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NATO: facing changes, making changes

1949, the year that NATO was established, was dripping with reminders of the past and signs of the future.

The world was still awakening from the nightmare of the Second World War. Rationing of clothes in the UK, a wartime necessity, came to an end. Berlin, the heart of the Third Reich four years earlier, was now torn in half, with the West part being blockaded by the USSR.

Growing disagreements with the Soviets took on a new hue, with the explosion of their first atomic bomb in 1949. It was also the year that Communists won the Chinese civil war. Fears over growing totalitarianism were embodied in George Orwell’s book published that year, entitled ‘1984’.

But as well as fears, there were also signs of progress. The first computer with a memory was made in 1949. The first non-stop flight around the globe was made by a US Air Force plane.

In the midst of this, NATO was formed. It was in part a response to two strong emotions at the time: fear and hope. The fear of an uncertain, and rapidly changing, world order was tangible. But so was the hope that the worst was behind us. NATO, a defensive force, became a major player almost immediately in this context.

The intervening years, up to 2009, have seen a breadth and pace of change unmatched in human civilisation. Space exploration, digital communication and mass international travel have made the world smaller and more interconnected.

But despite these advances, the emotions of fear and hope remain strong today. And so does NATO.

Paul King
Editor, NATO Review

Cover photo: fotolia.fr
As NATO celebrates its 60th anniversary, it is in greater demand than ever before. The Alliance is keeping the peace in Kosovo, it is engaged in both stabilisation tasks and combat operations in Afghanistan, runs an anti-terrorist naval operation in the Mediterranean, assists defence reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, trains Iraqi security forces, and provides support to the African Union. NATO is at the heart of a vast and expanding network of partnerships with countries from across the globe and is developing closer cooperation with key civilian institutions. And the Alliance’s enlargement process remains a strong incentive for aspirant countries to get their house in order.

In short, at age 60, NATO has become such an indispensable part of the international security environment that it is hard to imagine that it ever could have been otherwise. And yet it was. The initial duration of the 1949 Washington Treaty was modestly set at 20 years, by which time, it was assumed, the post-war recovery of Western Europe would have been completed and the transatlantic defence pact become obsolete. Few of the people who were present at NATO’s creation would have dared to hope that this Alliance would not only outlast the Cold War conditions that brought it into being, but indeed thrive in a radically different security environment.

The reason why NATO turned from a temporary project into a permanent one is not difficult to fathom. It is because the logic of transatlantic security cooperation is timeless. The need for Europe and North America to tackle security challenges together remains as pressing today as it was 60 years ago. So does the need for a transatlantic institutional framework which allows for political consultation, joint decisions, and common action. Only NATO can provide this framework.

When our Heads of State and Government meet at NATO’s 60th Anniversary Summit in Strasbourg, France, and Kehl, Germany, on 3 and 4 April, they will no doubt highlight the Alliance’s historic achievements. Indeed, the Summit venue itself testifies to NATO’s success in facilitating Europe’s post-war reconciliation. But while past achievements may inspire confidence for the future, they cannot substitute for new thinking and new policies. As NATO enters its seventh decade, it needs to overcome a series of challenges that are more difficult and complex than anything it has ever faced before. The Strasbourg/Kehl Summit must therefore not be confined to self-congratulatory statements. On the contrary, this Summit is a key opportunity to move NATO’s evolution another major step forward.

Three challenges stand out.

The first challenge is Afghanistan. To make a success of our engagement there, we need to better match our ambitions with the means that we are willing to deploy. I sincerely hope that all Allies would be able to step up their contributions. We have had considerable success in training and equipping the Afghan National Army, and we must build on that progress. The ability of the Afghan Police to play its role in providing security and stability is essential. There is a lot more that we – and the international community as a whole – can do on the civilian side – in helping the Afghans to build functioning institutions, to fight crime and corruption, and get a better grip of the narcotics problem. What we must guard against at all cost is individual nations taking a narrow view of their specific role in a particular geographical or functional area. It is vital that we all keep our eyes on the overall picture, and continue our engagement in Afghanistan as a common, transatlantic endeavour.

The overall picture stretches well beyond Afghanistan. It includes the wider region, and especially Pakistan, with which we must deepen our engagement. Moreover, we must get our military and civilian institutions to co-operate much more closely and more effectively. In other words, we need to further instrumentalise a truly comprehensive approach – and not just in Afghanistan, but also in response to
other urgent, transnational challenges. The UN-NATO Joint Declaration which UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and I signed last September should help us to move in that direction.

The second major challenge is our relationship with Russia. The conflict in Georgia last August has invited many different interpretations. It has also raised some serious questions about Russia's commitment to a positive relationship not only with its own neighbours, but also with our Alliance. Clearly, we are not going to let Russia derail NATO enlargement. That process is central to our aim of consolidating Europe as an undivided and democratic security space and, hence, it is not negotiable. But the NATO-Russia relationship is too valuable to be stuck in arguments over enlargement or, for that matter, over missile defence or Kosovo.

We need a positive agenda that befits the great importance of both Russia and NATO to European and indeed global security. Afghanistan is one key area where we have obvious common interests and a greater chance of meeting those interests when we work together. But there other areas as well, like the fight against terrorism and piracy, and the need to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In other words, the time has clearly come to give a fresh impetus to our relationship, and our next NATO Summit offers an excellent opportunity for the Allies to underline their commitment in this regard.

The third challenge is dealing with new threats. We have seen these past few years that cyber attacks or the interruption of energy supplies can devastate a country without a single shot being fired. We are also witnessing the return of piracy as a serious security challenge, as well as the first “hard” security implications of climate change, notably in the High North. At the same time, Iran's nuclear programme highlights the pressing challenge of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We need to better define NATO’s role in meeting these challenges. NATO may not provide all the answers, but that should not serve as excuse for inaction. We must make the best possible use of the Alliance's unique value as a forum for transatlantic political dialogue, and as an instrument for translating political decisions into concrete action. After all, threats don’t wait until we feel that we are ready for them.

The Strasbourg/Kehl Summit is an opportunity to demonstrate that the Allies are able to muster the necessary political will, imagination and solidarity to meet these various challenges. But the Summit must do even more. With a new US Administration settling in office, and with the prospect of France taking its full place in NATO’s integrated military structures, the Summit is also the perfect moment to launch an update of the Alliance's Strategic Concept.

Based on the “Declaration on Alliance Security” which is to be agreed at the Summit, a new Strategic Concept will need to reconcile the Alliance’s core purpose of collective defence with the many requirements associated with out-of-area operations. It will need to emphasise NATO’s role as a unique community of common values and interests, and avoid the temptation to push regional or national agendas at the expense of our common purpose and objectives. And it will need to make clear NATO’s strong desire to engage with the UN, the EU and other international actors, as partners, in a comprehensive approach to the security challenges of our time.

These challenges are fundamentally different from those that brought NATO into being 60 years ago. But as long a there is a solid transatlantic relationship, and as long as this relationship rests on strong institutional foundations such as NATO, we will be able to shape events and not be their victims. The Alliance’s 60th Anniversary Summit is a perfect opportunity to reaffirm this timeless logic.
Developments in the last few months have raised concerns. War in the Caucasus was this century’s first military conflict in Europe. At the beginning of this year, clashes between Israel and Hamas reminded us of Middle Eastern instability. There is still no progress towards solving the Iranian nuclear crisis. Terrorist attacks go on, as does violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or clashes in Africa, such as in the Congo and Sudan. And this comes against a background of turmoil generated by the financial markets’ and the world economy’s crises, as well as the climate change challenge.

A joined up security policy is vital.

It is clear to us that our security policy must be interpreted in a broader way. Beyond strictly military issues, the international financial situation must be taken into account, along with energy supplies and migration issues.

Our concepts must be adapted. To respond to crises and conflicts, we need a comprehensive approach, increasingly solid and stable partnerships, and flexible tools.

Nowadays, no single nation can solve the world’s problems. Alliances based on shared values, such as the European Union and NATO, are becoming increasingly important. The more our partnership network develops and our political, economic, development assistance and military capabilities are joined together, the better our security will be guaranteed, as well as our capacity for resolving crises.

This firm belief forms the basis of our security policy, the one we are developing through ever closer Franco-German cooperation, and within the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance. Those three dimensions are mutually reinforcing. We are convinced that it is in our best interest to make European construction and Atlantic partnership two facets of the same security policy.

Western Europe has been enjoying peace and freedom for 60 years – and this is now the case over almost all of Europe. We of course owe this to our own determination, but also to the United States: it has remained by our side and has committed itself to a free and democratic Europe. Given the dangers we face in the 21st century, the transatlantic security and defence partnership has to be strengthened and tailored to new challenges.

This involves analysing situations jointly, making joint decisions and implementing them in the same spirit of partnership. Unilateral decision-making would be at odds with the new spirit of our relationship.

For the first time in the Atlantic Alliance’s history, two nations – our two nations – are inviting their Allies to a Summit, the 60th anniversary Summit, on 3 and 4 April 2009. This is a strong symbol of a Franco-German friendship promoting peace and security. It is also the token of a henceforth united and free Europe.

We want the forthcoming Alliance Summit to be an opportunity for strategic debates, bringing political choices. Our aim is not...
to reinvent the Alliance’s fundamental principles, which were enshrined in the Treaty of Washington, nor the shared values and solidarity uniting us. Our aim is, as we already did successfully in the past, to have open-minded debates with a view to giving new guidelines and credibly transforming the Alliance. This is what we did in 1991 and 1999 when we redefined our Strategic Concepts.

We must reconsider our approach to new threats, our partnerships and our structures. Germany and France expect the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit to launch work on a new ‘Strategic Concept’.

To address the demands for the future, we think progress has to be made in several of the following key areas.

**NATO-EU Cooperation**

To our great regret, the ‘strategic partnership’ between NATO and the EU is not living up to our expectations due to disagreements which persist between certain nations. We think that this must change. We must move towards genuine cooperation, based on a necessary complementarity.

**Alliance missions**

Today, for the sake of our common security, the Alliance is conducting several out-of-area operations, in particular in the Balkans – Bosnia and Kosovo – and in Afghanistan.

Some 60 years after NATO’s founding, the commitment to give assistance to an ally under attack, enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty of Washington, still constitutes the very essence of the Alliance. And we drew one additional consequence from this after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. To combat terrorism, we are engaged with our Allies in Afghanistan, because this is one of the new threats in the 21st century.

Our soldiers are exposed to major risks in those operations, in particular in Afghanistan. Other young men and women who take part in the reconstruction effort are also victims of terrorism, which shuns any respect for human life. Be that as it may, we expect the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit to send the signal that the Alliance will continue to stand up for its security and its values.

“We expect the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit to send the signal that the Alliance will continue to stand up for its security and its values.”
Our goal remains to establish a security level allowing the country’s reconstruction, in accordance with the Afghans’ wishes, so that global terrorism will no longer develop its bases there. We are also aware that democracy strengthening must go along with military action. Political approaches also have to be discussed with our Alliance partners.

Russia: rebuild a partnership
The war in Georgia, during the summer of 2008, marked a turning point. The European Union was able to stop the violence spiralling and create the conditions for a settlement process. But the use of military force and the unilateral recognition, against international law, of Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia created a confidence problem with Russia.

Russia remains our neighbour and a very important partner. We are not back to the Cold War era. Those who claim this are wrong because the USSR no longer exists. We intend to restore and develop trustful and fruitful relations with Russia. Our alliance is a defensive alliance whose sole ambition is to guarantee our common security against global threats. But we are also entitled to expect Russia to demonstrate its respect for the standards and rules it contributed to establish, through the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter in 1990: territorial integrity, border inviolability, respect and equality within the Euro-Atlantic space.

It is on that basis that the vast majority of European nations wanted to join NATO and EU. This enlargement is central to the continent’s security and stability. Admittedly without euphoria, Russia, though not enthused, has nonetheless gone along with this process in a constructive way for a long time.

The Strasbourg-Kehl Summit will provide an opportunity to discuss this again. Wanting to join NATO is the free choice of European nations, of independent and free democracies. There is a trust in us that we cannot let down. However we want to stress once more that Alliance membership criteria have to be met; nations must first and foremost be able to take on its heavy responsibilities of it, making a real contribution to the Allies’ security and sharing the same values. By the same token, enlargement must contribute to the continent’s stability and security, which benefits Russia too. In this framework, cooperation within the NATO-Russia Council plays an essential part.

The military nature of the Atlantic Alliance implies that members have to make sure that their military capabilities accurately match their security requirements and the missions they take on. The Strasbourg-Kehl Summit will also provide an opportunity to discuss this. We need, particularly in Europe, more modern, efficient and interoperable military assets.

In addition, we will discuss issues related to the deployment of missile defence systems in the face of the limited ballistic threats emanating from the Middle East. So we think that Russia has to be involved in these discussions in a spirit of cooperation and transparency, as the United States has proposed. This dialogue will also have to continue in the NATO-Russia Council.

The Barack Obama presidency is already characterised by new foreign and security policy priorities. A great many Europeans are expecting a lot from this change; Barack Obama certainly expects as much from us. We are looking forward to cooperating with him and are convinced that, thanks to the Euro-Atlantic security partnership, we will be able to confront the risks and threats we face together.

It is by working in a spirit of confidence, acting proactively and together, that we will build a world bringing greater peace and security for everyone.
NATO has reached a resolute age – 60 – and we are about to celebrate the anniversary in Kehl and Strasbourg at a time of profound global uncertainty. Yet I am confident that this will be a Summit of renewal. President Obama and his Administration are determined to revitalize our transatlantic community and rebuild a strong and effective NATO. We are opening new dialogues, exploring fresh opportunities, and working to come together as an Alliance that rises to the challenges of the 21st century.

This Summit, co-hosted by France and Germany, is symbolic of NATO today – we are a quilt of nations stitched together, from Vancouver to Vilnius, from the Arctic to the Aegean, because of our shared democratic values. And although we have huge challenges confronting us, we also have the solidarity of purpose and political will that will help us overcome them.

As President-elect Obama said in his letter to the North Atlantic Council in January, “Our nations share more than a commitment to our common security – we share a set of common democratic values. That is why the bond that links us together cannot be broken, and why NATO is a unique alliance in the history of the world. Now it falls to us to work together to face down the perils of this moment in history, while seizing its promise.”

Certainly, NATO’s history should guide us along a hopeful path.

NATO was born out of hope. The hope that by joining together, democratic nations – on both sides of the Atlantic – could protect their freedom, and create the space for a peaceful and prosperous future.

That space is growing in Europe, but our work is not done. People in the Balkans, Georgia, Ukraine or elsewhere have as much right to build democratic, prosperous and secure societies as the rest of Europe – and they need our help. NATO is also helping promote security in other regions of the world. The reason NATO has forces in distant places is to protect its citizens at home.

At the heart of this Alliance is a simple pledge: We stand together. An attack on one will be met as an attack on all.

Ever since the Cold War, collective security has been our core mission – and will remain so. Nearly one billion people feel safe because of Article 5 and all that it promises. By protecting our nations, we protect our values: freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, economic opportunity.

At the Summit, we can study many aspects of NATO. Our history: we never fired a shot during the Cold War; European peace: NATO helped create a wide space in Europe where a war has not happened in 60 years; and finally, our most important current operation: NATO forces in Afghanistan are working to exorcise the threat of terrorism – a direct threat to both Europeans and North Americans.

But none of these speaks of NATO’s enduring legacy – as the most important defence alliance in the world that has never wavered from its core message of collective security. Now, in the new world of the 21st century, we face a more complex security environment.

NATO is ready. I sense a positive energy and confidence among the members as we head towards the Summit. Our allies want to contribute, both in terms of revitalizing NATO, and in operations like Afghanistan. As NATO enters its seventh decade, there is no other Alliance or institution that can do what NATO does best: protecting our common future.
NATO Secretary General: a changing job description?

By Ryan C. Hendrickson

As NATO reaches 60, its first Secretary General, Lord Hastings Ismay, would undoubtedly have been amazed to see the transformation of the NATO Secretary General role. From a position that was essentially managerial in nature, designed to advance intra-Alliance consultation, the modern Secretary General has evolved into a position with much wider responsibilities in shaping NATO’s operational and strategic role in the world.

At its birth in 1949, NATO did not have a Secretary General. With the onset of the Korean War, the Allies created the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe in an effort to increase military integration across the Alliance. The first SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), American General Dwight Eisenhower, brought new prestige and respect to NATO. But it was soon clear that the office of the SACEUR was not enough to promote the necessary political dialogue and cooperation among the Allies.

In response, the office of the Secretary General was created at NATO’s three-year anniversary in 1952. At its core, the Secretary General is there to help the Allies find consensus. The Secretary General has no vote in the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and thus in many respects, is simply a servant of the Allies, trying to build cooperation and meaningful consultation. The powers of this office are then quite limited in scope. In his first years as Secretary General, Lord Ismay was kept in the background, was not permitted to speak without approval from the Allies, and did not even chair Council meetings until 1955.

Yet since then, NATO’s political leader has evolved into a key, and at times, central decision-maker among the Allies. He has shaped how the Alliance evolved, defining key strategic concepts as the Alliance adapted to new security circumstances.

While many within NATO Headquarters understand the importance of this office, many histories and past analyses of NATO have devoted very little to the roles played by the 11 Secretaries General. This absence is unfortunate given the profoundly important influence NATO’s political leader can and has exercised.

For example, among the past Secretaries General, Lord Peter Carrington has received almost no historical attention or credit for his leadership at NATO, which ran from 1984 to 1988. Carrington himself admits in his memoirs the frustration he felt during his service at NATO, due in part to the absence of any real formal power or authority provided to the Secretary General—a condition that Ismay and other predecessors most certainly understood.

Yet upon his selection as Secretary General, former assistant Secretary General to NATO, Robin Beard noted...
that Carrington “projected honour” and generated a new level of respect for the Alliance. Former American Ambassador to NATO, David M. Abshire said that Carrington led the Alliance using his skill, good humour and grace in dealing with the many different personalities across the Alliance. Carrington's personal diplomatic skills were critical in helping to find consensus during some very difficult moments among the Allies.

NATO’s ninth Secretary General, Javier Solana, also demonstrated the potential influence that this office can wield. His legacy as NATO’s political leader is especially significant.

At the Madrid Summit in 1997, when the debate over NATO’s expansion became contentious among the Allies, author Ronald D. Asmus noted that the Allies turned to Solana to find a way out of this contentious political environment. After consultation with the Allies, Solana succeeded in finding the eventual compromise that resulted in membership invitations to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

Solana’s quiet diplomacy and skills with language also came into play in 1998, when debate within Brussels ensued over how to respond to the violence and aggression in the Balkans. Again, it was Solana who identified that all the Allies could agree that a “sufficient legal basis” existed for NATO to authorise the use of force in the Balkans, which eventually resulted in Operation Allied Force in 1999.

At the onset of military action in 1999, Solana again played a key role in advising the SACEUR, General Wesley Clark, on the kinds of military targets that the Allies would support. Again, Solana played a key role in allowing the operation to move forward as rapidly as possible, while maintaining political consensus among the then 19 members of the Alliance for military action.
Certainly, among NATO’s most influential Secretaries General, Manfred Wörner’s legacy merits special consideration. Wörner, NATO’s first and only German Secretary General, brought a special set of skills to the Alliance, which in many ways shaped what the Alliance is able to achieve today.

First, Wörner had the extraordinary intellect to frame issues and questions into the broader strategic interests of the Alliance. In part, his ability to think strategically helped move the Alliance toward its new Strategic Concept, which was agreed at the Rome Summit in 1991. This set the stage for NATO to begin peacekeeping and crisis management operations, which have in many ways defined NATO’s role in the world today.

In addition, Wörner saw, much earlier than some, the advantages of extending NATO’s outreach to the Soviet Union and later to the newly formed democracies of Eastern Europe, all in an effort to integrate them into the rest of democratic Europe. Through his own initiative, he used the influence of his office to foster new relationships across Eastern Europe, which set the foundation for the major membership expansions that came at the Madrid, Prague, and Bucharest Summits. Wörner’s early vision helped to establish the political groundwork for NATO to move east, and later to assist in the modernisation and democratisation of many of these formerly communist militaries.

Wörner’s influence was also felt in the NAC, such that a number of his contemporaries believed that consensus was not going to be reached unless he also approved of the policy in question. The informal authority that he exercised came due to his wide diplomatic contacts among the Allies, his command of the specific issues in question, and the force of his personality.

Among his most memorable occasions in the NAC was his attendance at a critical April 1994 Council session. He was suffering from cancer, which eventually took his life in August 1994. With evident weight loss, his physician at his side, and intravenous feeding tubes visible from his shirt collar, Wörner successfully lobbied the Allies for a NATO military response to the repeated attacks on Bosnian civilians. As has been documented, after rising from his sick bed in Aachen, Germany and traveling to Brussels for this meeting, his presence was instrumental in producing the necessary consensus for military action.

“At its core, the Secretary General is there to help the Allies find consensus.”

Manfred Wörner (above) brought a strong personality and dedication as Secretary General.
Leading in a new security climate, when the Alliance has taken on new roles in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, and conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian support activities in Kosovo, Sudan, and Pakistan, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has also produced his own legacy as NATO’s political leader.

Like Wörner, de Hoop Scheffer has stretched NATO in directions beyond what some thought was possible prior to his selection as Secretary General. In his efforts to generate new partnerships to fight terrorism, de Hoop Scheffer has carried NATO’s message across the globe, including trips to Asia, the Middle East and Australia, all of which was unprecedented.

Much like his predecessor Lord Robertson’s mantra for more “capabilities, capabilities, capabilities,” de Hoop Scheffer has often stressed the need for additional and more cooperative defence spending efforts across the Alliance. His goal, much like Robertson’s, is for an alliance that can rapidly respond to new and immediate security challenges and crises. De Hoop Scheffer has continued to push for these investments, which nearly all military analysts concur is in the Alliance’s best interest.

But de Hoop Scheffer’s clearest priority was NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan.

From his first day as Secretary General through to 2009, de Hoop Scheffer has used his office to ensure that he did everything possible to increase NATO’s chances for success in Afghanistan. In doing so, he has often called for more resources, both civilian and military, to promote democracy and peace in Afghanistan. While NATO still has many challenges to face in Afghanistan, which de Hoop Scheffer has readily acknowledged, his focus and commitment to the mission’s success will be among his most significant legacies as Secretary General.

The Alliance is about to move into a new era with new leadership. The individual who holds this position can make a profound difference in NATO’s ability to act, evolve, and respond to new circumstances. And the trend, from Ismay to de Hoop Scheffer, is that the Secretary General’s role has continued to grow in stature.

As the Alliance moves into a new era with new leadership, it is clear that the individual who holds this position can make a profound difference.”
Voices from history

NATO Review celebrated its 50th anniversary recently. Over the years, many predictions, warnings and hopes have been expressed in its pages. Here, we reproduce a selection.

“I have great ambitions because I become daily more convinced of two things: that the fate of Europe depends on the unity of the European peoples; and that the fate of the West depends on the unity and cooperation of the Atlantic peoples.”

– NATO Letter, Vol. 6, No. 12, December 1958, from a speech by M. Paul-Henri Spaak before the Fourth Annual Conference of NATO Parliamentarians

“We cannot stand still in NATO. We must move forward or we will slide backwards. Moving forward means bringing the NATO members – or those of them who are willing – closer together politically and economically. Nothing else makes any sense in the little world of 1959.”

NATO Review, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 1974, Review editorial on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Alliance

“…terrorist is just one of many, non-traditional security challenges. Examples include ethnic and religious conflict, drug trafficking, mass migration, environmental instability, corruption, money laundering, militant activism and information theft. Such threats – where conflict and crime often merge – respect no boundaries. All too often, there are no leaders or legions against which to focus attention or target a response.”


“What has to be prevented at all costs in tomorrow’s Europe is the rekindling of nationalism as a result of a renaissance of the nation-state.”

NATO Review, Vol. 38, No. 3, June 1990, from “The history of the future” by Mark Eyskens, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium

“The key individual player [in security in 2009] could well be the person – perhaps a business traveller, a migratory worker, a tourist – who carries the pathogen that results in a devastating global pandemic.”

NATO Review, January 2009, by Dr Ian Goldin, former advisor to Nelson Mandela and former Vice President of the World Bank
“...developments in Europe over the past 12 months have played out as if according to an ideal plan. So spectacular indeed has been our progress that inevitably questions have been asked about the Alliance’s future. What is there left for a politico-military alliance such as NATO to do now that the threat that dominated our daily lives and our planning assumptions for nearly half a century has all but disappeared?”

NATO Review Vol. 39, No. 1, February 1991, essay by NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner

“The feeling of euphoria that was prevalent in most industrialised countries since the last war was based on a boundless confidence in economic growth to resolve the thousand and one problems facing our type of society...

It was not until the end of the 1960s that the general public came to appreciate the senselessness of indiscriminately wasting land and natural resources because, although they might be vast, they were finite...

Japan and Western Europe and even the United States have suddenly come to realise just how much their dependence on oil as the main source of energy has made their economies vulnerable...

... there is every reason to suppose that this era of reckless and conspicuous waste may soon be over.”

NATO Review Vol. 22, No. 2, April 1974, quoted from the report, “NATO Science Committee Conference on Technology of Efficient Energy Utilisation”

“If it is true that in 40 or 50 years’ time there will be between eight and ten billion inhabitants on Earth, we have to start deciding right now how they are to be fed, and how they are to be found work... But if we find no solution, the problems we have been facing for the last five years will later be considered child’s play and our period regarded as a golden age.”

NATO Review Vol. 26, No. 5, October 1978, by François de Rose, Ambassadeur de France, “Scientific and Technological Progress: Problems for the West”, as part of the 20th anniversary of the founding of NATO’s Science Committee

“Partnership, along with crisis management, has become a fundamental security task of the Alliance... Allies and Partners are together building mechanisms for future ‘coalitions of the able’ not only for joint operations, but also for conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.”

NATO Review Vol. 37, No. 2, Summer 1999, essay by Charles J. Daly

“There has repeatedly been cause for concern about the Alliance. However, nostalgia for the ‘good old times’ of NATO does not get us anywhere... The discussions which led to the definition, in 1967, of the future tasks of the Alliance and the unanimity with which the Allies reacted moderately, but with determination, to the events in Czechoslovakia, have proved... that NATO is able to work out the basic lines of its policy.”

NATO Letter, Vol. 17, No. 4, April 1969, from “Facing new challenges,” by Willy Brandt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany and President of the North Atlantic Council
NATO has accomplished a lot more in the post-Cold War period than anyone imagined when the Berlin Wall came down and it lost its ostensible raison d’etre. Its accomplishments include the Alliance’s expansion and its Bosnian and Kosovo operations.

But as NATO leaders prepare to meet in Strasbourg/Kehl – in what will be President Obama’s first NATO Summit and should mark France’s full reintegration into NATO’s standing military structures and the defence planning mechanisms of the Alliance – considerable challenges remain. These include NATO’s expansion, its Afghan operation and its transformation to a leaner organisation.

Hiding beneath those items lies an even bigger question: what is NATO for in the 21st century?

Some Allies now want to return to a static, defensive posture, which is focused primarily on traditional territorial threats; others want to focus mainly on expeditionary operations like ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) in Afghanistan. This is likely to be the biggest strategic dilemma facing NATO. The right choice is obviously to see the two missions as reinforcing each other and continue the agreed-upon transformation of Allied armies lest it becomes even harder for NATO to gin up the necessary fighting forces.

But convincing many Allies to make this “and/and” commitment will not be easy.

In light of this, the Afghan mission may in fact be the least contentious of NATO’s assignments. Everyone knows the
mission has to go on. Few believe it is succeeding. And everyone knows that President Obama will want a significant enhancement of European effort. The question is how to deliver it. If Europeans cannot give more troops, then they need to make their troops better at the key task – building up Afghan forces.

To this end, a standing NATO Military Advisory Corps could be unveiled at the next Summit. It will not solve all of ISAF’s problems, but it will enhance the European effort and boost ISAF’s capacities. As such, it may ensure that, as the Obama administration gradually takes over all NATO operations in the south and east of Afghanistan, US Allies do not actually withdraw and the US continues to see NATO as a useful instrument.

More problematic will be NATO’s relationship with Georgia and Ukraine. Russia has made it clear that it opposes enlargement. But reaching out to Georgia and Ukraine is worthwhile. Even though Europe needs to rebalance its relationship with Russia, giving Moscow a veto over NATO’s decisions is unlikely to encourage better behaviour by the Kremlin. Though the Obama administration will, I’m sure, be keen not to create a conflict at the 2009 Summit, it will probably also not want to go back on NATO’s ‘open door’ policy.

The key is therefore to make sure the two commissions NATO has established to help Ukraine and Georgia reform their defence structures actually mean something. From experiences in the Balkans, it is clear that overseeing politically sensitive defence reforms is more difficult than technical assistance or just serving as an umbrella for allied reform assistance.

It has to be different this time if NATO’s offer is to mean anything to Kiev and Tbilisi (and Moscow). NATO’s staff will need to be beefed up to work on the reform processes, high level appointees are needed as NATO Senior Civilian Representatives in Kiev and Tbilisi and the Allies need to come together to deliver a serious reform package.

Then NATO will have to find ways to assuage the likes of Poland, Estonia and Lithuania who feel threatened by Russia. To do so, the Alliance should offer to establish a non-military NATO facility in the region, for example a research institute or a training centre. This would give the new NATO members a sense that their Allies care about their predicament without being provocative to Moscow. The cyber defence centre in Estonia is a good first step.

Western leaders should also give JFC Brunssum – one of its military commands – a watching brief over military developments in northern Europe. During the Cold War, each NATO command had a regional focus. Countries could call these up and get an update of military developments, e.g. Soviet Navy movements. As military tasks have changed, the commands have become more functionally focused;
Brunssum is now in the ISAF chain of command and calls the mission its ‘highest priority’. But given Russia’s behaviour, it is worth tasking JFC also to keep an eye out for developments in northern Europe.

JFC Naples should also be given a task to look out for developments on Europe’s southern flank, so as to avoid giving NATO too anti-Russian a slant. Consideration should also be given to undertaking limited military exercises for a defensive, Article 5 scenario.

When US President Truman inaugurated the Alliance six decades ago, little could he have imagined the world we now live in. Today, however, the Alliance’s strength will come not only from building up NATO’s capabilities and enlarging its membership, but also strengthening the NATO-EU ties. Experiences in the Balkans and Afghanistan have shown that military capability is not enough to guarantee success. A more complex mix of political and development tools are required. Only by NATO and the EU working together can these be brought to bear. So both organisations must move beyond a preoccupation with process over substance and find a new modus operandi, starting at Strasbourg/Kehl.

As long as the Cyprus conflict remains unsolved, it may be best to eschew large scale initiatives, which might be vetoed by Turkey. But it should be possible to create a working-level basis for an EU/NATO rapprochement. One idea would be for the EU to take charge of reconstruction in Afghanistan’s largest cities, with NATO providing security inside and US forces operating in the provincial hinterland. A “Kabul security and development plan” could be a first step; another could be for European gendarmerie forces – either through NATO or the EU – to help build up the Afghan police.

The two organisations should consider other areas for cooperation including in-theatre ISAF support to EUPOL (European Union Police Mission), joint
training and predeployment preparation for PRT (Provincial reconstruction team) staff and joined up civil-military exercises. Even better, a NATO/EU School on Post-Conflict could be set up where each organisation can bring their respective strengths to bear to the benefit of missions where both are present. Where better than at the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit to unveil such an idea?

Outside ongoing commitments, and EU-NATO relations, two long term challenges for NATO are likely to emerge. The first is NATO’s potential role in any Israeli-Palestinian settlement, including peacekeeping tasks and assistance in building Palestine’s security institutions. The second, longer term challenge is how to deal with Africa. I believe that, although there have been some requests from the AU to NATO to help build up the AU’s capabilities, the efforts made have not yet been completely effective.

The new Obama administration should help NATO examine how it might operate with Africom and the AU. It could also help explore the possibilities for a new hybrid construct, such as an AU/NATO set-up – perhaps even involving the UN or EU – which could have a permanent presence in Africa, become a long term partner for security assistance and work to prevent conflict.

Reforms are also needed to improve both current and future operations, including adjustments to NATO’s command structures, so that greater authority can be delegated to military commanders and in-theatre integration with partners like the United Nations (UN) can be improved.

Changes in the way NATO missions are financed should also be explored, perhaps through a commonly financed NATO operations budget.

Then there is the question of leadership. The mandate of the current NATO Secretary-General expires this year; it will be crucial find an equally-respected replacement.

If the new Obama administration helps NATO to take advantage of a strongly Atlanticist French President, and strike a balance between defence and strength, then the Alliance will remain relevant to the European public, and accepted as a full spectrum military operator by all its members.

And that may be the best 60th anniversary gift NATO could wish for.

“Changes in the way NATO missions are financed should also be explored, perhaps through a commonly financed NATO operations budget.”
NATO was born well before the age of 24 hour news cycles and digital communication. Nonetheless, there was often a photographer around at key moments in NATO's development. Here, we show some of their work.

General Alexander Haig (left) discusses the strength of the Warsaw Pact at a Defence Planning Committee meeting in 1976.

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NATO opens its new headquarters in Brussels, 1967

Greek and Turkish soldiers carry out their first joint NATO exercise in 1953

Berlin in the 1950s still showed the scars of the devastating war in Europe – out of which NATO was born
President Richard Nixon (centre) welcomes NATO ministers in Washington, April 1969 back to the room where the NATO Treaty had been signed 20 years previously.

NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner walks across Moscow’s Red Square as he prepares for talks with the Soviet leadership, 1990.
NATO Ambassadors and staff observe three minutes’ silence on 14 September 2001, as a mark of respect for the victims of the attacks in the US three days earlier.

A peacekeeper from the NATO-led Stabilisation Force walks on the former front line in Sarajevo.

An ethnic Albanian woman feeds her baby as she and another 2,000 refugees flee Kosovo on March 30, 1999.
An Italian soldier of the NATO peacekeeping forces stands near Sarajevo’s Lion cemetery.

General Wesley Clark outlines NATO’s Allied Force operation in Kosovo at a press briefing on April 13, 1999.

The Bosnian conflict was also a media war, with communication channels becoming targets.
Afghanistan has lived through the tyranny of the Taliban, evidenced by their destruction of Buddhas of Bamyan in 2001 (right). The fight against drugs (far right), and the revenue it provides to the insurgents, goes on today. But elections (below) have shown the Afghans steadily taking control of their own country. NATO has been one of the central players in trying to help Afghanistan’s transformation from bullets to ballots.
NATO’s anniversary summit is likely to be dominated by the ongoing mission in Afghanistan. And rightly so. NATO’s ability to forge a coherent strategy, allocate burdens among members, and shore up domestic support for the mission are vital to the alliance’s ability to enhance security and stability in Afghanistan – a goal that will serve as a litmus test of NATO’s effectiveness.

But even as the alliance confronts this immediate challenge, it must also open a searching debate about three over-the-horizon issues that it can no longer afford to push off: its relationship to Russia; its decision-making rules; and the scope of its global ambitions.

On all three issues, NATO members should be guided by realism and sobriety.

With Russia, NATO must seek to avert the continuation of zero-sum competition, instead mapping out a practical vision of programmatic cooperation.

On decision-making, NATO must acknowledge that its growing membership makes reliance on consensus ever more unwieldy, necessitating adoption of a more flexible approach to governance.

As for its global aspirations, NATO must nip such ambitions in the bud, realizing that efforts to turn the body into a worldwide alliance of democracies promise to speed its demise, not its renewal.

Whatever the merits of NATO enlargement – and they are many – the expansion of the alliance has unquestionably come at the expense of its relationship with Russia. To be sure, Russians themselves bear primary responsibility for the recent backsliding on democracy as well as their bouts of foreign policy excess – the war in Georgia most notable among them.

But the perception among Russia’s leadership and its public alike that NATO’s eastward expansion impinges on their country’s security and prestige has certainly not helped matters. Appropriately, NATO seems prepared to put on hold for now its commitment, agreed upon at last year’s Bucharest summit, to offer membership to Georgia and Ukraine. But the mere prospect of Ukrainian and Georgian membership continues to contaminate NATO’s dialogue with Russia.

The way out of this bind is to find a formula for encouraging Moscow to become a stakeholder in Europe’s security order, making Russia a participant in rather than an object of NATO’s evolution. The Cold War has been over for two decades; it is high time for NATO to make a serious effort to bring Russia into the post-war settlement. Moscow may well decline the offer in favor of estrangement with the West. But at least NATO will have done its best to avert that outcome.

At this point, the immediate goal is not finding the precise formula for reaching
out to Moscow, but beginning a strategic conversation that makes clear that NATO members are sincerely committed to anchoring Russia within the Euro-Atlantic community. The conversation can begin by exploring ways to make more of the NATO-Russia Council. NATO members should pick up on Moscow’s call for fresh thinking about a “new European security architecture.” This dialogue must be backstopped with concrete strategic cooperation on issues such as missile defense, access to Afghanistan, and diplomacy with Iran.

Ongoing enlargement also forces the issue of the need to reform decision-making in an alliance that has 26 members and counting. As its ranks grow in number and diversity, continued reliance on consensus may well become a recipe for paralysis. Reinforcing the need for reform is the changed strategic landscape in which NATO operates – one whose complexity has attenuated the solidarity that NATO enjoyed during Cold War.

The sharp disagreements that have arisen over Afghanistan, over the urgency of offering membership to Georgia, and over relations between NATO and Russia are not fleeting differences that will soon disappear. Rather, they are by-products of the inevitable divergence of interest and threat perception that has accompanied NATO’s adaptation to the post-Cold War world.

The key question for the alliance is not whether such differences can be overcome, but whether they can be tolerated. Like it or not, NATO is growing more unwieldy and a consensus more elusive.

Such divergence of perspective among member states hardly spells NATO’s fracture, but it does mean the alliance must adjust accordingly how it reaches decisions. Members are unlikely to give up the consensus rule on matters of war and peace. However, on most other issues, it is time for the alliance to forge a more flexible approach to decision-making. NATO should also consider various forms of opt outs to ensure that the intransigence of individual members on specific issues does not stand in the way of effective action.

Finally, members would be wise to begin addressing the calls – coming primarily from American voices – to extend NATO’s reach beyond Europe and transform the body into a global alliance of democracies. Recasting NATO’s relationship with Russia and reforming decision-making require careful deliberation. The proposal for NATO to go global does not; it should be readily dismissed.

NATO has its hands full in Afghanistan; indeed, its ability to prevail remains open to question. With the Afghan mission so straining NATO’s resources and cohesion, it is hard to imagine that the alliance is ready to take on additional commitments further afield. NATO should by all means forge strategic partnerships with countries and regional groupings willing to contribute to the common cause; the help of non-members in Afghanistan is more than welcome. But making NATO the institution of choice for dealing with conflicts around the world is a bridge too far.

In the Balkans, Caucasus, and Europe’s far east – as well as in Afghanistan – NATO has much unfinished business. It had better focus on completing these tasks before packing up for new missions in Kashmir or the Gaza strip. Moreover, extending NATO membership to the likes of Japan, Australia, and Israel would not only prove uniquely contentious for the alliance but also saddle it with commitments likely to go unmet.

To be sure, NATO has an important role to play beyond Europe; it is already developing linkages in the Mediterranean. But prudence requires that NATO focus primarily on helping others help themselves – providing assistance and training, serving as an institutional model, on occasion partnering with local states in limited missions – all to the service of standing up other security organizations around the globe that can be as successful in their own regions as NATO has been in Europe.

NATO’s sixtieth anniversary comes at a time of challenge and strain for the alliance. Against the backdrop of the mission in Afghanistan, NATO would be wise to consolidate its gains by reaching out to Russia, updating its decision-making to reflect its broader membership, and recognizing the limits of its own success.
Are you a NATO expert?

So you know what NATO stands for. But how much more do you know about the Alliance? These 20 questions will test your knowledge on what it is and what it does. To be an expert, score more than 15 correct answers.

1. Which NATO member country does not possess armed forces?
   a. Norway
   b. Iceland
   c. Luxembourg
   d. Bulgaria

2. Who was the first NATO Secretary General to walk across the Red Square in Moscow?
   a. Dirk Stikker
   b. Hastings Ismay
   c. Manfred Wörner
   d. Willy Claes

3. Which of the following non-NATO countries contribute with troops to the NATO-led KFOR operation?
   a. Morocco, Austria, Armenia
   b. Lebanon, Iran, Israel
   c. Brasilia, China, India
   d. Australia, New Zealand, Japan

4. When did NATO start to engage in scientific cooperation?
   a. 1958
   b. 2001
   c. 1945
   d. 1985

5. How many members does the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council have?
   a. 28
   b. 26
   c. 50
   d. 10

6. Which of the following threats is mentioned in NATO’s present Strategic Concept?
   a. The Israel-Palestinian conflict
   b. Iran’s nuclear programme
   c. Ethnic conflicts
   d. Axis of evil

7. Where did EUFOR take over the tasks of NATO’s Stabilisation Force?
   a. Bosnia and Herzegovina
   b. Montenegro
   c. Croatia
   d. Kosovo

8. Which of the following NATO countries does not possess nuclear weapons?
   a. France
   b. United States
   c. Germany
   d. UK

9. Where did NATO have its first headquarters?
   a. Paris
   b. Luxembourg
   c. London
   d. New York

10. Under which UN Security Council Resolution is KFOR operating in Kosovo?
    a. 1093
    b. 1598
    c. 1244
    d. 1178
11. Where did NATO first engage in a crisis management operation out of its territory?
   a. Democratic Republic of Congo
   b. Former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
   c. Haiti
   d. East Timor

12. Which of the following groups of countries joined NATO in 2004?
   a. Bulgaria, Slovenia, Latvia
   b. Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland
   c. Croatia, Albania, Montenegro
   d. Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova

13. Which non NATO country contributes troops to the NATO-led ISAF mission in Afghanistan?
   a. New Zealand
   b. Japan
   c. China
   d. Pakistan

14. Which two countries joined NATO in 1952?
   a. Belgium and Luxembourg
   b. UK and Iceland
   c. Greece and Turkey
   d. Portugal and Italy

15. How is NATO present in Iraq?
   a. The biggest NATO mission is deployed here with more than 40 000 troops
   b. NATO provides assistance to the development of the security sector and the training of Iraqi soldiers
   c. It operates PRTs
   d. It has no mission nor activities in Iraq at all

16. Which of the following four cooperative frameworks does not belong to a NATO partnership initiative?
   a. Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
   b. Mediterranean Dialogue
   c. Partnership for Peace
   d. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

17. Which country is not a founding member of NATO?
   a. Canada
   b. Iceland
   c. Portugal
   d. Spain

18. Through which body does NATO organise its humanitarian responses to natural or man-made disasters?
   a. Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre
   b. NATO Multilateral and Regional Affairs Section
   c. Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
   d. Istanbul Co-operation Initiative

19. Which of the following countries does not participate in NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue?
   a. Morocco
   b. Israel
   c. Mauritania
   d. Syria

20. What is mentioned as an emerging threat in NATO’s Bucharest Summit Declaration?
   a. Ballistic missile proliferation
   b. Terrorism
   c. Proliferation of WMD's
   d. Energy Security

RIGHT ANSWERS
1b, 2c, 3a, 4a, 5c, 6c, 7a, 8c, 9c, 10c, 11b, 12a, 13a, 14c, 15b, 16d, 17d, 18a, 19d, 20d
Today’s uncertain international security environment has prompted renewed attention to the roles which rapid reaction forces play in protecting core NATO security interests and in underpinning the Alliance’s contributions to the preservation of international peace and security.

Historically, NATO’s rapid reaction forces – starting with the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) established in 1960 and extending to today’s NATO Response Force (NRF) – have performed a spectrum of roles, covering deterrence, defence, and reassurance, complemented since the end of the Cold War with the increasingly important mission of crisis-response. While each of these roles has a specific political and operational purpose, which necessarily reflects the evolving real-world context in which they are performed, in many ways these roles overlap and mutually reinforce each other.

By Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, the Head of the Planning Section in NATO’s Operations Division. Here he writes in a personal capacity.

Enduring characteristics of NATO’s rapid reaction forces are: high readiness; responsiveness; deployability; and multinationality. These features make rapid reaction forces relevant to expeditionary operations at a strategic distance from Europe and North America, as well as to reinforcement inside of the North Atlantic Treaty area.

Rapid reaction and deterrence on Europe’s flanks

NATO’s first foray into rapid reaction can be traced back to proposals in 1960 by the then Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), General Lauris Norstad, to create a rapidly deployable mobile force for his command – Allied Command Europe (ACE)\(^1\) – to help deter intimidation, coercion or aggression, short of general war, against allied nations located on ACE’s northern and southern flanks. In peacetime, these nations hosted no or a very small allied military presence, and the concept of the AMF aimed at projecting a multinational deterrent capability on short notice.

National contributions to the AMF (see Box 1) were organised into various pre-planned, multinational force packages optimised for deployment to the five AMF contingency areas – northern Norway; the Zealand islands of Denmark; northeast Italy; northern Greece and Greek and Turkish Thrace; and eastern Turkey. Planning and exercising were overseen by a small multinational staff located in the Federal Republic of Germany, but, in an actual contingency, command and control of the deployed AMF components would have been the responsibility of the local.

\(^1\) Allied Command Europe was renamed Allied Command Operations (ACO) in 2002.
NATO land and air commanders, to ensure seamless integration between indigenous and reinforcing forces and present a single NATO “face”.

**Equipment pre-positioning and forward defence in the Central Region**

While the impetus behind the AMF’s creation in 1960 had been prompted by concerns related to deterrence in ACE’s northern and southern regions, the Berlin crisis of 1961 refocused NATO’s attention on defence of the Central Region. Following the construction of the Berlin Wall, the United States massively reinforced its forces stationed in Western Europe. The Herculean scale of this effort underscored the difficulties of rapid reinforcement inherent in the transatlantic lift of thousands of vehicles and led to the first instance of large-scale equipment pre-positioning, whereby the United States stored in southern Germany materiel for two divisions.

In 1963, the ability of the United States to rapidly reinforce the Central Region was tested during exercise *Big Lift*, which demonstrated the United States’ ever growing strategic airlift capacity, the wisdom of the concept of equipment pre-positioning, and the feasibility of rapid reinforcement on a grand scale.

**The Allied Command Europe Mobile Force**

The Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) was established in 1960 and disbanded in 2002. It was structured into separate, rapidly deployable land and air components, – AMF (Land) and (Air) – comprised of infantry battalions, artillery batteries, transport helicopter flights, and air force fighter and reconnaissance squadrons, contributed by Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg (land component only), The Netherlands (air component only), the United Kingdom and the United States. Contingents contributed by Canada, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom were trained and equipped for operations in Arctic weather conditions.

While slightly larger than a brigade-size force, the AMF was not meant to deploy as a self-contained, stand-alone formation; instead, AMF contingents were trained to deploy and operate as part of the host nation’s forces. The AMF’s readiness, combat capability and deployability were regularly tested by means of field training (*Express* series) and command post (*Exchange* series) exercises, as well as live firing evaluations (*Ardent Ground*). Transportation from home locations was the responsibility of the individual nations, but NATO provided an airlift coordination element and funded collectively the deployment costs.

The AMF was never deployed in a crisis situation during the Cold War, but it was engaged twice in crisis-response operations in the 1990s. In 1991, at the request of Turkey, fighter and reconnaissance squadrons from Belgium, Germany and Italy belonging to the AMF (Air) were deployed to airbases in southeastern Turkey as a deterrent force (Operation *ACE Guard*), to deter any possible Iraqi act of aggression in the context of the Gulf War. And in 1999, the AMF (Land) provided the nucleus of NATO’s Albania Force (AFOR), which was deployed into Albania in the framework of Operation *Allied Harbour* to help provide humanitarian assistance to several hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanian refugees who had crossed into Albania from Kosovo.
In 1968, following the United States’ decision to relocate some US Army units from Europe to the continental United States, to help sustain the United States’ engagement in Southeast Asia, a third divisional set of equipment was stored in southern Germany. And from 1969 onwards, until the end of the Cold War, the United States exercised annually its ability to “REturn FORces to GERmany” during the REFORGER strategic mobility exercise.

Rapid reinforcement and reassurance

In 1975, upon becoming SACEUR, General Alexander Haig decided to harmonise disparate NATO and national reinforcement plans into a single SACEUR Rapid Reinforcement Plan (RRP) and to embed the REFORGER exercises into a broader set of coordinated exercises, labelled Autumn Forge, designed to test and demonstrate NATO’s ability to reinforce and defend all three regions of ACE at once.

At the core of the RRP was an unprecedented United States’ commitment to NATO to have 10 division equivalents deployed and ready to defend West Germany within 10 days of a reinforcement decision (the so-called “10-in-10” concept), which required the storage of pre-positioned equipment for three additional divisions at sites in northern Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and The Netherlands.

An essential aim of the RRP – one that underpinned the political credibility and military effectiveness of NATO’s Cold War rapid reaction forces and reinforcement planning – was reassurance. There could be no stronger motivation for Allies located along Europe’s dividing line to commit to a strong forward defence, and to be prepared to resist intimidation, coercion or aggression, than the pledge of “off-shore” Allies, such as Canada, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States, through the RRP, to come to their assistance in times of crisis or war. In that way, rapid reaction forces and reinforcement planning were the embodiment of the Alliance’s collective defence motto – “One for All, All for One”.

Naturally, the end of the Cold War made all of these arrangements unnecessary. REFORGER exercises were terminated, most storage sites in Europe were closed-down and long-standing as well as more recent reinforcement commitments brought to an end (see Box 2). The RRP had achieved its purpose of deterrence and reassurance, but had now outlived the circumstances that had prompted its development.

“...rapid reaction forces and reinforcement planning were the embodiment of the Alliance’s collective defence motto – ‘One for All, All for One’.”
After the Cold War: crisis response beyond the NATO area

With Europe evolving steadily towards a continent united, free and at peace, but with the growing spectre of unpredictable crises on NATO’s periphery escalating rapidly into conflicts, such as in the Balkans, the focus of rapid reaction shifted from reinforcement inside of, to crisis-response beyond, the North Atlantic Treaty area. For a while, consideration was given to expanding the size of the AMF force pool from a brigade to a division to make it more robust, but the AMF’s time had come and gone.

As early as 1991, the 1st British Corps, which had been the United Kingdom’s key contribution to the defence of West Germany for four decades, was transformed into the multinational Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC). Rapid reaction now required a larger, more capable military force – for instance, in the context of demanding peace-enforcement operations such as IFOR in Bosnia-and-Herzegovina in 1995 and KFOR in Kosovo in 1999, where the ARRC was in both cases the initial entry force.

The AMF soldiered on until its disbandment in 2002. In NATO’s post-Cold War vocabulary, the AMF and the ARRC were categorised as Immediate Reaction Force (IRF) and Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), respectively.

During the 1990s, building upon the experience of the Gulf War, Allies transformed their forces for expeditionary operations at a strategic distance from Europe and North America on short notice. The ARRC’s model was emulated in the form of eight other multinational corps stationed across Europe, six of them like the ARRC at high readiness. Rapid reaction was no longer a specialised military capability; it had become the heart of NATO’s new Force Structure. Eventually, the IRF and RRF categories were abandoned in favour of new categories of High Readiness Forces (HRF) and Forces at Lower Readiness (FLR).

A new focus: rapid reaction and expeditionary operations

Without a unifying employment concept, however, the HRF multinational corps (HRF(L)) and their sister HRF maritime formations (HRF(M)) were isolated “islands” of capability. The skill behind the concept of a multinational NATO Response Force, agreed upon by Heads of State and Government at NATO’s Prague Summit in 2002 (see Box 3), was to link...

“...building upon the experience of the Gulf War, Allies transformed their forces for expeditionary operations at a strategic distance from Europe and North America on short notice.”
the HRFs through a common rotational scheme and the adoption of standardised tactics, techniques and procedures. In essence, the NRF provided the backbone of NATO’s rapid reaction capability and the HRFs provided the flesh. This was a “marriage made in heaven” between a growing expeditionary capability and an innovative employment concept.

Starting in 2003, the NRF has provided the Alliance with a stand-by rapid reaction capability of some 20,000 men per rotation, unlike anything NATO had had during the Cold War and unlike anything available today anywhere around the world, with the exception of the United States. Experience gained from successive rotations has demonstrated that the NRF concept is sound and that the transformational dynamic created by the establishment of the NRF is reaching deep and wide across the Alliance’s military establishments.

Furthermore, the successive deployment to Afghanistan between 2004 and 2007 of four HRF(L) headquarters, to provide the core headquarters of the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), meant that these headquarters could put their NRF skills to good use in a demanding, real-world operation, while bringing the experience of deploying into a distant theatre into the NRF.

Provided that strategic airlift and sealift are made available to NATO by member nations when required, the NRF can be projected at a strategic distance from Europe and North America. This capability was demonstrated in the context of the disaster relief assistance extended by NATO to Pakistan following the earthquake of October 2005 and in June 2006 during exercise Steadfast Jaguar carried out in Cape Verde, off Africa’s western coast – whereas the AMF could only deploy within Western Europe.

The NRF includes land, air and maritime components, as well as special operations and psychological operations task forces and a joint logistic support group. Components and task forces are generated on a rotational basis for successive 6 month-long preparation and stand-by periods from the NATO pool of High Readiness Force (HRF) land and maritime headquarters and affiliated formations and Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) staffs and units. Command of the Force is vested, on a rotational basis, in the three Allied Joint Force Commands (JFC) subordinated to SACEUR and located at Brunssum, The Netherlands; Naples, Italy; and Lisbon, Portugal. Force preparation is assisted by an Operational Preparation Directorate co-located with the JFC headquartered in Lisbon. NRF formations and staffs participate regularly in joint and component-level live exercises and battle staff training, designed to prepare and certify forces before they assume their alert duty during the stand-by period.

In addition to its significant contribution to the enhancement of NATO’s operational responsiveness, the NRF has had a beneficial transformational influence on Alliance forces, by prompting important improvements in doctrine, capability, deployability and interoperability.
Admittedly, enduring shortfalls in key NRF capabilities, particularly operational enablers whose availability is critical for the deployment and employment of the NRF, as well as the persisting failure from rotation to rotation to fill them, have cast a shadow on the NRF and raised doubts on its operational effectiveness and long-term viability. Proposals were aired that could result in a lowering of the level of ambition for the NRF which the Alliance agreed upon its creation.

But while a genuine cause for concern, the persistence of these shortfalls does not call into question the soundness of the original NRF concept. Rather, it reflects the challenge that many Allies face in attempting to keep a segment of their best forces on stand-by while they are engaged in multiple expeditionary operations simultaneously.

Those shortfalls are also symptomatic of wider, systemic weaknesses in the way NATO generates forces for operations in the early 21st century, namely:

• The failure to leverage NATO’s proven defence planning process and the creation of the HRFs to make force generation more predictable, efficient and sustainable over time;
• An insufficient reliance on common funding to underwrite part of the costs of unforeseen, contingency deployments of the NRF, a practice which acts as a disincentive for Allies who otherwise would be prepared to contribute forces to NRF rotations but are concerned that they could face large, unbudgeted expenditures if these forces were actually deployed in a crisis situation;
• An excessively rigid segregation of Alliance forces into various categories, which prevents a more flexible use by NATO of all available capabilities and complicates the employment of the NRF; and
• An approach to estimating the capability of individual NRF rotations that has focused excessively on shortfalls versus a generic requirement, rather than on leveraging the actual contributions made available by member nations.

There is widespread recognition of the adverse impact of these shortcomings on the NRF’s credibility and usability, and setting work in train to address and resolve them will be a priority for the Alliance at the Strasbourg and Kehl Summit.

Rapid reaction’s diverse horizons

Against the background of NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan, the priority mission of the NRF and associated HRFs is crisis response, which could take place at a strategic distance from Europe and North America, to protect core Alliance security interests, help prevent crises from escalating into open warfare, or resolve a conflict and help build the peace. At the same time, in an enlarged Alliance, rapid reaction forces with enhanced deployability retain their relevance for deterrence, defence and reassurance.

In all cases, the Alliance’s distinct and unrivalled ability to plan and conduct multinational, expeditionary operations and meld together disparate capabilities into a coherent force will help ensure that the legacy of the AMF is sustained in the NRF into NATO’s seventh decade and beyond.

“Since 2003, the NRF has provided the Alliance with a stand-by rapid reaction capability of some 20,000 men per rotation, unlike anything NATO had during the Cold War.”
Don’t forget the science bit...

Professor Sir Brian Heap, former UK Representative on the NATO Science Committee, outlines the role science has played in NATO – and where it goes from here.

In the heavily divided post-World War II environment in which NATO was established, its science programme was designed to show practical cooperation across barriers of nationality, language and culture through scientific exchanges.

Initially, NATO’s Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme drew a clear distinction between supporting civilian science and NATO defence cooperation. Its work concentrated on the physical sciences. Later it took in biological, environmental and social sciences.

Following the end of the Cold War, the emphasis changed towards solidarity, stability and peace, using scientific research increasingly in diplomacy.

The programme reinvented itself in the 1990s, focusing on partnership with the Commonwealth of Independent States.

After 9/11, the objectives changed again, due to the proliferation of new technologies, the growing gap between the rich and poor, and the information revolution.

At its peak, some 10,000 scientists were involved, with over 6,000 scientists participating in over 100 NATO scientific meetings, and about 100 volumes of scientific papers were published annually. Recently, over 2,500 Fellowships have been funded for partner country scientists, and an annual prize has been established for the most prestigious and relevant research.

The NATO Science programme has had to be flexible in responding to the demands of the times. Today, its mission is to address the new threat of international terrorism, as well as modern threats.

The SPS Programme is overseen by NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) with an SPS Committee of senior scientists who advise PDD. The programme has a unique network of 57 states: 26 member States, 24 Partner nations and 7 Mediterranean nations.

In terms of results, the construction of the Virtual Silk Highway is a highly successful satellite-based regional system. It allows Internet connections for the first time in three Caucasian and five Central Asian new independent states, with one earth station per country. Afghanistan is now part of the network, which is managed by support from Germany and the EU. The SPS Committee has agreed to continue funding this important initiative.

“...
and the success of this venture has been unanimously endorsed by all NATO countries and their partners.

The NATO-SPS Programme has had to evolve from its early beginnings to the present day threats. But does it have a future? I would say – yes it does!

Why? First, because ‘security’ includes non-military threats arising from incompetent governance, corruption, organised crime, insecure borders, ethnic and religious conflict, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, shortage of natural resources and, of course, terrorism: areas where science has a key role to play.

Second, science has become central to many policies, including the demand for new assessments of the environmental impact of climate change, the need for better models of disease spread, and the provision of food security, particularly in less developed nations.

Third, the current SPS Programme provides a unique opportunity to contribute to world peace by enhancing science and innovation cooperation with all partners. It has a ‘horizon-scanning’ role raising NATO’s awareness of new challenges and opportunities, and is tasked to find solutions to new challenges primarily through non-military means.

However, more is needed to support scientific work in NATO. The science budget represents only around 5% of the total civil NATO budget. This limited funding could be used more effectively to counter international terrorism through greater collaborative efforts. But collaboration with the EU still has a low profile. So too does science in NATO – mention of it is largely missing from NATO’s key statements.

With the shift in the NATO Science Committee’s priorities towards military and defence strategies, there is a strong case for looking into how integrated public diplomacy and research/technology organisations are.

It is well over a decade since NATO’s civil science programme was reviewed by a high level team. Hopefully a new review will recognise the key role of science and technology in global security and stability, and acknowledge that fresh instruments and organisations may be needed for the twenty first century.

Further details of the programme can be accessed at www.nato.int/science/index.html.

This issue will be further debated in the forthcoming ‘Role of independent scientists in assessing the threats of WMD’ by John Finney and Ivo Slaus
The strategic environment and NATO itself has changed a lot since the current Strategic Concept was approved 10 years ago. In 1999, terrorism barely warranted a mention, NATO had not even conceived of an out-of-area mission as ambitious as Afghanistan, and our enlargement process was only beginning.

But by 2001, the Alliance had invoked Article 5 for the first time, in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September. By 2003, it had embarked on its most challenging out-of-area mission in Afghanistan.

NATO has gone on to admit ten new members, create new structures, partnerships, and initiatives such as the NATO-Russia Council. NATO keeps an ‘open door’ to new members and partners, and its relationships with neighbours and other international organisations continue to evolve.

NATO is an alliance of democracies, and the parliaments of its members are primary communication channels between NATO member country citizens and NATO’s leadership. It is parliamentarians who must often explain to their constituents why devoting scarce resources to security and risking lives of soldiers in distant operations is so important.

For those reasons, I believe the new Strategic Concept should address some of the concerns of parliamentarians of NATO states. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly is preparing its commentary on the new Strategic Concept and I have the privilege of serving as the Special Rapporteur for this project.

The new Strategic Concept will be a fundamental document that will guide the Alliance. At the same time, however, it must also be readable and express the values of the Alliance and the threats posed in clear language.
It must also set out concepts that will make the Alliance a more flexible organisation, better able to cope with emerging challenges. My comments here do not necessarily reflect the views of all of the members of the Assembly, but I believe that many, if not most, of my colleagues would share them.

Clarity of Purpose
We cannot ask our citizens to support Alliance missions unless we are clear about the purpose of the Alliance. We owe it to the general public and especially our national militaries to be clear about the challenges we face and how we plan to mitigate the risks they pose.

Any survey of literature on strategic affairs will show that there is a wide array of issues that fall under the rubric of security. Environmental concerns, terrorism, proliferation, information security, energy security and others are all cited.

There is also a solid consensus that the strategic challenges we face do not lend themselves to purely military solutions. We see this in Afghanistan, where military aspects are a necessary but insufficient component of a comprehensive solution.

The new Strategic Concept should confirm the close link between security and development and draw the necessary consequences for planning and deployment of Alliance armed forces. This link calls for the closest possible cooperation between political and military authorities in planning and execution of overseas missions. It also means encouraging closer contacts and involvement with non-governmental organisations.

Yet, ultimately NATO is a political and military alliance; we should carefully assess what NATO’s role should be in addressing specific challenges. International terrorism, for example, is a major security concern – especially the potential for the combination of extremist organisations and weapons of mass destruction. It is not clear, however, that NATO is the proper organisation to address this threat.

But as an alliance composed of democracies, we should be willing to state openly that we will protect our citizens against those who violently oppose the principles and values of our societies. We should also use NATO as a forum for exchanging information and coordinating responses in the event of an attack.

It is easy to list all of the challenges that can impact on our mutual security. It is not easy, however, to determine the key areas where NATO should play a significant role.

But this is something a new Strategic Concept must do.

If we define everything as a security challenge that NATO should address, we risk spreading the resources of the Alliance too thinly across a wide range of issues. Security challenges are potentially boundless, but resources are finite.

Parliamentarians are all too familiar with the limits on resources. Therefore,
focusing NATO on what it can do well – planning, training and conducting military operations, as well as performing humanitarian and civil emergency response missions – will be an important task of the new Strategic Concept.

We need to appreciate that NATO cannot be all things to all people, but rather serve as an important cornerstone.

**Flexibility and Growth**

One area where there should be no controversy is the development of military capabilities for the missions we face as an alliance.

Some analysts have presented this as a trade-off between territorial defence and expeditionary capability. Yet, it is not necessarily true that being prepared to deter the use of military force in Europe and being prepared to manage security challenges in distant locations are missions in direct competition with each other.

Regardless of whether our forces are deployed 100 or 5,000 kilometres from their home base, they still need all of the most effective communications, surveillance and other equipment. They need the ability to move quickly and be protected against hostile fire. Perhaps most importantly, they must receive the training to cope with a wide variety of potential situations.

We should also consider making NATO decision making structures more flexible and responsive. The North Atlantic Council and the Military Committee are separate entities, but a merger could significantly streamline the decision making process.

At the same time, consensus is central in the Alliance decision making process, and it should remain at the core of how it makes big decisions. But is consensus necessary at every level and could we benefit from an alternate process on less significant matters? This issue will only become more salient as the Alliance grows, and as our interaction grows with other international actors such as the European Union and the United Nations.

The growth of the Alliance also deserves some consideration. In the near future we will welcome two new members: Albania and Croatia. At the Bucharest summit we collectively declared that Georgia and Ukraine would become members at some time in the future. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly has offered strong support for the rapid and broad enlargement of the Alliance.

Nevertheless, we must soon face the fact that the Alliance has treaty-based limits. Article 10 clearly states that any European state may join the Alliance, but there are increasingly few European states that are not members of the Alliance. At some point, we must decide if that geographic limit is still appropriate and, if not, what implications that has for the future of the Alliance.

**Looking to the Future**

The strategic environment has changed dramatically. It is time for a new Strategic Concept.

The key to NATO’s longevity is precisely that it has proven to be an adaptable organisation that maintains its relevance. To ensure that this continues, a new Strategic Concept needs to clearly state the purpose of the Alliance and guide it into the coming decades.

Jan Petersen is a former Foreign Minister of Norway and is currently Special Rapporteur for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly’s contribution to the Strategic Concept.
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