clear moral and ethnical principles and the rule of law in our society. For, as all senior Croatian officials argue, guilt is individual, not collective. The ICTY is one of the elements that should help build a framework for reconciliation, but it remains remote from its beneficiaries, ordinary people on all sides who were victims during the war. For this reason and to build effective state structures, efforts also need to be made to establish the conditions for proper war-crimes trials in our own domestic courts.

Defence reforms

Since the change in regime, many security-related constitutional and legal reforms have been passed. These include the Defence Act and the Military Service Act, both of which helped establish appropriate civilian control of the armed forces and security agencies. The *Hrvatski Sabor* (parliament) and its Committee for Internal Affairs and National Security now has authority over the Armed Forces as far as their financing, deployment, and appointment procedures are concerned. The Defence Ministry is responsible for their daily management in close cooperation with the President who, as Commander-in-Chief, is solely responsible for defending the country's political independence and territorial integrity. Under the new arrangement, the role of the Chief-of-Staff has been clarified. He is now directly accountable to the Defence Minister and, in some cases with the Prime Minister's consent, to the President, and responsible for preparing key documents concerning the Armed Forces' daily operations.

Similar reforms have been applied to the security agencies. Under the provisions of the National Security Act, a National Security Council has been established, including the President, the Prime Minister and some of the more prominent ministers, which manages and commands the security agencies.

The adoption of a National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy in spring 2002 and a Military Strategy a year later also represent important milestones for security and defence structures. Under the new legal provisions, the General Staff, Defence Minister, President, government, and parliament all played a

part in drafting, assessing and adopting these strategic documents. Although there may still be shortcomings both in their substance and in the process by which they were prepared, the effort invested and the learning experience have been extremely positive. The fact that Croatia now possesses these strategic documents

adds coherence and efficiency to the state's activities in this area and future versions will no doubt be improved with the benefit of experience.

The desire to upgrade Croatia's military capabilities is motivated by two main considerations. Firstly, since we are not a member of NATO, we have to maintain sufficient independent military capabilities to ensure our national security. Secondly, at the same time, we have to think about the kinds of military capabilities that we might be able to bring to NATO in the event that we are invited to join the Alliance and the standards that we will have to meet. At the same time, however, the military reform process is constrained by limited resources.

Work on defence reform began with organisational restructuring in the Defence Ministry, General Staff and Armed Forces. In the Defence Ministry, many departments have been reduced; the Croatian Army has been reorganised into four corps; and a new Joint Education and Training Command as well as a Logistic Command have been created. At the same time, the Armed Forces are being downsized. According to the latest estimates, 5,000 soldiers have left or applied to leave voluntarily since the change of regime and another 2,000 are expected to follow by the end of 2003. A special programme has been set up with NATO support to assist the reintegration of former soldiers into civilian life, by, for example, organising workshops to help them acquire skills for alternative employment. In addition, several superfluous military installations are being converted for civilian use, thereby enabling the Defence Ministry to save funds that would otherwise have been spent on refurbishment and maintenance.

Budget matters

Savings — wherever they can be made — are important to help fund further reforms and improvements in military capabilities, since reducing the numbers of

A new challenge will be to reinforce domestic support for NATO membership

active soldiers is, in the short-term at least, costly and is placing great pressure on both the military and the state budget. In common with many European countries, Croatia suffers from a “zero-growth budget” mentality that has seen the resources allocated to the military decline in both absolute and relative terms every year for the past six years. As the economy improves, with greater stability throughout the region and the return of mass tourism, this situation should improve and it might be possible to increase military spending without significantly changing the proportion of national wealth allocated to this area.

If everything goes to plan, the mid-term projection for the military budget is 2.2 per cent of GDP, which is almost 10 per cent more in relative terms than this year. And the projected military budget structure is 50 per cent for personnel (compared with 70 per cent this year), 30 per cent for operational costs and infrastructure and 20 per cent for acquisition. But these issues still need to be properly debated by politicians and public alike in order to build a national consensus on what we should expect from our Armed Forces and what resources we are prepared to invest in them.

Since joining the Partnership for Peace in May 2000, Croatia has progressively intensified its dialogue with NATO and made the most of Alliance expertise, structures and programmes, including the Planning and Review Process, to assist and guide the military reform process. MAP participation has helped build awareness that preparations for NATO membership involve far more than the Defence Ministry, thereby making inter-agency coordination essential. Whereas the early focus of Croatia’s relationship with the Alliance was on preparing forces to participate in NATO/PfP operations, today they cover a much broader range of activities. Indeed, Croatia is working on implementing 48 Partner goals, 38 of which fall under the jurisdiction of the Defence Ministry and General Staff, and 10 of which involve inter-agency cooperation.

Successful and timely implementation of these goals will result in reformed defence structures and in the Armed Forces’ ability to meet NATO standards of interoperability. This in turn will affect the most important elements of our defence policy, especially those connected to training and education, acquisition, financial and material management. In our efforts to install sufficient safeguards and procedures to make secure the most sensitive exchange of information with NATO, considerable progress has already been made. Under the provisions of the Security Services Law, which was passed by the *Hrvatski Sabor* in March 2002, a legal framework has been established

for the creation of an Information Security and Cipher Protection Agency. The main function of this agency will be to protect the secure flow of information through government departments and agencies.

Under the same law, an Office of the National Security Council has also been created. This body is designed to provide the National Security Council with the expertise, analytical capabilities and administrative support that it requires and includes a central register for distribution of documents. In the future, one of its tasks will be to carry out security clearances to NATO standards of individuals who might have access to sensitive documentation or information.

These changes and others brought in during the past two years, as Croatia changed its political system from one that was semi-presidential to one that is parliamentary, have generally streamlined relations between political institutions and security and defence structures. Some discrepancies, nevertheless, remain. One example is that the President, who is Commander-in-Chief responsible for national defence, is not yet legally involved in the process of preparing the military budget or the long-term development plan for the Armed Forces. But this and other discrepancies can be worked out, given good will on all sides of the political spectrum.

NATO focus

Several further NATO-related documents are currently being prepared. This includes a Long-Term Development Plan of the Armed Forces (due to be completed by the end of 2003), a Modernisation Plan, a Strategic Defence Review (scheduled for completion in 2004), a Study on the Professionalisation of the Armed Forces and a Joint Doctrine of the Armed Forces. In combination, these documents should contribute to further improvements in Croatia’s defence structures and greater efficiency in defence matters. Despite this, much legislation — including laws concerning the stationing of foreign troops on Croatian soil and the deployment of the Croatian Armed Forces abroad in response to Article 5, collective-defence obligations — still need to be overhauled before Croatia is ready to join NATO.

In this context, a new challenge will be to reinforce domestic support for NATO membership while making it clear that the Alliance’s collective-defence provisions involve both benefits and opportunities and costs and responsibilities. The latest opinion polls indicate support for Alliance membership in Croatia to be between 50 and 60 per cent. For this figure to increase, the government will have to address the

obstacles ahead and engage the wider public in a forthright debate.

As a small country that has experienced the consequences of war and instability, we cannot take security for granted and have to invest in it ourselves and, additionally, to use all available international tools and mechanisms. In this way, Croatia is eager to play its part in addressing the most crucial security problems of today; is helping develop regional cooperation and understanding; and is participating actively in both the war against terrorism and efforts to combat the threat of organised crime, an issue of special concern in Southeastern Europe.

Croatian military observer teams and civilian experts are involved in a variety of UN peacekeeping missions — in Sierra Leone, West Sahara, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Kashmir and East Timor. Moreover, we recently deployed a military police platoon to Afghanistan within the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and are supporting ongoing international efforts in peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in resolving ethnic unrest in Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.* Our troops have learned a lot through their foreign deployments and been praised for their professionalism by the United Nations, the officials of host countries and by field commanders.

Croatia remains focused on the MAP process and intends to maintain the pace of military reform in the coming years in the expectation that NATO's door will remain open and one day soon the country will be invited to join the Alliance. In the words of President Stjepan Mesic at the Prague Summit: "We are well aware of our obligations and know that only by fulfilling them can we achieve our aspirations." ■

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.