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**THESIS**

**THE NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES  
TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE: OPPORTUNITIES AND  
CHALLENGES**

by

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March 2009

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**THE NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES TRANSFORMATION  
INITIATIVE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989-1991, NATO has engaged more extensively in expeditionary operations designed to establish and maintain stability in war-torn countries. From the Balkans to Afghanistan, NATO's special operations shortfall has been illuminated. At the Riga Summit in November 2006, NATO leaders decided to develop an Alliance special operations capability. The NATO Special Operations Forces Transformation Initiative (NSTI) was agreed upon as the means by which the Allies would improve such capabilities. This thesis investigates the extent to which NATO requires robust special operations capabilities similar to U.S. capabilities in order to respond to current and future threats. Because threats in the post-11 September 2001 environment are largely unconventional, NATO must develop a capability that can meet these threats in kind. The need to face and overcome unconventional adversaries is likely to increase as the scope of NATO's military operations extends to areas far from its traditional geopolitical space. This thesis concludes that the NSTI's objective—to enhance the special operations capabilities of the Allies—is well-founded and should be properly funded and supported by appropriate command arrangements.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. OVERVIEW

An apparent shortfall in the Alliance's Special Operations Forces (SOF) capability was illuminated during operations in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. A few Allies employed SOF unilaterally and completely outside the realm of NATO's Command and Control (C2) structure. More recently, since 2003, the Alliance has led the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and operations in this country have illuminated the SOF shortfall even further as the local security environment has deteriorated.

At the Riga Summit in November 2006, NATO leaders decided to develop an Alliance special operations capability. The NATO Special Operations Forces Transformation Initiative (NSTI) was agreed upon as the means by which the Allies would improve SOF capabilities throughout the Alliance.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Paul Gallis, "At Riga, the allies launched an initiative to develop a core of available SOF, which they might call upon for operations. NATO is attempting to build forces for irregular, counter-insurgency warfare, for which SOF are well-suited."<sup>2</sup> However, in light of the capabilities gaps among the contributing Allies and NATO's burden-sharing philosophy in military operations, there are obvious shortcomings in meeting SOF requirements which must be addressed if NSTI is to be successful.

In 2007, General James Jones, USMC, a former Supreme Allied Commander-Europe (SACEUR), wrote that "today's convergence of multiple unconventional threats

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<sup>1</sup> GEN Bantz J. Craddock, "Statement Before the House Armed Services Committee," 15 March 2007 [http://www.eucom.mil/english/command/posture/HASC%20-%20Craddock\\_Testimony031507.pdf](http://www.eucom.mil/english/command/posture/HASC%20-%20Craddock_Testimony031507.pdf) (accessed 22 July 2008). For specific language regarding NSTI see Item 24, "Riga Summit Declaration," *NATO Press Releases*, 29 November 2006, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm> (accessed 15 August 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gallis, "The NATO Summit at Riga, 2006," *CRS Report for Congress*, RS22529, 20 December 2006.

across the strategic continuum requires a new focus on transforming the unconventional aspects of Alliance military capability.”<sup>3</sup> While unconventional and asymmetric threats such as terrorism persist in the current period, some may wonder why NATO requires a SOF capability when each member state of the Alliance has national law enforcement capabilities that are responsible for confronting asymmetric threats. This fact was demonstrated in May 2008 when law enforcement agencies from three NATO European nations—France, Germany and the Netherlands—conducted coordinated counterterrorism (CT) operations, which resulted in the arrest of 10 individuals with ties to al-Qaeda.<sup>4</sup> This was but one of a number of CT operations that have been conducted in Europe by national law enforcement personnel, and it raises many questions about the actual requirement that NATO has for SOF. To what extent are NATO SOF necessary? What roles and missions should they have? What specific threats does NATO believe cannot be addressed by current law enforcement and conventional military forces and therefore require the development of a special operations capability? Is the strategic value inherent to SOF a tool that NATO intends to use in achieving objectives in the global security environment?

## **B. HYPOTHESIS**

This thesis investigates the hypothesis that NATO requires SOF capabilities that parallel U.S. SOF capabilities to respond to current and future threats. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989-1991, NATO has engaged more extensively in expeditionary operations designed to establish and maintain stability in distant countries, as opposed to the original institutional purpose of collective defense as defined by Articles 5 and 6 of

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<sup>3</sup> James L. Jones, “A Blueprint for Change: Transforming NATO Special Operations,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 45 (2d Qtr 2007), 37 [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq\\_pages/editions/i45/11.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i45/11.pdf) (accessed 7 July 2008).

<sup>4</sup> John Leicester, Associated Press, “10 arrested in France, Germany, Netherlands in terror probe,” *The Boston Globe*, [http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2008/05/17/10\\_arrested\\_in\\_france\\_germany\\_netherlands\\_in\\_terror\\_probe/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2008/05/17/10_arrested_in_france_germany_netherlands_in_terror_probe/) (accessed 21 July 2008).

the North Atlantic Treaty.<sup>5</sup> Because security threats in the post-11 September 2001 environment are largely asymmetric and unconventional, NATO must develop a military capability that can meet these threats in kind and achieve decisive superiority over them swiftly and with minimal adverse impact to Alliance members. This thesis identifies tasks and missions that are ideally suited to the specialized military operations that only SOF can conduct, as well as the operations that should be the responsibility of conventional military forces and national law enforcement agencies. As the scope of NATO's military operations extends to areas farther away from its traditional Euro-Atlantic area, the need to face and overcome asymmetric and unconventional adversaries is likely to increase.

This thesis also analyzes the potential for Alliance members to contribute to NATO SOF, given the fact that the SOF capabilities of many countries in the Alliance are less robust than those of the United States. SOF in each Alliance member are organized based on requirements determined by the member nation itself, irrespective of potential strategic designs that NATO may have. With that in mind, it may be assumed that the tasks and missions expected of Allies contributing to the NSTI may be beyond their capabilities, and that additional tasks and missions may be limited solely to Alliance members with robust and highly capable SOF that are well-trained in all facets of SOF roles and missions.

### **C. IMPORTANCE**

As the name implies, SOF are forces that are capable of accomplishing missions that conventional military forces are not manned, trained, equipped, or expected to undertake. Such forces would provide NATO vastly improved capabilities to respond to combat and crisis contingencies wherever they may arise, and to eliminate the potential for crises to emerge at all. These forces can, if properly tasked and employed, yield strategic benefits to the Alliance in pursuit of its political objectives. Yet political factors may act as a constraint in practice as a result of the luxury each Alliance member has in

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<sup>5</sup> "The North Atlantic Treaty," *NATO E-Library*, 4 April 1949, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/treaty.htm> (accessed 22 August 2008).

limiting the roles that its forces play in NATO operations. National caveats, red cards, and selective contributions have the potential to negate any benefits NATO SOF may provide.

There is also the issue of consensus in the Alliance. The NATO decision-making process is based on consensus among Alliance members in the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which is a body composed of representatives of the Alliance members. This arrangement lends itself to delays, which could severely limit the effectiveness of SOF, particularly in crisis situations where time is of the essence. For NATO SOF to be effective, NATO governments might have to devise an exemption to the standard decision making process—perhaps a pre-delegation of operational authority to SACEUR in certain contingencies. Even the NATO Response Force (NRF), designed to be NATO’s “rapid response in the initial phase of a crisis situation,” cannot deploy in less than five days, currently has limited dedicated SOF capability, and requires the authorization of the NAC in order to mobilize.<sup>6</sup>

NATO’s relevance in the global security environment of the 21st century cannot be over-emphasized. The Alliance’s performance in Afghanistan is being watched closely and debated by Allies and non-allies alike. The key issues include the potential for success, exit criteria, and responsibilities in bringing peace to a distant country at the expense of national blood and treasure. Global security challenges require a capability to respond globally; and asymmetric or unconventional threats demand specialized forces that are manned, trained and equipped to confront and overcome them.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature about the theory and employment of SOF is vast. Similarly, the literature about NATO strategy and transformation is extensive. However, literature which bridges the two subjects is sparse.

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<sup>6</sup> “NATO Response Force - NRF,” *Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Allied Command Operations*, [http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/shape\\_nrf/nrf\\_intro.htm](http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/shape_nrf/nrf_intro.htm) (accessed 20 July 2008).

The 1990s witnessed a dramatic change in NATO's focus as the Alliance intervened in the conflicts in the Balkans. It was the first time the collective defense Alliance engaged in military operations outside the geographic boundaries of its member states. It also served as a benchmark for the Alliance's future strategy that expanded beyond collective defense, a mission that has never been abandoned, toward strategic engagement in support of broader security objectives shared by the Alliance members. In his treatise on the evolving role of NATO, David Yost noted that the contemporary role of the Alliance is one in which the collective defense responsibilities are retained, while greater attention is devoted to collective security requirements.<sup>7</sup> This is done via two new Alliance roles. The first is through "cooperation with former adversaries and non-Allies" and the second is "crisis management and peace operations." The latter involves what Yost terms "security against an extension of war beyond manageable limits."<sup>8</sup>

NATO has revised its Strategic Concept twice in the wake of the Cold War. While the current Strategic Concept notes NATO's indispensable role in "meeting current and future security challenges," it was written in 1999 and does not directly address security challenges conceivable in the current post-11 September 2001 environment. In fact, in February 2007, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer highlighted the need to address 21st century security issues and "enshrine them in our guiding documents so that they are implemented in practice."<sup>9</sup> De Hoop Scheffer did not explicitly identify the threats that he had in mind, but it can be assumed, in light of the NAC's subsequent communiqués, that they include unconventional and asymmetric challenges, and will most likely call for expeditionary operations in distant lands as well as within Europe.

As a force, SOF have great strategic value, but with inherent risks. For example, Eliot Cohen highlighted the potential for SOF to become politicized and to develop an

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<sup>7</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 270.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>9</sup> Reuters, "NATO Chief Calls for New 'Strategic Concept'," *International Herald Tribune*, 11 February 2007 <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/02/11/news/nato.php> (accessed 27 August 2008).

agenda of their own.<sup>10</sup> In an environment such as NATO, there is some potential for SOF to become instruments of national policies, and this might prove counterproductive to NATO's greater objectives. John Borawski and Thomas-Durell Young support this statement in writing that 21st century NATO priorities, force structures and command arrangements "must conform less to national and allied politics than to military exigency."<sup>11</sup> National rivalries and bottlenecks such as the committee consensus model described above are perfect examples of the potential obstacles to effective use of SOF in NATO.

Thomas Adams quotes Defense Department definitions which characterize doctrine as consisting of the "Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application."<sup>12</sup> Hy Rothstein notes that doctrine must "adapt to both the grand strategy of the state and the threats" it faces if it is to enhance the state's security, and notes the improbability of a state facing just one threat.<sup>13</sup> In an organization such as NATO, a complex marriage of national and inter-governmental politics, that fact is magnified exponentially. In fact, after his departure from the SACEUR position, General Jones noted that the consensus decision-making model had become standard in the approximately 350 NATO committees. This tended to reduce the Alliance's ability to agree on issues to a "slow and painful" process. Moreover, General Jones said, military decisions were becoming excessively influenced by political considerations, further exacerbating the problem.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Eliot Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for International Affairs, 1978), 53-80.

<sup>11</sup> John Borawski and Thomas-Durell Young, *NATO After 2000: The Future of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), ix.

<sup>12</sup> Adams, 13. Adams cites the *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1987), 118.

<sup>13</sup> Hy S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), xiv.

<sup>14</sup> David S. Yost, "An Interview with General James L. Jones, USMC, Retired, Supreme Allied Commander Europe," NATO Defense College Research Paper, 34 (January 2008), 3-4, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp\\_34.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp_34.pdf) (accessed 26 August 2008).

Thomas Adams refers to Clausewitz's famous saying that "war is the continuation of politics by other means" as he explains the relationship between war and politics. He notes that there is an area of overlap between the two that is "contentious and poorly-defined." He contends that this area is the realm of SOF, and that it is specifically known as unconventional warfare (UW).<sup>15</sup> The very name "unconventional warfare" implies that it differs from the tasks expected of general purpose (or conventional) forces, and includes a wide range of tasks that are well outside what such forces are expected to achieve. The greatest benefit of UW lies in the ability to shape the political-military and psychological environments in an adversary or target country toward the overall objectives of the nation conducting the operations.

Christopher Lamb and David Tucker highlight the absence of a codified examination of the strategic value of SOF, but note that there are a few examples. They argue that, as national strategic interests differ, so too must the emphasis placed on the different SOF missions and capabilities in support of them.<sup>16</sup> It can be argued that the most significant benefit of having SOF in NATO will reside in their strategic value to the Alliance. Thoughtful analyses of the strategic value of SOF caution that SOF should not be employed to perform inappropriate, non-specialized tactical tasks that could and should be the responsibility of conventional forces.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to have a clear understanding of the core tasks and capabilities of SOF. Certainly, these tasks and capabilities vary by nation and correspond to national priorities, strategy and resource availability. Published U.S. doctrine provides comprehensive details about the core tasks of U.S. SOF. NATO doctrine defines core tasks as well, but the focus of expected NATO SOF core tasks is narrower than that in

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 18.

<sup>16</sup> David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *U.S. Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 144-145.

<sup>17</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), chapter 7. For further analyses on the strategic use of SOF, see John Arquilla, *From Troy to Entebbe: Special Operations in Ancient and Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996). Arquilla refers to the strategic use of SOF in his introduction. Tucker and Lamb go into great detail about the strategic value of SOF in chapters 5 and 6 of their book, cited above.

U.S. doctrine. Moreover, experts such as Colin Gray, Thomas Adams, David Tucker, Christopher Lamb, David Gompert, and Raymond Smith have contributed greatly to understanding the subject.

The United States has the broadest and most capable SOF complement in the Alliance, and U.S. SOF are able to respond to virtually any contingency across the spectrum of SOF missions. However, not all Alliance members are able to provide SOF that meet the same mission standards set for U.S. SOF. David Gompert and Raymond Smith provide an examination of Alliance capabilities by nation, and thereby indirectly identify gaps in SOF capability that must be filled. These data are critical as they facilitate analytical determination of the SOF capabilities that must be developed by Alliance members or deemed unnecessary as a core competency for NATO SOF.<sup>18</sup> This thesis critically examines several works about the roles and missions of SOF in general, and compares them to the tasks that the Allies expect their SOF to be able to accomplish. Additional examination of the tasks that NATO SOF should be realistically expected to perform separates what is practical from unrealistic expectations, given the transformation of the Alliance and the resident conventional military and law enforcement capabilities.

NATO has written SOF doctrine in Allied Joint Publication-3.5 (AJP-3.5), *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, which is currently in ratification draft status. The document outlines specific roles and missions that NATO SOF should be expected to perform. The framework of the document appears to be based on that of U.S. Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*. In fact, four of the chapters are parallel. The NATO doctrine adds an extra chapter outlining the integration of SOF and conventional forces. However, the NATO doctrine does not address UW as an expected core competency for Alliance SOF, a fact that seems to be disconnected from the strategic value that SOF offer.

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<sup>18</sup> David C. Gompert and Raymond C. Smith, "Creating a NATO Special Operations Force," *Defense Horizons*, 52 (2006), 3. [http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense\\_horizons/DH\\_52.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense_horizons/DH_52.pdf) (accessed 4 July 2008).

## E. METHODOLOGY

To assess NATO's requirements for SOF, this thesis first examines NATO's strategic vision to better understand the Alliance's perception of the security environment that it will face in the next decade. NATO's strategic documents, including the 1999 Strategic Concept, provide the Alliance's guidance and philosophy about the employment of its armed forces, and serve as the starting point from which to determine whether the Alliance's vision is appropriate for the next decade's security challenges. NATO's vision of future military operations has evolved to encompass expeditionary missions as a result of the radical changes in global security concerns since the most recent Strategic Concept was published in 1999. Given the dynamic security environment in which NATO is currently engaged, and will certainly continue to face in the next decade and beyond, it is important to determine what role the Alliance's nascent SOF will be required to fill as part of the NSTI. Beyond the security challenges that NATO faces, political machinations, red cards, caveats and consensus-formation problems have the potential to diminish the NSTI's presumed benefits.

This thesis then takes the next step in determining perceived threats to the Alliance by using posture-relevant statements from Alliance strategic documents and an assessment of the threats facing NATO today, as well as those that the Alliance stands to face in the next decade. Each Ally prioritizes its development of national capabilities to meet the threats that it perceives as most significant. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, each European Ally perceives transnational and/or asymmetric threats as most salient.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis then undertakes an analysis of SOF competencies; that is, the roles and missions that SOF are trained, equipped and expected to perform better than other forces, as well as Alliance member states' current SOF capabilities, and NATO SOF doctrine.

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<sup>19</sup> *European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations*, ed. Bastian Giegerich and Alexander Nicoll (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008), 31-39. Table 3.1 describes the perceived threats and priorities for 41 NATO and non-NATO European countries.

This thesis also considers which tasks are best suited for SOF in NATO, and which are best suited for conventional military forces and national law enforcement agencies.

Finally, this thesis examines the hypothesis that NATO governments agreed to the NSTI because they recognized that their abilities to address certain security requirements, not only within Alliance countries but beyond their borders as well, are inadequate. This is particularly true in light of the fact that NATO is resolved to conduct military operations in distant countries such as Afghanistan. On the basis of these assessments, this thesis analyzes which missions NATO SOF are best suited for in NATO's security environment and examines capabilities, limitations, challenges and opportunities for NATO SOF.

## **F. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II examines NATO's strategic vision to better understand the Alliance's perception of the security environment it will face in the next decade. Chapter III examines contemporary threats and security concerns that should drive NATO requirements for SOF. Chapter IV discusses NATO's current capability to respond to the threats it faces, and the potential roles and missions of SOF to that end. Chapter V sums up conclusions regarding the significant opportunities and challenges facing the NSTI, and provides an assessment of the best employment strategies for NATO SOF.

## II. NATO GRAND STRATEGY: EXAMINING THE ALLIANCE'S VISION FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SECURITY

### A. OVERVIEW

From 1949 until 1991, NATO served to ensure that the Soviet Union did not attempt to encroach westward. The collective defense of Alliance members was the foundation upon which tyranny was to be deterred. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, NATO remained, having emerged victorious from the Cold War, but the Alliance's continued focus on collective defense was supplemented by a security strategy that included larger security objectives encompassing all of the Euro-Atlantic region.<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing the need to adapt to a dramatically changing security environment, NATO leaders began crafting a new strategy. Published in November 1991, the Strategic Concept outlined the post-Cold War vision for the Alliance in conjunction with a continuing hedge against the residual risk of Soviet aggression or coercion. In the mid-to-late 1990s Russian reactions to NATO enlargement, combined with the lessons learned in the wake of the conflicts in the Balkans, necessitated a review of the Strategic Concept. As a result, the most recent NATO Strategic Concept was published in 1999. However, that document was written in the pre-11 September 2001 environment and does not accurately reflect the transformation that NATO has undergone since its publication. In spite of NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's calls to develop a new Strategic Concept, the document has not been revised to reflect the new security environment.<sup>21</sup> The lack of response by the Alliance could be a result of disagreement

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<sup>20</sup> The Euro-Atlantic region is defined as the territory of all the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe countries. This territory encompasses Canada and the United States, Europe, Turkey, and the former Soviet Union, including Siberian Russia and the former Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia. This definition is cited in David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, "Beyond the Bucharest Summit," *Speech at Brussels Forum*, NATO Opinions Online, 15 March 2008, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2008/s080315a.html> (accessed 1 October 2008). Earlier calls for revision of the Strategic Concept by the NATO Secretary General are cited by Reuters, "NATO Chief Calls for New 'Strategic Concept'," *International Herald Tribune*, 11 February 2007, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/02/11/news/nato.php> (accessed 27 August 2008).

among the Allies about the relevance of the 1999 version, or a result of NATO's inability to develop "sufficient consensus for collective action" until faced by an actual crisis.<sup>22</sup>

NATO's military operations in the 1999 Kosovo conflict marked a turning point for the Alliance as it was the first time that NATO forces had been employed in combat operations outside its geographic boundaries without a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, seemingly in contradiction to the UN Charter and the North Atlantic Treaty. Since then, NATO has undertaken more operations in distant lands. This chapter examines NATO's vision for future military operations in an expeditionary posture, given the radical change in global security concerns since the most recent Strategic Concept was published in 1999. The aim is to determine what roles the Alliance's nascent Special Operations Forces (SOF) will be required to fill as part of the NATO SOF Transformation Initiative (NSTI), given the dynamic security environment in which NATO is currently engaged, and will certainly continue to face in the next decade and beyond. The overarching strategy documents this chapter analyzes are NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept, the 2004 Strategic Vision document, NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism, and NATO's Comprehensive Political Guidance. These documents provide the Alliance's guidance and philosophy about the employment of NATO armed forces, and serve as the starting point from which to determine whether the Alliance's vision is appropriate for the next decade's security challenges.

## **B. NATO'S SECURITY VISION**

### **1. The 1999 Strategic Concept**

The 1999 Strategic Concept builds upon its predecessor and specifies elements of NATO's "broad approach to security" in the twenty-first century, while describing the new security environment it faces.<sup>23</sup> The document points to issues such as terrorism,

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<sup>22</sup> Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis, *European Security Institutions: Ready for the Twenty-First Century?* (Dulles, VA: Brasseys, Inc., 2000), 20.

<sup>23</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," *NATO Press Release, Washington Summit, 24 April 1999*, par. 5, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> (accessed 7 September 2008).

sabotage and organized crime, disruption of the flow of vital resources and the uncontrolled movement of large numbers of people as threatening to the Alliance's security interests.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, instabilities in countries peripheral to Allies caused by "economic, social and political difficulties," or "ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, and the dissolution of states" are cited as potential crises which could in some circumstances necessitate NATO intervention.<sup>25</sup> In referring to strategy, the *NATO Handbook* notes that the most significant security challenges that the Alliance faces in the contemporary period are "ethnic conflict, the abuse of human rights, political instability, economic fragility, terrorism and the spread of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and their means of delivery."<sup>26</sup> The strategic environment described is indeed broad, and the breadth may bring uncertainty and misunderstanding, particularly regarding the use of force in non-Article 5 (NA5) operations. For example, NATO's mission in Afghanistan could be characterized as responsive to a number of the security concerns mentioned in the Strategic Concept, including terrorism, but none provides true specificity. The absence of specifics could create points of contention and confusion among Allies, particularly in the event that consensus must be reached in short order to avert a major crisis.

In referring to force posturing, the document points out that "the forces of the Alliance must continue to be adapted to meet the requirements of the full range of Alliance missions effectively and to respond to future challenges."<sup>27</sup> However, nowhere in the document is it written that NATO forces should be postured to conduct expeditionary operations, although the document does make the distinction between traditional collective defense outlined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and NA5

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<sup>24</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," par. 24.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 20.

<sup>26</sup> "The Strategic Concept of the Alliance," *NATO Handbook, Chapter 2: The Transformation of the Alliance*, NATO Publications Online, 8 October 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb0203.htm> (accessed 7 September 2008).

<sup>27</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," par. 51.

operations in noting that NATO forces must be prepared to respond to both missions.<sup>28</sup> Jamie Shea, NATO's Director of Policy Planning, suggests that the Alliance will have to seriously discuss its future strategic policy with regard to what has been called "the new Article 5" or "collective defense without borders."<sup>29</sup> This line of reasoning is consistent with NATO's need to decide, in both political and military terms, how involved it should be as an alliance in expeditionary missions, particularly when some Allies feel that specific potential crises could adversely impact their national security. As Shea points out, "defense of populations is now no longer the same thing as defense of territory."<sup>30</sup>

Opinions supporting and opposing an update of the Strategic Concept have been widely published in recent years. Support has come most notably from NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel. She notes the obvious shortcomings in having an Alliance strategy that predates "the terrorist challenges we face today."<sup>31</sup> On the opposite side, concern was expressed in 2005 that a new Strategic Concept review could be ill-timed as a result of tensions and disagreements among the Allies regarding the legitimate use of force in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.<sup>32</sup> Since then, the political recriminations among the Allies that caused apprehension about undertaking a Strategic Concept review have abated somewhat, and calls for such an exercise have come more frequently.

Since the 1999 Strategic Concept was written, NATO has taken part in military operations outside its geographic boundaries (in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Darfur), in military operations without a UN Security Council mandate (Kosovo), and in military

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<sup>28</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," par. 47.

<sup>29</sup> Jamie Shea, "A NATO for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Toward a New Strategic Concept," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 31, 2 (2007), 53. <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/forum/archives/pdfs/31-2pdfs/Shea.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2008).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>31</sup> Angela Merkel, *Address at Opening Ceremony of 54<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 10 November 2008, <http://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Content/EN/Reden/2008/11/2008-11-10-rede-merkel-dt-atlantische-gesellschaft.html> (accessed 20 November 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Pro and con arguments regarding the need to update the Strategic Concept can be found in "Debate: Is it Time to Update the Strategic Concept?" *NATO Review*, Autumn 2005, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/debate.html> (accessed 18 November 2008).

operations featuring combat and state-building capacity simultaneously (Afghanistan). These operations are evidence of NATO's transformation toward a more flexible and agile force, and are demonstrative of the Alliance's changing view toward a more globally-focused security posture. In light of this evolution, it stands to reason that the Strategic Concept should reflect how the Alliance employs its military forces now, and how it plans to do so in the foreseeable future. The Allies may decide to commission a new Strategic Concept review at the Strasbourg-Kehl summit meeting in April 2009.

## **2. The Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism**

In the weeks following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States and the subsequent invoking of Article 5, Alliance Defense Ministers agreed that a strategy must be developed to defend against terrorism. As a result, NATO's military leadership developed the Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism based on existing strategic guidance and the Alliance's terrorism threat assessment. This document was the first in the post-Cold War era that outlined the potential use of force outside NATO's geographic boundaries "by acting against these terrorists and those who harbor them."<sup>33</sup> The premise of preventive or pre-emptive action contradicts NATO's traditional collective defense philosophy that had its genesis in the Cold War and was based upon resisting and repelling the invading communist hordes. In fact, the Military Concept delineates between offensive (counterterrorism—CT) and defensive (anti-terrorism) operations.<sup>34</sup> This delineation is also a break with traditional European approaches to terrorism as falling within the domain of law enforcement agencies. However, the document stipulates that NATO forces will act within the Alliance's geographic boundaries only if requested to do so, and that the nation conducting domestic CT maintains primary responsibility.

As far as offensive military operations against terrorists and their sponsors are concerned, the Military Concept categorizes NATO's involvement as being either in the

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<sup>33</sup> "NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism," *NATO International Military Staff*, October 2003 (updated 14 April 2005), <http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/terrorism.htm> (accessed 9 July 2008).

<sup>34</sup> "NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism."

lead or in a supporting role. The document expresses the Alliance's first public leaning toward the development of a SOF capability when it states that planning for counterterrorism operations recognizes "the need for more specialized anti-terrorist forces."<sup>35</sup> By and large, general purpose military forces are not trained or equipped to engage in these types of operations, though there are exceptions to the rule (e.g., British forces in Northern Ireland). However, SOF experts David Gompert and Raymond Smith write that "generally speaking, SOF are more useful than regular military forces for finding and eliminating terrorists" and cite examples of SOF CT operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines to support their view.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to outlining the need for specialized forces, the Military Concept outlines the need to take advantage of core capabilities that are inherent to U.S. SOF, such as Psychological Operations and Information Operations in order to maximize the leverage that these capabilities provide in gaining the support of local populations. Paradoxically, these core capabilities are not considered part of the doctrinal skill set for NATO SOF under NSTI.<sup>37</sup> The Military Concept does not state where this capability should reside, nor the means by which it should be employed. The omission of such a vital detail in this and other strategy documents appears to be a glaring oversight, but it probably reflects the difficulties encountered by the Allies in reaching consensus on this document. As experts on the Alliance have pointed out, the Allies have sometimes approved vague wording in order to achieve consensus.

It should also be noted that the Military Concept requires that the decision-making process in NATO be "as effective and timely as possible" so that the concept can be implemented effectively in situations that feature little or no advance warning to "deter

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<sup>35</sup> "NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism."

<sup>36</sup> David C. Gompert and Raymond C. Smith, "Creating a NATO Special Operations Force," *Defense Horizons*, 52 (March 2006), 3, [http://www.ndu.edu/CTNSP/defense\\_horizons/DH\\_52.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/CTNSP/defense_horizons/DH_52.pdf) (accessed 3 July 2008).

<sup>37</sup> "Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations, AJP-3.5, Ratification Draft 1" *NATO*, 2008 <https://nsa.nato.int/protected/unclass/ap/Dr%20AP/AJP-3.5%20RD1.pdf> (available with account access only; accessed 11 August 2008). The proposed set of principal tasks for NATO SOF forces is outlined in Chapter 2 of this document. For a complete statement of U.S. SOF tasks, see "Joint Publication 3-05: Doctrine for Joint Special Operations," *Department of Defense, The Joint Staff*, 17 December 2003, Chapter II, Figure II-2, Page II-5.

terrorist attacks or to prevent their occurrence.”<sup>38</sup> Because NATO’s current political and military structures are built upon a consensus model, success in this regard may be scenario-dependent. The Military Concept concludes by stating that the Alliance must “be prepared to conduct military operations” in its CT role “as and where required” when determined by the North Atlantic Council (NAC).<sup>39</sup> Such concrete commitment of NATO forces to a globally-focused strategy was previously expressed in NAC communiqués at the ministerial meeting in Reykjavik in May 2002 and at the summit meeting in Prague in November 2002.<sup>40</sup>

The Military Concept’s wording implies a need to adopt a more expeditionary and proactive posture with regard to combating terrorism than NATO has practiced at any point in the history of the Alliance. In practice, such a posture may prove infeasible given the political relations among Allies and the attitudes toward expeditionary CT missions. Moreover, the Allies would have to surmount the problem that French scholar Guillaume Parmentier has characterized as NATO’s political and military arms both “trying to do the other’s job.”<sup>41</sup> To put it more bluntly, in the absence of an immediate contingency (such as the 11 September 2001 attacks or the Madrid and London bombings), NATO will continue to suffer decision-making maladies in combating terrorism which are caused by differing views among the Allies about how the problem should be addressed.

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<sup>38</sup> “NATO’s Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism.”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Statements regarding the employment of NATO forces wherever and whenever necessary can be found in the NAC communiqués following the 2002 Reykjavik ministerial meeting <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-059e.htm> and the 2002 Prague summit meeting <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm> (accessed 4 September 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Guillaume Parmentier, Comments given at the “Future of Transatlantic Security Relations” Conference, captured in *The Future of Transatlantic Security Relations: A Colloquium Report*, ed. Dr. Joseph R. Cerami, Lieutenant General (USA, Ret) Richard A. Chilcoat, Patrick B Baetjer, Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, September 2006, 15, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB725.pdf> (accessed 2 September 2008).

### 3. The 2004 Strategic Vision Document

Recent NATO operations far from home have demonstrated the Allies' willingness to act in support of collective security on a global basis. This is consistent with *Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge*, a document written in 2004 by General James L. Jones, USMC, and Admiral E.P. Giambastiani, USN, who were then serving as SACEUR and Supreme Allied Commander-Transformation (SAC-T) respectively—NATO's top military commanders. Though written to express the views of NATO's top two military leaders rather than as a statement of Alliance policy, the document has nevertheless received a great deal of attention in NATO military circles. The authors hold that “the Alliance will respond militarily more frequently in addressing global threats to its interests” in a security environment that calls for greater flexibility to combat current and future asymmetric challenges.<sup>42</sup> They specifically cite several elements of the new security environment that may directly impact NATO's military posturing: “globalization, the increasing sophistication of asymmetric warfare, the effects of changing demography and environment, failing states, radical ideologies and unresolved conflicts.”<sup>43</sup> For the most part, these security concerns overlap with those cited in the Strategic Concept, but the document provides a level of detail that is more specific about the potential that these issues have to spur NATO forces into action.

The Strategic Vision document is pragmatic about military intervention in a world that may see a destabilized security situation with little or no forewarning. The document states that asymmetric threats “constitute the most immediate security risk” to the Alliance as a result of the ability of adversaries to develop unconventional means of “direct and indirect attack.”<sup>44</sup> The U.S. officers serving as SACEUR and SAC-T called for structural change, noting that forces “must be expeditionary in character and design” as well as capable of operating in smaller numbers and in concurrent and protracted

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<sup>42</sup> General James L. Jones and Admiral E.P. Giambastiani, “Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge,” *NATO Defence College Publications*, August 2004, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/sc/stratvis0804.pdf> (accessed 7 October 2008), iii.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

operations “at some distance from home bases.”<sup>45</sup> While some may point to NATO’s ISAF role as an example of a more expeditionary force, Jamie Shea holds that “The major challenge for NATO, then, is to determine how it wishes to define itself in the future as an organizer and facilitator of expeditionary missions beyond its territory.”<sup>46</sup> But having an expeditionary force is not enough to counter asymmetric threats effectively. The forces must have sufficient specialized manning, training, and equipment, which is traditional in SOF, to confront and overcome asymmetric threats.

From a strategy standpoint, the Strategic Vision document makes significant strides toward defining what role NATO’s military forces should adopt. It clearly outlines the security concerns and destabilizing effects that have become predominant in the current era, and points to the need to maintain the Article 5 requirements of high-intensity conflict that dominated the Cold War period. Additionally, the document provides greater granularity about the security environment through the eyes of the two top Alliance military leaders, and points to the need to maintain all the instruments of the Alliance’s power—diplomatic, informational, military and economic—as part of an integrated strategy to face and overcome these security challenges. This opinion is echoed in the Atlantic Council’s *NATO’s Role in Confronting International Terrorism* study which outlines the importance of overcoming differences between the United States and its European Allies in defining the Alliance’s CT role, specifically pointing to the “need to think and act in terms of a long-term strategy combining the whole range of policy instruments that are relevant” in combating terrorism.<sup>47</sup>

#### **4. Comprehensive Political Guidance**

When the NATO heads of state and government met in Riga in November 2006, they resolved to establish a framework for Alliance priorities in “capability issues,

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<sup>45</sup> Jones and Giambastiani, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Shea, 53.

<sup>47</sup> “NATO’s Role in Confronting International Terrorism,” 10.

planning disciplines and intelligence.”<sup>48</sup> In the strategic context in which this document was written, NATO leaders agreed that terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are the two “principal threats” the Alliance faces.<sup>49</sup> The Comprehensive Political Guidance builds upon many of the ideas captured in previous strategic documents and goes even further in stating a need for forces that are flexible, expeditionary, and able to rapidly respond to a variety of security concerns.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, the document reaffirms the strategy outlined in the 1999 Strategic Concept and insists upon the consensus decision-making process in determining when to intervene militarily, including in NA5 operations. These two premises may entail a significant contradiction which must be resolved if the Comprehensive Political Guidance is to be used as a pillar in NATO’s strategic vision. Decisions by consensus, as far as NATO is concerned, are not traditionally known as being rapid or flexible.

NATO’s history has shown that reaching political consensus can be challenging under the most favorable circumstances. The attacks of 11 September 2001 had a unifying effect on the Alliance and led to the swift invocation of Article 5. However, decisions to deploy military forces in an expeditionary fashion will not always be so definitive. Persuading NATO members to decide to act may be difficult in some contingencies. As the alliance enlarges and the missions become less consistent with each Ally’s security strategy and domestic political environment, there will likely be more and more hurdles in reaching consensus. Operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Darfur were, by and large, clear cut cases in which there was little controversy among the Allies about the need to conduct military operations, though there was sharp disagreement within the Alliance about the extent and nature of the operations. Ultimately, consensus was reached that the Alliance needed to intervene in resolving

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<sup>48</sup> “Comprehensive Political Guidance,” *NATO Online Library*, 29 November 2006 (updated 5 November 2007), par. 1, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b061129e.htm> (accessed 15 October 2008).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 10.

those crises in spite of the fact that operations were to be conducted outside NATO's geographic boundaries, and in the case of Kosovo, without a UN Security Council mandate.

While not ignoring the lessons offered by NATO's post-Cold War military operations, it is important to understand what the Comprehensive Political Guidance aims to achieve. An examination of the current political guidance with respect to military operations helps to determine how best to avoid problems in reaching consensus with respect to NATO's future security environment. The document offers some detail about what is expected of the Alliance militarily. There are 10 broad-brush capability requirements meant to prompt significant Alliance transformation across the spectrum of conflict, to include operations not previously given great emphasis such as the ability to undertake "combat, stabilization, reconstruction, reconciliation and humanitarian activities simultaneously."<sup>51</sup> This declaration is the most significant publicly-available guidance written in the post-Cold War era regarding how the Allies should design the forces that they contribute to NATO operations. The fact that it extends along most of the spectrum of conflict is indicative of the realization that NATO must transform to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century security environment lest it become irrelevant.

The Alliance has implemented bold transformation initiatives to meet the standards outlined in published strategy documents. For example, in 2003 NATO adopted a new command structure with strategic scope which is "more flexible and better able to deal with the security challenges of the 21st Century."<sup>52</sup> Further, the NATO Response Force (NRF) was created as a "robust rapid reaction capability, deployable and sustainable wherever it may be required."<sup>53</sup> These military applications and capabilities are examined further in Chapter IV of this thesis.

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<sup>51</sup> "Comprehensive Political Guidance," par. 16.h.

<sup>52</sup> "The New NATO Force Structure," *NATO International Military Staff*, October 2003 (updated October 2006), <http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/force-structure.htm> (accessed 15 October 2008).

<sup>53</sup> "The New NATO Force Structure."

### C. RED CARDS, CAVEATS, CONSENSUS AND SHORTFALLS

A nation's willingness to commit its military to combat is largely based on that nation's societal perspective. Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer have argued that a nation's will to commit military forces to combat is "influenced by its values, culture and historical experiences" and that the willingness to use force to achieve political goals is shaped by a nation's strategic culture.<sup>54</sup> The Alliance's 1999 Strategic Concept outlines the dependence NATO has on "the equitable sharing of the roles, risks and responsibilities" among the Allies for collective defense, implying that strategic culture and values are fundamentally similar within the Alliance.<sup>55</sup> However, while the concept of equitable burden-sharing in NATO is ideal in principle, it is improbable in practice, regardless of whether the assessment of burden-sharing focuses on economic, military or political dimensions. To highlight this discrepancy, in 2007 only six of the 26 Allies made the desired investment and expenditures (two percent of GDP) in their respective military establishments.<sup>56</sup> Decisions to commit resources and modernize national armed forces are made at the national level. When not aligned with NATO expectations, these decisions could impact the ability of the Alliance as a whole to effectively plan for and execute military operations. The fact that so few Allies meet expected resource allocations in their respective militaries indicates that, in practice, there are differences in strategic culture and spending priorities at the national level that trump NATO's strategic outlook.

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<sup>54</sup> Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, "All the Way? The Evolution of German Military Power," *International Affairs*, 84: 2 (2008), 218. The authors cite Henry E. Eccles, 'Strategy: The Theory and Application', *U.S. Naval War College Review* 32: 3, May-June 1979, 13, and Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', in Carl G. Jacobsen, ed., *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, (London: Macmillan, 1990), 121.

<sup>55</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," par. 42.

<sup>56</sup> "Defense Expenditures as a Percent of Gross Domestic Product," *NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence*, 20 December 2007, Table 3, 7 <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2007/p07-141.pdf> (accessed 12 November 2008). The Allies that contributed the objective level of 2% of GDP—a goal informally agreed upon at the 2002 Prague Summit—in 2007 were Bulgaria, France, Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Restrictions on a nation's military when participating in multinational operations have existed in modern combat in Europe since World War I, when U.S. General John Pershing refused to subordinate U.S. combat troops to French command, having been directed by Washington to wait until U.S. combat strength was sufficient to engage the enemy on its own.<sup>57</sup> The urgency of the situation soon changed Pershing's perception; and American forces ultimately served under European commanders. However, the event seems to have resonated through the remainder of the twentieth century and into the current period. Twenty-first century NATO is no different in this regard.

Even in cases in which consensus is reached to employ NATO forces, military commanders leading the effort may find themselves subject to "red cards" and caveats that will stymie mission accomplishment. Each Ally has the right to restrict how its forces are employed. This may create significant problems for military commanders in meeting both the standards of employment and the expectations established in the Alliance's strategy documents. Limitations or exclusions based on the national political concerns of Alliance members must be given great forethought if NATO is to effectively employ military forces in an expeditionary manner, particularly in crisis operations when time is of the essence and there may be little or no advance warning.

The Kosovo campaign brought this possibility to reality in the starkest possible terms when British Lieutenant General Sir Michael Jackson refused to comply with the orders of the then-SACEUR, U.S. General Wesley Clark. Clark ordered Jackson to deploy forces in response to Russian movements to control the airport at Pristina, Kosovo. The disagreement between the two military leaders was elevated to American and British political circles. This resulted in Britain refusing to employ its forces in the manner ordered by Clark.<sup>58</sup> Some observers have pointed to this event as "evidence of

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<sup>57</sup> Colonel Ian Hope, *Unity of Command in Afghanistan: A Forgotten Principle of War*, Strategic Studies Institute Carlisle Paper, November 2008, 2, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB889.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2008).

<sup>58</sup> General Sir Michael Jackson, "My Clash With NATO Chief," *Daily Telegraph Online*, 5 September 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1562161/Gen-Sir-Mike-Jackson-My-clash-with-Nato-chief.html> (accessed 15 November 2008). This article is an excerpt from Jackson's autobiography and presents his version of the Pristina exchange with General Clark. For Clark's version of the exchange, see Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (Public Affairs Publishers, 2002), Chapter 15.

an emerging polarization within the Alliance.”<sup>59</sup> Regardless of the individual personalities, objectives and perceptions of those involved in the Pristina affair, the essential significance of the event is that Allies have on occasion refused to employ their forces in accordance with SACEUR/Allied Command Operations orders at the tactical level; and this has reflected political disagreements at ministerial levels. This is the antithesis of the desired relationships in the Alliance.

NATO’s deployment to Afghanistan offers additional examples of how an Ally’s political philosophy has a direct impact on the military leadership’s employment of assigned forces at the tactical level. There are Allies that, for reasons all their own, participate in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, but with strict limitations on the role their deployed troops are allowed to fulfill. As an example, German forces are limited in their use of force in the “targeted killing of insurgents” unless the German soldiers have been attacked by those same insurgents.<sup>60</sup> Restrictions were even placed on German SOF operating outside the ISAF mandate along side multinational SOF under the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). These restrictions precluded the German SOF from firing on legitimate targets unless they were fired upon first.<sup>61</sup> According to Noetzel and Schreer, the German policy in Afghanistan “undermines Germany’s military credibility among allied partners and restrains Germany’s ability to make full use of military power as an instrument of policy.”<sup>62</sup>

But the Germans are not alone in this approach to their contribution to Alliance operations. Colonel Ian Hope notes in his monograph that Allies “have placed heavy caveats upon their forces to protect them from being sucked into OEF missions that are

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<sup>59</sup> Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis, 35.

<sup>60</sup> “ISAF Commander Discusses German Army Mission in Afghanistan, AWACS Deployment,” Interview with General David McKiernan in *Der Spiegel*, 11 August 2008, in Open Source Center, EUP 20080810036012.

<sup>61</sup> “German Commandos Withdrawn From Afghanistan,” *Strategy Page*, 9 October 2008, <http://www.strategypage.com/htm/htsf/articles/20081009.aspx> (accessed 15 November 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Noetzel and Schreer, 211.

directed unilaterally by the White House and CENTCOM with no alliance input.”<sup>63</sup> Politically-motivated decisions based on public opinion in member nations and bilateral disagreements have proven problematic for NATO in conducting military operations since 1992, though the ISAF experience is proving far more costly than did Kosovo—both politically and militarily.

In addition to “red cards” and caveats that may be placed on an Ally’s forces once deployed to an operation, displeasure has been expressed regarding the NATO consensus decision-making model previously discussed. This thesis noted in Chapter I that General Jones has characterized NATO’s decision-making process as “slow and painful” and burdened by political constraints.<sup>64</sup> Both the Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism and the 2004 Strategic Vision document note that NATO must be able to shorten the time necessary to decide that a military response is required to address a security risk. These documents may be regarded as calls to action for NATO’s political leadership. To protect the Alliance’s security interests, the Allies need to develop a better process by which they can agree on committing to the use of military forces in response to a security concern wherever it may be.

There are also limitations in member nations’ SOF and general purpose military capabilities that must be considered in the planning process, particularly as it pertains to burden-sharing. These capabilities are discussed in Chapter IV.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

In 2005, Jean Dufourcq, then the Chief of the NATO Defense College’s Academic Research Branch, wrote that “no strategy can be really effective unless it identifies priorities and focuses efforts and, hence, provides the appropriate control over

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<sup>63</sup> Hope, 12.

<sup>64</sup> David S. Yost, “An Interview with General James L. Jones, USMC, Retired, Supreme Allied Commander Europe,” *NATO Defense College Research Paper*, 34 (January 2008), 3-4, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp\\_34.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp_34.pdf) (accessed 26 August 2008).

the means available for achieving the specific aim.”<sup>65</sup> While the four strategy documents examined in this chapter attempt to outline NATO’s priorities, the efforts are not accomplished uniformly and do not eliminate ambiguity in focusing the Alliance’s prioritization of its tasks. Despite the significant transformation initiatives in the absence of specific strategic guidance, there remain chasms between political philosophies and military applications within the Alliance that serve to hamstring effectiveness on both fronts. For example, each of the four strategic documents touched upon in this chapter argues that terrorism is a major threat to the Alliance, but there is no pragmatic guidance as to how the Alliance should approach the problem; and this may directly impact NATO’s ability to deal with it. In point of fact, in the Strategic Concept, which should arguably be the capstone and prevailing guidance, the word terrorism appears exactly once, and is mentioned in the same breath with organized crime. There is also only one reference to terrorist attacks, as the document notes that the Alliance must protect forces and infrastructure from them. Chapter III of this thesis discusses linkages between terrorism and criminal activity, but the two phenomena are nonetheless distinct and should be addressed as such.

The 1999 Strategic Concept is of less value than a revised version could be, given the asymmetric nature of the current security environment, and in light of the growing emphasis that subsequent strategy documents have placed on combating terrorism wherever it may exist. In his opinion about modernizing the Strategic Concept, a NATO Defense College Research Fellow, Slovak Colonel Pavel Necas, notes that it “should become a strategy-centered document that provides practical and prioritized guidance for Alliance members” to operate in an era of asymmetric threats. As each year passes without an updated Strategic Concept, this opinion will be voiced more and more frequently.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Security Strategies: NATO, the United States and the European Union*, NATO Defense College Occasional Paper 5, ed. Jean Dufourcq and Lionel Ponsard, March 2005, 8, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/op\\_05.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/op_05.pdf) (accessed 16 October 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Pavel Necas, *Beyond Tradition: A New Strategic Concept for NATO?* NATO Defense College Research Paper 11, September 2004, 7, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp\\_11.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp_11.pdf) (accessed 17 November 2008).

It has been argued that European philosophies on how to combat terrorism are less proactive than the American approach.<sup>67</sup> Europeans place greater emphasis on distinctions among types of terrorism (e.g., political, nationalistic or religious) and their respective causes, with different approaches in confronting them. These nuanced differences manifest themselves in NATO's political decision-making process. This has an effect on Alliance military operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels as these differences among military forces reflect their national outlooks. An Atlantic Council analysis of the threat of terrorism and its relationship to NATO's approach claims that terrorism's highly adaptive nature "requires frequent adjustments in ways of thinking and responding."<sup>68</sup> At the political level this has not happened. However, when taken together, the four strategy documents provide greater insight as to the security issues that NATO leaders judge should receive greatest attention. However, such nebulous and ambiguous guidance spread widely over four documents will not provide the explicit guidance needed to develop requisite capabilities to meet the challenges deemed greatest.

The literature regarding NATO transformation in the post-Cold War world is extensive, and opinions vary about the Alliance's relevance in the current security environment. Noting NATO's evolution in the post-Soviet era, Daniel Fried, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, recently characterized the Alliance's transformation to a more globally postured organization. He testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee regarding "NATO's transformation from a static Cold War instrument that never fired a shot in anger to an active, expeditionary force capable of projecting power out of area where needed."<sup>69</sup> The success NATO has enjoyed in this regard seems to have been achieved without the benefit of publicly

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<sup>67</sup> Dieter Mahncke, Wyn Rees, and Wayne C. Thompson, *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004) 172.

<sup>68</sup> "NATO's Role in Confronting International Terrorism," x.

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, *Testimony Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee*, Washington, DC, 23 April 2008.

circulated comprehensive strategic guidance documents that prioritize security concerns and direct the development of capabilities to confront them.

Notwithstanding the obvious limitations in NATO's strategic vision, there is evidence that the Alliance is taking steps to deal with asymmetric threats through the NSTI. Terrorism and related asymmetric threats are the greatest security concerns in three of the four guidance documents considered. Given that SOF provide the greatest potential to overcome and counter these threats, the NSTI is a logical and necessary step for the Alliance to meet CT expectations. The 2009 NATO mission set is characterized by operating environments in which asymmetry has often been the prevalent mode of operation employed by the adversary, no where more so than in Afghanistan. The success SOF enjoyed at the onset of the war in Afghanistan in 2001 is often pointed to as the latest example of modern warfare. High intensity conflict waged by two heavily armed adversaries was expected to occur in the Fulda Gap had the Cold War gone hot.

However, as the 2004 Strategic Vision document, NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism, and NATO's Comprehensive Political Guidance all note, terrorism and asymmetric warfare are the most likely concerns that the Alliance will have to face, and the high intensity combat that NATO envisaged during the Cold War is improbable. With that in mind, the advent of the NSTI is more critical than ever, assuming that the limitations brought into play by red cards, caveats and consensus decision-making do not render NATO SOF incapable of realizing the strategic effects expected by the Alliance's political and military arms when properly employed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> AJP-3.5, 1-1.

### **III. NATO THREAT PERCEPTIONS: EXAMINING THE ALLIANCE'S CURRENT AND FUTURE THREATS**

#### **A. OVERVIEW**

An attempt to determine what NATO perceives as threatening is difficult because the Alliance's Threat Assessment is classified and not publicly available. However, a general assessment can be made based on published documents and an analysis of the greater geostrategic security environment. As mentioned in the previous chapter, NATO's strategy has evolved to deal with changing security challenges, though the public strategic documents are less explicit in prioritizing threats than might have been expected. The 1999 Strategic Concept is broad enough to encompass every potential threat, including full-scale high-intensity aggression against the Alliance. As noted in Chapter II, the Strategic Vision written by NATO's top military commanders points to asymmetric threats as requiring immediate attention. In fact, each of the four strategy documents analyzed in the previous chapter notes the potential threat from either terrorism or asymmetric threats, or a combination of the two. Obviously, terrorism must be considered one of the most significant threats that the Alliance will be faced with, and counterterrorism (CT) operations should be at the forefront of NATO force posturing.

The previous chapter argued that, in spite of significant post-Cold War transformation in NATO, there is still a need for greater strategic vision to ensure that the Alliance's military capabilities are properly postured to confront 21st century threats. The Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism notes that "counterterrorism operations will be mainly joint operations and some units specifically trained in counterterrorist operations might be extremely effective."<sup>71</sup> The previous chapter also mentioned that Special Operations Forces (SOF) are much more qualified than regular conventional forces or law enforcement personnel to conduct CT operations.

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<sup>71</sup> "NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism," NATO International Military Staff, October 2003 (updated 14 April 2005), <http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/terrorism.htm> (accessed 9 July 2008).

This chapter examines current and future threats facing the Alliance based on the global security environment and those threats deemed most significant in publicly available NATO strategy documents. This chapter then analyzes what potential NATO has to confront these threats.

## **B. NATO'S 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY THREATS**

Although NATO published a threat assessment that was agreed upon by all Allies, much has been written about what truly constitutes a threat. What the Baltic States deem most threatening differs from the outlook of older Allies with a different history and geostrategic situation, such as Britain. Karl-Heinz Kamp notes the differences in perception between “old” and “new” Allies in writing that “most of NATO’s Western European members have almost excluded the possibility of a military threat to their territorial integrity from their strategic reasoning,” but that “most East European members emphasize the relevance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty as an assurance against an immediate military threat from abroad.”<sup>72</sup> The obvious reference to growing intimidation from Russia does not detract from NATO’s overall perceived threats, but highlights the differences in judgment among the Allies about what constitutes the greatest threat to individual Allies.

In October 2002, then-Secretary General Lord Robertson attempted to predict what the strategic environment would be like in 2015. He made note of five major security challenges that the Alliance would face: more instability from volatile areas such as the Caucasus, Central Asia, Northern Africa and the Middle East; spillover as a result of the instability, in the form of migration, human smuggling, and the criminal activity associated with it; terrorism in all its forms; failed and failing states; and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>73</sup> Much of Lord Robertson’s prediction is contained in the

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<sup>72</sup> Karl-Heinz Kamp, “After the Summit: Long-Term Consequences for NATO,” *NATO Defence College Research Paper*, 37 (May 2008), 4, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp\\_37.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp_37.pdf) (accessed 16 October 2008).

<sup>73</sup> Lord Robertson, “The World in 2015—Predicting the Unpredictable,” *Keynote Speech at the Defense Industry Conference, London*, 14 October 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021014a.htm> (accessed 24 November 2008).

four strategy documents discussed in the previous chapter, and many of his concerns are not mutually exclusive and go hand in glove with one another. However, there is little argument that the four general threats outlined below have the potential to affect each Ally individually, and the Alliance as a whole.

## **1. Terrorism and Asymmetric Threats**

Terrorism is one of myriad asymmetric threats. An asymmetric threat is generally viewed as one in which weaknesses are exposed and exploited by an adversary to compensate for the adversary's relative weakness in conventional warfare capabilities. Much more attention has been drawn to it since the end of the Cold War, and significantly so as a result of Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks. Paul Thomsen notes that "policy makers and journalists alike have called this 'a new kind of war,' but the nineteen box cutter-wielding 9/11 hijackers were practicing a very old form of war in a very new way with great intrepidity."<sup>74</sup> This unconventional approach to warfare has existed as long as warfare itself and has been used to weaken governments, alliances and states alike. In characterizing the strategic impact of asymmetric warfare, a *Jane's Intelligence Review* report notes that there are psychological and physical effects that work "to exploit the fears of the civilian population to weaken support for the democratic process, undermine the government, or compromise its alliances and partnerships."<sup>75</sup> Asymmetric threats, including terrorism, have the potential to do all this simultaneously. In fact, many have argued that the 2004 Madrid bombings successfully altered the Spanish political landscape by ushering in a new government which promptly removed Spanish forces from the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq.

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<sup>74</sup> Paul A. Thomsen, "The Ascent of Knowledge-Based Warfare," *Beyond Shock and Awe: Warfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Eric L. Haney and Brian M. Thomsen (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2006), 75.

<sup>75</sup> Kevin O'Brien and Joseph Nusbaum, "Intelligence Gathering on Asymmetric Threats—Part One," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 October 2000.

The Military Concept document notes that religious extremism constitutes the “most immediate terrorist threat” to NATO.<sup>76</sup> While Islam is not specifically mentioned, there is concern in several European countries that the growth of the Muslim population in “Old Europe” could have a destabilizing effect on existing and historical social, economic, cultural and political traditions. While most Muslims in Europe, be they immigrants or native-born, are considered moderate, the visibility that Islamic extremists are receiving in light of the Madrid and London terror attacks; arrests by police of extremists and discovery of Al-Qaeda cells in such countries as Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands; and events such as the Theo Van Gogh murder in Amsterdam have raised anxiety in traditional European societies about the extent of the Islamic extremist danger.

Radical Islamic ideology is something that now transcends many ethnic and cultural differences among groups inside and outside Europe. Modern telecommunications and Internet technologies present extremely secure means through which jihadists can plan operations and tap into pools of potential recruits. In fact, the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate for Terrorism notes that “the jihadists regard Europe as an important venue for attacking Western interests. Extremist networks inside the extensive Muslim diasporas in Europe facilitate recruitment and staging for urban attacks, as illustrated by the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London bombings.”<sup>77</sup> Despite the high level of concern about jihadists, statistics demonstrate that terrorist attacks at the hands of Islamic radicals occur less frequently than acts conducted by separatist groups by a wide margin. In fact, Europol data show that 532 incidents of separatist terrorism occurred in Europe in 2007, while only four incidents can be attributed to Islamism.<sup>78</sup> The same report notes that roughly 20% of those arrested in 2007 for terrorism-related offenses

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<sup>76</sup> “NATO’s Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism.”

<sup>77</sup> “Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate ‘Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States’,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, April 2006, [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf) (accessed 1 December 2008).

<sup>78</sup> “EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TESAT) 2008,” European Police Office, Figure 2, 10, [http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/EU\\_Terrorism\\_Situation\\_and\\_Trend\\_Report\\_TESAT/tesat2008.pdf](http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/EU_Terrorism_Situation_and_Trend_Report_TESAT/tesat2008.pdf) (accessed 16 November 2008).

were Islamists, while more than half were separatists. However, of 449 convictions for terrorism in 2007, 198 were Islamists and 214 were separatists.<sup>79</sup>

Whatever the motivation of terrorists in Europe, the fact of the matter is that the magnitude of terrorism in the name of Islam distresses the population, leaving them with images and fears that they simply cannot ignore. Despite the horror of these acts, differences remain among the Allies in how they view terrorism. Joanne Wright of the University of Sussex notes that Europeans generally do not share the U.S. conception of a “war on terror” and that some Allies may have shortcomings in dealing with the linkages between internal and external security.<sup>80</sup> In developing a strategy to confront terrorism, and the myriad issues such as transnational crime that are associated with it, internal and external security cannot be assessed in a vacuum independent of one another.

## **2. Instability Domestically and Peripherally**

In his remarks to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on European Affairs on the topic of Islamic extremism in Europe, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried noted that the extremist problem comes from a “minuscule minority of Muslims who seek to distort Islam for radical and destructive political ends, and thereby defile a noble faith by committing terrorist acts.”<sup>81</sup> Fried echoed popular sociological explanations for the attraction many disaffected native-born European Muslims and immigrants have to extremist ideology, citing factors such as “demographics; high rates of poverty and unemployment; anti-Muslim discrimination and racism; a strict adherence by many Muslims to the language and traditions of their countries of origin; and issues of identity.”<sup>82</sup> Alison Pargeter notes that Islamist

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<sup>79</sup> “EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TESAT) 2008,” Figures 3 and 6, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Joanne Wright, “The Importance of Europe in the Global Campaign Against Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18, 2 (2006), 282.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Fried, “Islamist Extremism in Europe,” Remarks at the Hearing Before the Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Ninth Congress, 5 April 2006 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 2007), 3.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

organizations recognized the alienation that many in the Muslim community in Europe were feeling and were able to “channel this into a new Islamic awareness” which supported their radical ideology.<sup>83</sup> She asserts that this new Islamist awareness was further catalyzed by radicals fleeing persecution in their homelands and large inflows of money from Islamist organizations in the Middle East to create “a melting pot of Islamic ideas, ideologies and activism” in Europe.<sup>84</sup> Visibly, the networked nature of the extremist element has the potential to conduct terrorist attacks in NATO countries and in regions peripheral to the Allies.

Since the Madrid and London bombings brought home the threat of jihadist terrorism to Europeans, laws have been established to curb Islamic extremism in the name of national security. In the eyes of at least some Muslims, these measures are motivated by racism and they are increasing Muslim animosities toward national law enforcement agencies and security services. Attempts to restrict activities deemed contributing to radicalism have not brought the exact results intended. Legislation designed to bring Muslim minorities into the majority fold have often been blanket laws that negatively affect Muslims across the board and seem to focus on certain outward differences such as mosques, shops and restaurants serving Islamic customers, and Muslim dress and appearance traditions. This only serves to exacerbate the “us versus them” sentiment and increases volatility among the various Muslim minority diasporas domestically.<sup>85</sup>

Actually, domestic instability can be caused by any number of political, economic, and social issues. The Alliance’s 1999 Strategic Concept points to a large number of potential sources of instability. Lord Robertson’s assessment of future threats to the Alliance complements the Strategic Concept and highlights a variety of destabilizing factors as well. The lessons of the Balkan conflicts through the 1990s were

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<sup>83</sup> Alison Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad: Radical Islam in Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 30.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>85</sup> Liz Fekete, “Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State,” *Race and Class*, 46, 1 (2004), 4.

apparently not forgotten by the authors of the document, given the instability that the NATO countries nearest the conflict experienced. A Dutch university study notes that 700,000 refugees fled to Western European countries in 1989-1994, and that another 4.3 million people were displaced within the borders of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>86</sup>

The implosion of Yugoslavia in the 1990s is an example of instability in peripheral regions causing instability in NATO nations. The hundreds of thousands of refugees needed to be cared for, and this put economic and social strains on the countries that harbored them. It is no coincidence that the Balkan crises prompted the first engagement by NATO forces outside the Alliance's territory in a non-Article 5 operation. This is an example of what John Deni calls a "new security landscape" which is characterized by "nationalist, ethnic, and religious conflicts and unconventional, transnational threats"<sup>87</sup> and which rapidly became NATO's most pressing concern.

It is well documented that terrorist groups, regardless of ideology or motivation, have turned toward criminal activity to finance their terror campaigns. This has been called the "most dramatic threat to national and regional security," because the relationships among the illicit drug trade, organized crime, insurgency, and terrorism are becoming "increasingly intimate."<sup>88</sup> A 2006 NATO Parliamentary Assembly report underlined the difficulties in fighting opium production in Afghanistan while European demand for heroin is driving an increase in poppy production.<sup>89</sup> These seemingly

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<sup>86</sup> "Refugees and Asylum Seekers," *History of International Migration*, Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands, Updated 29 July 2008, <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/history/migration/chapter10.html> (accessed 4 December 2008).

<sup>87</sup> John R. Deni, *Alliance Management and Maintenance: Restructuring NATO for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co, 2007), 1.

<sup>88</sup> Svante E. Cornell and Niklas L.P. Swanström, "The Eurasian Drug Trade: A Challenge to Regional Security," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 53, 4 (July/August 2006), 11.

<sup>89</sup> Julio Miranda-Calha (Rapporteur), "Lessons Learned from NATO's Current Operations," NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Document 061 DSC 06 E, par. 21, Spring 2006.

symbiotic relationships between terrorism and crime have been characterized as “strategic crime” because they encompass “the full spectrum” of illegal transnational threats.<sup>90</sup>

Because these groups are vastly networked, the solutions to the problem are difficult to identify. As Wright notes, “when one takes into account the many other existing problems and demographic trends in the Mediterranean region, the Europeans do have much to worry about.”<sup>91</sup> These phenomena have been described as a hydra, with each of the heads representing a different transnational threat. To cut one of the heads off does not slay the beast, nor does it eliminate that threat. The hydra seems to grow another head and continues to bring greater instability than those threats that exist only within an Ally’s geographic boundaries.

### **3. A New Cold War? The Russian Dilemma**

NATO’s relationship with Russia has suffered greatly in recent months, reaching an exceptionally low point in the wake of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia war. The Allies suspended the activities and discussions of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) and the NATO Secretary General declared that there could be no “business as usual” in NATO-Russia relations.<sup>92</sup> Had Georgia been a member of NATO, that conflict would have forced the Alliance to invoke Article 5 and defend Georgia. In crafting modern strategy, NATO holds that the likelihood of high intensity conflict pitting east versus west on the European landmass is unlikely. Kamp notes that NATO must provide “a realistic assessment of the present situation” in the relationship between the two sides.<sup>93</sup> He opines that NATO must understand the difference “between legitimate Russian security interests and calculating political arguments” and be able to see through the

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<sup>90</sup> Colonel Albert Zaccor, *Security Cooperation and Non-State Threats: A Call for an Integrated Strategy*, The Atlantic Council Occasional Paper, August 2005, 21.

<sup>91</sup> Wright, 284.

<sup>92</sup> Mike Shuster, “NATO: No ‘Business as Usual’ with Russia,” *National Public Radio All Things Considered*, 19 August 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93738366> (accessed 27 January 2009).

<sup>93</sup> Kamp, 5.

rhetoric in assessing what may cause Russia to act aggressively.<sup>94</sup> In the eyes of the Russians, NATO enlargement affects their legitimate security interests, and it might cause Russia to react as aggressively as in the August 2008 conflict with Georgia.

Additionally, initiatives such as the U.S. proposal to deploy ballistic missile defense system elements in Poland and Czech Republic are viewed by Russians with great skepticism. American efforts to ease their concerns have thus far not satisfied the Kremlin. It has been opined that, when viewed through the Russian lens, NATO enlargement is part of America's overall strategy to "contain Russia."<sup>95</sup> The Russian response has been anything but meek, as Putin announced in July 2007 that Russia would suspend compliance with the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. This suspension took effect on 12 December 2007. The *Study on NATO Enlargement* acknowledges that there is no legal linkage between the CFE Treaty and NATO enlargement, but points to preservation of the treaty's integrity as an issue of "fundamental importance" because it is considered "the cornerstone of European security."<sup>96</sup>

NATO enlargement is not generally viewed as threatening or provocative in the Alliance as a whole, but there has been concern among some Allies that, if not executed properly, enlargement could escalate tensions with Russia to a precarious point. In a recent BBC interview, Czech Republic shadow Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek expressed general relief regarding his country's membership in NATO but acknowledged Russian sensitivities: "Russia is not so strong to be a real enemy for us, but we can make it an enemy. It is our decision."<sup>97</sup> Warnings about the perceived threat to Russia by NATO enlargement are echoed in other publications as well. One scholar characterized the situation by writing, "Some observers in NATO countries are nonetheless concerned

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<sup>94</sup> Kamp, 5.

<sup>95</sup> Tim Whewell, "Dancing with the Russian Bear," *BBC News Online*, 19 February 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7252678.stm> (accessed 23 February 2008).

<sup>96</sup> "Study on NATO Enlargement," *NATO Online Library*, September 1995, Chapter 2, Section B, par. 21, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9503.htm> (accessed 23 February 2008).

<sup>97</sup> Whewell.

that, particularly if it is not handled adroitly, the enlargement of the Alliance could instead lead to confrontation and polarization. They warn that the Russians might conclude they are being threatened and humiliated and try to reassert control over some former Soviet republics or take other retaliatory measures.”<sup>98</sup>

As for Russia, there is obvious concern about NATO’s eastward path. There have been not-so-quietly asked questions about the need for NATO enlargement, mostly from Moscow, but some concern has been expressed by Alliance members themselves. The most stinging criticism, though, came from then-President Putin during a speech at the 2007 Munich Conference on Security Policy when he stated that placing troops nearer and nearer Russian borders does not contribute to European security, but is actually a “serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust.”<sup>99</sup> Obviously, there is no ambiguity in the Russian attitude and “hostility to NATO enlargement.”<sup>100</sup>

The perceived threat to security is far greater among the new NATO member nations that were once part of the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact. These Allies have asked for assurances from NATO that they will be protected from Russian aggression if they are attacked. General John Craddock, SACEUR, initiated talks about defense planning for such a contingency, but he does not have the authority to develop formal defense plans without a threat assessment that is “approved by NATO’s political leadership.”<sup>101</sup> Clearly, there is some anxiety among the Allies about Russian intentions in spite of the general acknowledgment in the 1999 Strategic Concept that East-West high intensity conflict is unlikely.

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<sup>98</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security* (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1988), 122.

<sup>99</sup> Vladimir V. Putin, Speech at the 43d Munich Conference on Security Policy, 2 February 2007, <http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?sprache=en&id=179> (accessed 20 October 2008).

<sup>100</sup> Yost, 123.

<sup>101</sup> Kristin Roberts, “NATO Chief Seeks Defense Plan for Allies Near Russia,” *International Herald Tribune*, 6 October 2008.

#### 4. Energy Security

In recent years, Western Europe has suffered the disruption of hydrocarbon shipments (most notably natural gas) from Russian-owned pipelines as a result of disagreements that Russia has had with countries in its “near-abroad” through which the pipelines pass. As energy producers realize the power that they wield over their customers, there is a risk that the delivery of hydrocarbons will be used as leverage with greater frequency to increase influence politically.<sup>102</sup> Gazprom, Russia’s state-owned natural gas company, earns nearly 70% of its income from sales to the European Union.<sup>103</sup> Likewise, the European Union currently imports half of its energy requirement, and much of that comes from Russia, a dependence expected to grow to 70% by 2030, with 40% of the total natural gas demand imported from Russia.<sup>104</sup> Potentially more frightening is the fact that Europe will have to import 94% of its oil and 84% of its natural gas by 2030.<sup>105</sup>

This dependence is unnerving for Europeans. A recent EU Commission on Energy report stated, “while the economic impact of Europe’s reliance on energy imports may be cause for concern, the security consequences could be dire.”<sup>106</sup> In fact, Andrew Monaghan of the NATO Defense College recently noted that energy security is so tightly connected to a country’s national security that any threats to the availability of energy resources “may lead to war to seize or defend” them.<sup>107</sup> Monaghan cited other noted

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<sup>102</sup> Paul Gallis, “NATO and Energy Security,” *CRS Report for Congress*, RS22409, 28 December 2007, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Kamp, 6.

<sup>104</sup> Gallis, 2.

<sup>105</sup> Ida Garibaldi, *NATO and European Energy Security*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1 (March 2008), [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.27719/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.27719/pub_detail.asp) (accessed 1 December 2008).

<sup>106</sup> Andris Piebalgs, “Europe’s Energy Future: The New Industrial Revolution,” *EU Commission for Energy’s Energy Portal*, 4 November 2008, [http://www.energy.eu/news/Europes\\_Energy\\_Future\\_The\\_New\\_Industrial\\_Revolution.pdf](http://www.energy.eu/news/Europes_Energy_Future_The_New_Industrial_Revolution.pdf) (accessed 20 December 2008).

<sup>107</sup> Andrew Monaghan, “Energy Security: NATO’s Limited, Complementary Role,” *NATO Defense College Research Paper*, 36 (May 2008), 2.

scholars who contend that the “possibility that access to energy resources may become an object of large-scale armed struggle is almost incontestably the single most alarming prospect facing the international system today.”<sup>108</sup>

These considerations certainly are in the minds of NATO leaders and are forcing them to pay much closer attention to the Alliance’s potential role in providing energy security. In a recent speech, NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer said that NATO’s primary role with regard to energy security is “to police and protect.”<sup>109</sup> Much of this concern stems from the fact that the European Allies have a great dependence on imported energy, which is growing quickly, coupled with the fact that energy-producing countries tend to be unstable or politically fragile and to base most of their economic policy on petrodollars. Putin noted in 2003 that “Gazprom is a ‘powerful political and economic lever of influence over the rest of the world’.”<sup>110</sup> If this attitude became pervasive throughout unstable petroleum-producing states and if these states chose to manipulate the flow of energy, there would be direct effects on NATO members at the economic and political levels.

European Allies understand the predicament brought on by disruptions to the supply of energy. As Russia and Ukraine disputed payments for natural gas deliveries from the former to the latter in December 2005 and January 2009, and the flow of gas subsequently was interrupted, many highly-dependent Western and East-Central European countries felt the impact immediately. This reality has forced a shuffling of priorities to a certain extent. U.S. Senator Richard Lugar proposed at the 2006 Riga Summit that energy security be viewed as an Article 5 issue, and approached as a mutual security concern.<sup>111</sup> In fact, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution unanimously which

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<sup>108</sup> Monaghan, 2. Monaghan cites Daniel Moran and J.A. Russell, “The Militarization of Energy Security,” *Strategic Insights*, 7, 1 (February 2008), 2.

<sup>109</sup> Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, “Energy Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Keynote Speech at the Economist Energy Security Dinner*, 23 October 2008, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2008/s081023b.html> (accessed 4 December 2008).

<sup>110</sup> Gallis, 3. Gallis cites *Jamestown Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 19 January 2006 and “EU’s Barroso Demands Natural Gas Supply Assurances from Russia,” *Bloomberg News*, 16 March 2006.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

called upon NATO to “protect the energy security of its members.”<sup>112</sup> Ira Garibaldi asserts that the issue is gaining in importance. In his view, “neglecting to ensure European energy security could be lethal to NATO’s unity because it could split the alliance between vulnerable and nonvulnerable members.”<sup>113</sup>

Clearly, the threat to NATO’s security that a disruption in energy would cause could be devastating to the Allies most highly dependent on energy imports. European leaders have recognized this risk and have worked to diversify sources of oil and gas so that disruption from one source does not cripple or strain them. However, in spite of calls to develop a strategy to mitigate the threat, NATO has thus far proceeded cautiously in order to ensure that solutions to this problem are appropriate for the Alliance on the whole.

### **C. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS**

In 1990, near the end of the Cold War, a strategic analysis called the Wittmann Paper was written. In it, the first glimpse of the twenty-first century security environment was captured as NATO was advised “to turn its attention to more unpredictable threats such as ethnic strife, religious fundamentalism, and terrorism” and to pay less attention to Soviet military capability. The document also outlined the need for forces that were flexible and agile.<sup>114</sup> Over the next 18 years, NATO was given opportunities to bring Wittmann’s vision to fruition during conflicts in the Balkans and (since 2002) in Afghanistan. The Alliance has slowly adapted and begun transforming itself militarily into an organization that can confront present day threats. As Kamp observes, “NATO is not fighting against a state but against an insurgency” in Afghanistan.<sup>115</sup> One must wonder if the Alliance is postured to bring appropriate military capability to bear in confronting the threats outlined in this chapter wherever and whenever the Allies deem

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<sup>112</sup> Garibaldi.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Deni, 56. Deni cites Colonel Dr. Klaus Wittmann’s analysis written in May 1990.

<sup>115</sup> Kamp, 3.

appropriate. The next chapter examines Allied capabilities in SOF and conventional forces, as well as law enforcement counterterrorism forces.

The overview of threats in this thesis is by no means comprehensive and does not have the benefit of intelligence collection and analysis that NATO enjoys in preparing a fully informed threat assessment. Rather, this summary of prospective threats is based upon what NATO has alluded to as threatening in publicly available strategy documents, combined with a reasonable consideration of the Alliance's most significant vulnerabilities. However, of the threats noted, terrorism must be considered the greatest near-term threat to the NATO Allies because of its potentially catastrophic and destabilizing effects. It requires great vigilance to defend against, and terrorist organizations have ties to transnational groups in Europe that are networked with radicals outside Europe. Terrorist groups have ties to criminal organizations that smuggle drugs, weapons, people, and other contraband. Terrorists may target a country's population with destabilizing effect.

It is in the counter-terrorist area that the NATO SOF Transformation Initiative (NSTI) may have greatest impact. According to Karl-Heinz Kamp, "the Alliance is seen as an institution to export stability, to prevent and to manage crises or to take on military threats far beyond NATO's borders."<sup>116</sup> It has further been noted that "NATO's outreach activities to its partners" may improve capacity in weaker states to the benefit of the international community.<sup>117</sup> The ability of the SOF community to engage abroad toward this end is well documented, and the specific capabilities are addressed in the next chapter.

The cumulative effects of 9/11, Madrid and London (to say nothing of other terrorist attacks) have brought the threat of terrorism to much greater prominence than it had previously. While many European nations had, and continue to have, separatist groups that terrorize their populations, the new horizontally-networked brand of religious extremist terror used by Al-Qaeda and its franchises served as a wake-up call for the

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<sup>116</sup> Kamp, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Wright, 292.

Allies to adopt measures to confront it. However, disagreements among the Allies about how to take action are not unusual. Some Allies, including the United States, favor a proactive approach, whereas others prefer a more reactive approach.

Terrorist acts have consisted of conventional explosive attacks for the most part, although there should be little doubt that extremist groups would employ weapons of mass destruction if they could obtain them. Suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices have proven to be lethal, effective, inexpensive, easy to use, and difficult to stop. Aum Shinrikyo's more complex and labor-intensive sarin attack in Tokyo was an exception to these common practices, but this exception was not based on a lack of motivation to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction, but rather on factors such as technical expertise, cost, and material availability.<sup>118</sup> If Al-Qaeda had a nuclear explosive device or a radiological weapon or any other weapon of mass destruction, however crude it might be, there can be little doubt about its willingness to use it.

The Alliance is correct in noting the potential destabilizing forces of conflict in peripheral regions. NATO's experience in the Balkans was eye-opening for Allies on both sides of the Atlantic. Allied inability or unwillingness to commit combat forces compelled the United States to provide the vast majority of troops, equipment, aircraft sorties and munitions in efforts to bring stability to Bosnia and Kosovo. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the instability and human rights concerns, as well as the spillover effect of refugees into NATO Europe, created an environment in which the Allies agreed that something needed to be done, but then could not easily reach a consensus about what to do. According to John Deni, the United States was also forced "to bring into the theater the necessary special operations forces" in addition to the conventional forces committed to the Balkan crises, because there was little capability resident in NATO Europe at the time.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Frances L. Edwards and Friedrich Steinhäusler, *NATO and Terrorism: On Scene: New Challenges for First Responders and Civil Protection* (Dordrecht, NL: Springer Publishing, 2006), 11.

<sup>119</sup> Deni, 65.

Further instability from strategic crime which transcends national boundaries is also a serious threat, but steps have been taken to address it. Recognizing that the drug trade has become the primary funding source for terrorist groups and extremists and that a major source of drugs lies on its southern border, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Russian-led security organization, has launched an initiative through the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to help pursue counter-narcotics operations in Central Asia in an attempt to mitigate any spillover effect from Afghanistan.<sup>120</sup> However, *Jane's Intelligence Review* notes that these efforts have not been effective.<sup>121</sup> Despite this ineffectiveness, the cooperative effort launched by the NRC may yet contribute to stemming the flow of drugs to Europe and limiting the resources of narco-terrorism and strategic crime.

The Allies also have started serious transformation efforts to develop military capacity to meet the challenge this brand of terrorism brings, but the pace has not been as swift as the United States hoped that it would be. When Article 5 was invoked on 12 September 2001, the United States seems to have recalled the disjointed approach that NATO took during the Balkan campaigns. The United States also seems to have understood the limited unconventional capability the Allies could bring to bear against adversaries using unconventional tactics and the difficulties any Alliance deployment so far from home would entail. A NATO Parliamentary Assembly report noted that, for these reasons, and the fact that United States actions in Afghanistan “relied heavily on Special Forces” in the opening months of the operation, the United States took the lead in dislodging the Taliban and hunting Al-Qaeda while the Allies operated mainly in a combat support role.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Richard Weitz, “Terrorism in Eurasia: Enhancing the Multilateral Response,” *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program*. 4, 2 (2006) [http://www.isdp.eu/files/publications/cefq/06/May\\_2006.pdf](http://www.isdp.eu/files/publications/cefq/06/May_2006.pdf) (accessed 16 April 2008), 16.

<sup>121</sup> “Fissures in the Force—Multilateral Co-operation Can Only Go So Far,” *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 June 2007.

<sup>122</sup> Ruprecht Polenz (Rapporteur), “The Fight Against Terrorism—Impact and Implications for the Atlantic Alliance,” *NATO Parliamentary Assembly*, 174 PCTR 07 E rev 1, 2007.

The previous chapter noted the lack of specificity in NATO's strategic vision. In spite of NATO's significant post-Cold War transformation efforts, the use of such a broad brush to chart the Alliance's vision regarding threats has not been as successful in readying the armed forces of the Allies to confront specific threats as it might have been. The additional difficulties of burden-sharing, technology gaps, and caveats also diminish the potential that NATO has to overcome the security challenges that the next decade will bring. This chapter has outlined the most significant threats the Allies are likely to face in the near to mid term and has highlighted the fact that no threats can truly be isolated from one another as there are connections with additional threats. Islamic radicalism as a domestic problem in Allied countries is connected to Islamic radicalism in other Allied countries, as well as external radicals. Energy security is related to unstable or politically fragile petro-producer states, some of which have used their resources to demonstrate power and curry political gain.

The NSTI is intended to help to bring Alliance military capabilities to levels appropriate for confronting the threats discussed in this chapter, but the NSTI cannot be expected to operate in a vacuum independent of political, economic and information power instruments and conventional (general purpose) forces. However, a unified strategy that prioritizes the threats examined here will facilitate development of capabilities that are appropriate for the threat. The specific capabilities of SOF, general purpose forces, and specialized law enforcement personnel in dealing with the issues deemed most threatening, specifically terrorism, are addressed in the next chapter.

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## IV. SOF ROLES AND MISSIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: A CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT

### A. INTRODUCTION

The hostage crisis and murder of Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists during the 1972 Munich Olympics was a watershed event in Europe. The crisis exposed the need for a highly specialized counterterrorism (CT) force that could operate independently and bring extreme force to bear against those perpetrating terror. Since then, many NATO member countries have developed a specialized force within their law enforcement agencies responsible for hostage rescue operations or other *in extremis* requirements. Commando organizations such as the French *Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale* (GIGN), the German *Grenzschutzgruppe 9* (GSG 9), the Dutch *Dienst Speciale Interventies* (DSI), and the Belgian *Escadron Special d'Intervention* (ESI) are all organized, trained and equipped to ensure that crises such as that experienced in Munich in 1972 can be dealt with swiftly, forcefully and effectively.

Nearly 30 years later, in October 2001, a small number of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) led the invasion of Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime and eliminate the threat of terrorism posed by Al-Qaeda. The invasion of Afghanistan demonstrated significant shortcomings in the militaries of NATO countries and had an impact comparable to that of the Munich failure on law enforcement agencies. Carl Ek noted that “The conflict in Afghanistan marked a new development in modern warfare through the extensive use of precision-guided munitions, directed by ground-based special forces; many believe that this step widened the capabilities breach between the United States and its European Allies.”<sup>123</sup> The capabilities demonstrated by U.S. special operators in Afghanistan, coupled with growing asymmetric threats at home and abroad, highlighted the need for America’s NATO Allies to develop similar capabilities, particularly in light of the terrorism that now threatened them.

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<sup>123</sup> Carl Ek, *NATO’s Prague Capabilities Commitment*, CRS Report for Congress, RS21659, 24 January 2007.

This chapter examines the capabilities that NATO can bring to bear in confronting some of these threats. Transformation efforts such as the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the NATO SOF Transformation Initiative (NSTI) are specifically designed to face twenty-first century security challenges, and not necessarily those envisaged during the Cold War. Colin Gray points out that, despite the fact that the likelihood of high-intensity conflict appears to have diminished, the prospect of participation in lower-intensity conflicts remains significant, and it is these types of engagements “for which SOF are especially well adapted.”<sup>124</sup> NATO’s recognition that the Alliance lacks a SOF capability to match the security environment in which it finds itself—dealing with asymmetric threats of low intensity—is a lesson learned the hard way. Beginning in Munich in 1972, this lesson was gleaned as a result of security shortcomings that were recognized after a number of domestic and transnational experiences, but reinforced in the strongest terms by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the bombings in Madrid and London, among others. Clearly, the separatist and leftist terrorism with which Europe was intimately familiar was being joined by a new and deadly brand of extremist terror. Chapter III of this thesis noted that the threat of terrorism has become one of the Alliance’s highest security priorities, if not the highest. NATO’s Military Concept for Defence Against Terrorism, adopted at the Prague Summit in 2002, supports this judgment.<sup>125</sup>

## **B. GENERAL SOF ROLES AND MISSIONS**

David Tucker and Christopher Lamb have noted the necessity to consider “the distinguishing characteristics that make SOF valuable” when “articulating a strategic concept” so that the roles and missions of SOF can be determined.<sup>126</sup> Although no SOF core competencies are accepted as universal, a number of roles and missions are

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<sup>124</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), 192.

<sup>125</sup> “NATO’s Military Concept for Defence Against Terrorism,” NATO International Military Staff, 14 April 2005 <http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/terrorism.htm> (accessed 4 July 2008).

<sup>126</sup> David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *U.S. Special Operations Forces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 145.

traditionally identifiable with special operations. As a general rule, these roles and missions require specialized training and special capabilities, and cannot be performed by general purpose forces (GPF) at “acceptable levels of risk and cost.”<sup>127</sup>

In general terms, SOF roles and missions can be characterized as either commando operations or what are known as warrior-diplomat missions. In the United States, SOF have a wide variety of missions, which include counterterrorism (CT), direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), civil affairs (CA), psychological operations (PSYOP), humanitarian assistance, search and rescue, information operations (IO), and others. David Gompert and Raymond Smith describe the primary U.S. SOF missions in Table 1.

Table 1. U.S. SOF Missions (From Gompert and Smith)<sup>128</sup>

Counterterrorism	Disrupt, defeat, and destroy terrorists and their infrastructure
Direct Action	Raid, ambush, or assault critical targets in hostile or denied territory
Special Reconnaissance	Complement national and theater intelligence by obtaining specific and time sensitive “ground truth”
Unconventional Warfare	With local forces, respond to guerrilla warfare, insurgency, subversion, and sabotage
Foreign Internal Defense	Train, advise, and assist host-nation military, paramilitary, and civil forces to help protect free and fragile societies
Civil Affairs	Coordinate U.S. military activities with foreign officials, U.S. civilian agencies, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations
Psychological Operations	Influence foreign views and behavior
Humanitarian Assistance	Deliver critical relief where and when others cannot
Search and Rescue	Extract personnel from enemy territory or denied areas when conventional combat search and rescue capabilities are insufficient
Information Operations	Interfere with adversary information and information systems while protecting U.S. systems
Collateral Mission Areas	Perform operations that include security assistance, counterdrug operations, and peacekeeping

<sup>127</sup> Tucker and Lamb, 146.

<sup>128</sup> David C. Gompert and Raymond C. Smith, “Creating a NATO Special Operations Force,” *Defense Horizons*, 52 (2006), 2 [http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense\\_horizons/DH\\_52.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense_horizons/DH_52.pdf) (accessed 4 July 2008).

These missions are generally thought of as either direct or indirect. Direct missions are typically understood to be those missions accomplished by SOF themselves, while indirect missions are generally accomplished using indigenous or surrogate forces and populations with SOF working in an advisory capacity.<sup>129</sup> However, this description is not comprehensive enough to provide political and military leaders sufficient understanding to make planning and employment decisions in developing SOF capabilities. Tucker and Lamb provide a finer level of detail about indirect missions and their strategic utility in noting that they “produce broader and more enduring results over time by reducing the appeal of terrorism and producing better intelligence on terrorists’ operations.”<sup>130</sup>

Whatever strategic aim NATO has, indirect missions are designed to favorably alter the political landscape by undermining support in a population for terrorist or insurgent movements. By working in this fashion, SOF can improve the ability of local forces to provide security by training and advising them in tactics, techniques and procedures in combating terrorism and insurgencies. In turn, this will result in “a reduction in terrorism’s mass appeal, a reduction in recruits, and growth in the willingness of those with knowledge of the terrorists to stop supporting them, or even better to betray them.”<sup>131</sup> Working indirectly is not merely a matter of passive SOF presence and teaching simple tasks to surrogate forces in the hope that terrorist and insurgent groups will be deterred from operating in these areas. In fact, it requires great commitment to employ SOF in such a protracted fashion, often in unstable and insecure environments, and without the benefit of logistical and administrative support associated with deployments of much larger conventional forces to an operating area.

In testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee regarding the current posture of U.S. SOF, the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, Admiral Eric T. Olson, characterized direct missions in the current war on terrorism as an

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<sup>129</sup> Tucker and Lamb, 153.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

approach that “addresses the immediate requirement to pursue terrorists, their infrastructure and their resources.”<sup>132</sup> He said that the “indirect approach addresses the underlying causes of terrorism and the environments in which terrorism activities occur.”<sup>133</sup> It would appear that the value of employing SOF in an indirect approach is more productive than a direct approach in achieving strategic objectives, although the indirect approach has not been widely accepted as a priority at many leadership levels due to a general tendency to resist the protracted nature of indirect missions, as well as dissatisfaction with the absence of the concrete metrics that are available in direct missions.

Neither direct nor indirect approaches are employed exclusively in CT operations. In fact, Tucker and Lamb categorize direct missions specifically as CT, counter-proliferation, DA, SR, and IO.<sup>134</sup> They categorize indirect missions as UW, PSYOP, FID, and CA.<sup>135</sup> However, direct and indirect missions often overlap, and tend to have a symbiotic effect on one another in achieving desired outcomes, particularly in confronting an asymmetric adversary.

The first chapter of this thesis alluded to the strategic utility found in appropriately employed SOF. In his book *Explorations in Strategy*, Gray discusses how SOF can be a strategic asset, but notes that their strategic value resides in their proper employment.<sup>136</sup> His model of strategic demand for SOF effectiveness considers five types of threat: balance-of-power problems, regional roguery, local disorder, nontraditional threats, and emergencies (what he terms “911”).<sup>137</sup> In this model direct and indirect missions can provide a state’s leadership with significant strategic gain if

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<sup>132</sup> Admiral Erik T. Olson, “The Posture of Special Operations Forces,” Statement Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 4 March 2008, [http://www.socom.mil/Docs/2008\\_Posture\\_Statement.doc](http://www.socom.mil/Docs/2008_Posture_Statement.doc) (accessed 13 January 2009).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Tucker and Lamb, 153.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>136</sup> Gray, 218.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 212.

employed in support of the national interest and strategy. Gray further notes that the utility that SOF offer “in the new security environment must flow from responses to the demands of policy.”<sup>138</sup> Tucker and Lamb corroborate this argument in writing that “SOF theoretically can provide disproportionate value by controlling military and political costs, both domestic and international, through small-unit activities that produce discriminate effects in ways that conventional forces cannot.”<sup>139</sup> Rothstein lends further support to the argument in noting that the strategic utility of SOF has been demonstrated numerous times, but that “there are three categories of operations that are exceptionally significant—economy of force, expansion of choice, and shaping of the future.”<sup>140</sup>

### **C. NATO CAPABILITIES AND ASYMMETRIC THREATS**

The previous chapter discussed the threats examined in NATO’s strategic vision documents in light of recent, current, and potential future security dilemmas. Spillover, instability, extremism, terrorism, strategic crime, and the destabilizing effects of failing states are of great concern to the Allies. Certainly, many of these issues overlap and converge to intensify the nature of the threat and further serve as cause for concern. The transnational nature of these threats has the potential, such as Afghanistan might have had before the October 2001 U.S.-led invasion, to become a danger that NATO must address proactively in order to mitigate the threats in a timely fashion. The lessons that NATO learned evidently sparked transformation initiatives such as the NRF and the NSTI. The Allies apparently intend to develop capabilities to counter such threats in the future. For example, a hostage rescue crisis at the Munich Olympics was the starkest instance in which it was determined that a dedicated commando capability was needed to confront terrorism, though at the time it was deemed a law enforcement requirement. Subsequent experiences in the Balkans and Afghanistan reinforced the need for a NATO rapid reaction capability and a SOF capability.

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<sup>138</sup> Gray, 192.

<sup>139</sup> Tucker and Lamb, 152.

<sup>140</sup> Hy Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 43.

Allied Joint Publication-3.5 (AJP-3.5), *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, notes that the rescue of hostages is essentially “a national responsibility” and that plans to confront such crises using national means will most likely have been long-developed independently at the national level.<sup>141</sup> In fact, groups such as GSG 9 and GIGN have demonstrated the resolve and ability to successfully overcome terrorists during hostage rescues on a number of occasions. One example was seen when the German commandos demonstrated their readiness to operate in distant countries during the Lufthansa airliner hijacking and rescue in Somalia in 1977. In future instances of this nature, they will doubtless be called upon to do the same. According to Colonel Russell Howard, Director of the U.S. Military Academy’s Combating Terrorism Center, this is particularly true in light of the skeptical opinion that most Europeans have regarding the use of the military against terrorists, considering terrorism instead a law enforcement responsibility.<sup>142</sup> However, in the event a crisis that requires such a response occurs in a distant country and concerns an Ally with limited SOF capability, how might NATO be asked to respond?

In events such as hostage rescue operations inside NATO’s geographic boundaries, the responding organization would almost certainly be from the law enforcement establishment. Most Western countries delineate roles and responsibilities regarding the employment of the military and the police. However, a nation may not have sufficiently robust capability in its law enforcement structure to confront immediate threats and crises, and may not have the requisite capability within its armed forces. In such a scenario, AJP-3.5 notes that NATO SOF could be called upon to respond to the crisis and conduct the operation on behalf of the Alliance member.<sup>143</sup> While this has not happened thus far, NATO SOF have been employed in multilateral operations in

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<sup>141</sup> “Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations, AJP-3.5, Ratification Draft 1” NATO, 2008 <https://nsa.nato.int/protected/unclass/ap/Dr%20AP/AJP-3.5%20RD1.pdf> (available with account access only; accessed 11 August 2008), 2.4.

<sup>142</sup> Russell D. Howard, “Thinking Creatively in the War on Terrorism: Leveraging NATO and the Partnership for Peace Consortium,” *Connections - The Quarterly Journal*, 1 (2005), 4 <https://consortium.pims.org/filestore2/download/1221/Terrorism.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2008).

<sup>143</sup> AJP-3.5, 2-4.

Afghanistan since 2002, with Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and others contributing SOF to missions across the spectrum of special operations.<sup>144</sup> However, the Allies have prioritized development of their individual capabilities to meet the threats that they perceive as being the greatest. In fact, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, all of the NATO European Allies perceive transnational and/or asymmetric threats as being greatest to them, though only Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom list SOF as a priority capability.<sup>145</sup> Many Allies have more conventional tactical priorities or command and control capabilities in their force development plans, which may be a reflection of their national obligations toward meeting NATO standards and contributing to the NRF.

### **1. NRF and Asymmetric Threats**

Collectively, NATO has a highly capable and well-trained military force. All Allies except Iceland (which has no military) can contribute armed forces in support of a larger military operation within the new NATO Force Structure. Some NATO nations are capable of fielding armies, navies and air forces that are among the most highly qualified in the world today. However, the forces that most nations are able to contribute are GPF, and the resources of the Allies vary considerably. As a result, the military capabilities of the Allies available for use in NATO operations differ. In fact, some Allied nations are only able to contribute small quantities of forces to the greater operational effort, as has been witnessed during the Balkan operations and in Afghanistan. To compensate, NATO leaders agreed at the Prague Summit in 2002 to develop the NRF, a force intended to eventually be 25,000 strong. According to the NRF

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<sup>144</sup> Howard, 5. The author cites Nora Bensahel, *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Europe, NATO, and the European Union* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2003), 22; and “NATO: Contributions to the War on Terrorism,” *US Department of State Fact Sheet*, (31 October 2002) [www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/14627.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/14627.htm).

<sup>145</sup> *European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations*, ed. Bastian Giegerich and Alexander Nicoll (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008), 31-39. Table 3.1 describes the perceived threats and priorities for 41 NATO and non-NATO European countries.

website, the force “has been acting as the engine for transforming NATO into a much stronger and more effective military organization.”<sup>146</sup>

By design, the NRF is structured to be “the Alliance’s rapidly deployable multinational unit made up of land, air, maritime and Special Forces components.”<sup>147</sup> In developing the NRF, the land, maritime and air components were established with an associated command and control structure and rotating forces standing ready to respond to whatever the North Atlantic Council (NAC) determines is necessary. Thus far, the NRF has been mobilized for two contingency operations, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, and the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. The NRF proved on both occasions that it can be activated and deployed with a relatively short response time, although the humanitarian nature of these operations is less politically volatile than a military operation that might require the use of lethal force.

The NRF has the potential to provide formidable land, maritime and air capabilities that can respond to a variety of security threats. However, the capabilities that the NRF offers can be negated by political disagreements on a variety of issues. These disagreements may lead governments to play “red cards” and/or to establish caveats about the appropriate level of military intervention by the current forces in the NRF rotation. Resource shortfalls also may hamper the NRF’s effectiveness, particularly in light of the failure of some Allies to meet burden sharing goals in allocating forces. The International Institute for Strategic Studies recently pointed out that, while NATO’s objective is to have 40% of Allied land forces deployable, just “2.7% of Europe’s two million military are capable of overseas deployment.”<sup>148</sup> A group of experts noted that

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<sup>146</sup> “The NATO Response Force-NRF,” *Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Allied Command Operations*, 19 October 2007 [http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/shape\\_nrf/nrf\\_intro.htm](http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/shape_nrf/nrf_intro.htm) (accessed 5 July 2008).

<sup>147</sup> “NATO’s Operational Military Command Structure,” *Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Allied Command Operations*, 16 May 2008 <http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/ncs/ncsindex.htm> (accessed 5 July 2008).

<sup>148</sup> Sally McNamara, “Principles and Proposals for NATO Reform,” *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder #2220*, 11 December 2008, [http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/bg2220.cfm#\\_ftnref33](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/bg2220.cfm#_ftnref33) (accessed 21 December 2008). McNamara cites “Press Release for European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, 9 July 2008, <http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/european-military-capabilities/press-statement>.

there is discussion about possibly reducing the NRF force requirement from 25,000 troops to 10,000 in light of the difficulties that the Alliance has had in meeting desired troop strength.<sup>149</sup>

Funding military operations has become a point of contention as well. As it stands, funding for NRF operations is supplied by the countries providing forces in the NRF rotation. This caused some discontent in the Spanish government when it bore much of the cost of the NRF operation to provide relief efforts in the wake of a massive earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005. Further, since the NAC must arrive at a consensus to allow the NRF to respond, the effectiveness of the force may be limited in those instances where time is of the essence. In his analysis of the 2004 Istanbul Summit, C. Richard Nelson validated that point when he wrote that “there are no standing provisions for pre-emptive military operations by the Alliance. In this way, any direct action by the Alliance against terrorists or those who harbour them requires prior approval by all member nations.”<sup>150</sup> With this in mind, the NRF may have limited utility in military operations that demand an immediate response. Whatever capabilities the NRF provides, the fact remains that the SOF capabilities of most Allies have not been developed as robustly as those of their GPF, although the NSTI is a significant step toward that end.

## **2. Doctrinal NATO SOF Capabilities**

Nearly all of the 26 Allies have SOF as part of their armed forces. When viewed collectively, NATO’s SOF provide the capabilities to meet and overcome virtually any

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<sup>149</sup> Daniel Hamilton, Charles Barry, Hans Binnendijk, Stephen Flanagan, Julianne Smith, James Townsend, “Alliance Reborn: An Atlantic Compact for the 21st Century,” *The Washington NATO Project*, February 2009, 47, [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/090130\\_nato\\_draft\\_final.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/090130_nato_draft_final.pdf) (accessed 1 February 2009). The report was produced through a collective effort from experts from the Atlantic Council of the United States, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, NDU, and the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University SAIS. The report notes that two months prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> NRF rotation, a mere 26% of required forces had been committed to NRF.

<sup>150</sup> C. Richard Nelson, “Analysis: Expanding NATO’s Counter-Terrorism Role,” *NATO Review Online*, Autumn 2004, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue3/english/analysis.html> (accessed 12 July 2008).

challenge using a wide variety of tactics, techniques and procedures. However, when viewed individually, the SOF capability of some Alliance members is quite thin. The reason for such a limited development of SOF among some member countries is that the individual Ally's requirement for such capability is determined by national objectives, and a country will almost certainly not commit scarce resources to developing a capability when its government does not deem it necessary or when the requirement is not pressing enough. With that in mind, it is easy to understand why countries such as Latvia and Lithuania maintain one Special Forces team each, while the United States has thousands of SOF with skills designed to accomplish missions throughout the spectrum of military operations.

As part of the NSTI, the Alliance created the NATO SOF Coordination Centre (NSCC). The intent of this organization is to be the "focal point for NATO Special Operations expertise" for the Supreme Allied Commander-Europe (SACEUR) and Allied Command Operations (ACO).<sup>151</sup> The NSCC is therefore co-located at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. The primary mission of the NSCC is to develop policy and doctrine for the employment of NATO SOF, and to develop and synchronize NATO SOF education, training, and exercises, as well as the training centers required.<sup>152</sup> Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the NSCC to optimize the burden-sharing responsibilities in view of the expected and current SOF capabilities of the NATO nations. The principal tasks expected of contributing nations will have to be performed to an acceptable level, and how well or poorly Alliance members have done to date has not been made public. Military Committee 437/1 (MC 437/1) is a classified document which codifies the capability standards required of contributing nations. The NSCC is charged with ensuring that contributing nations meet the standards outlined therein.

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<sup>151</sup> "NATO SOF Coordination Centre (NSCC)," Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Allied Command Operations, 4 October 2007 <http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/sof/index.html> (accessed 4 July 2008).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

AJP-3.5 requires that SOF engage in four missions: 1) peacetime military engagement; 2) peace support operations; 3) counter irregular threat operations; and 4) major combat operations.<sup>153</sup> The document further states that the tasks that NATO SOF are expected to be prepared to conduct are special reconnaissance surveillance (SR), direct action (DA), and military assistance (MA).<sup>154</sup> According to AJP-3.5, these principal tasks are defined as follows:

- SR: “Predominately HUMINT function that places ‘eyes on target’ in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive territory.”<sup>155</sup>

- DA: “Focused on specific, well-defined targets of strategic and operational significance, or in the conduct of decisive tactical operations.”<sup>156</sup>

- MA: “A broad spectrum of measures in support of friendly forces throughout the spectrum of conflict.”<sup>157</sup>

AJP-3.5 is careful to note that each NATO member country has different “modes and levels of employment” for its national SOF. For the NSCC, the important consideration is that SOF are strategic assets which should be employed to realize benefits at the “strategic and operational levels.”<sup>158</sup> 21 of the 25 Allies (excluding Iceland) have SOF capability of some sort. Eight Allies—Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and Slovenia—have SOF units that are smaller than battalion size.<sup>159</sup> On the other hand, some nations have much greater SOF capabilities that are suited for tasks throughout the spectrum of military operations. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom each have

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<sup>153</sup> AJP-3.5, 1-2.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 2-1.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 2-2.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 1-1.

<sup>159</sup> David C. Gompert and Raymond C. Smith, “Creating a NATO Special Operations Force,” *Defense Horizons*, 52 (2006), 3 [http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense\\_horizons/DH\\_52.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense_horizons/DH_52.pdf) (accessed 4 July 2008). The authors cite *The Military Balance 2004-2005*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

brigade size or larger units, and the remaining NATO members maintain battalion-level SOF elements at a minimum.<sup>160</sup> While specific national SOF capabilities are closely guarded for national security reasons, each of these SOF units is capable of meeting the DA and SR task requirements outlined in AJP-3.5.<sup>161</sup>

The MA portion of the task set includes training and advisory missions “by, with, or through friendly forces that are trained, equipped, supported, or employed in varying degrees by SOF.”<sup>162</sup> Also within the MA mission set are the more traditional SOF missions such as FID, in which SOF are tasked to train host nation security forces to bring stability to a country. It is in these arenas that NATO SOF can yield the greatest benefit for the Alliance by ensuring that an unconventional and asymmetric approach is adopted in dealing with present and future security threats to eliminate them before they are manifested more significantly. However, this approach can also be hindered by political decisions because the results of such missions are less tangible and less measureable than those of certain other military operations, and are not traditionally reported by the media. In the recent American experience, these types of military operations tend to be ignored (or concealed) because they are the “antithesis of the Pentagon’s long-standing preoccupation with rapidly-achieved, measureable effects.”<sup>163</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

There are many considerations in opting to employ SOF in place of GPF. Gray notes that SOF are severely limited as a “substitute for GPF.”<sup>164</sup> Likewise, the inverse holds true, that SOF cannot be readily replaced by GPF for those roles and missions for

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<sup>160</sup> The actual number of troops in military units depends on the organizational structure of the unit and the size of its subordinate units. For example, a brigade may be composed of two to six subordinate battalions and may have from 2,000 to 5,000 troops. Battalions may have up to 1,000 troops, and be comprised of multiple companies of varying troop levels. Each branch may differ in its composition, and each service may differ as well.

<sup>161</sup> Author’s interview with an expert observer at the NSCC, 9 December 2008.

<sup>162</sup> AJP-3.5, 2-3.

<sup>163</sup> Rothstein, xiv.

<sup>164</sup> Gray, 199.

which they are designed. One of the typical defining characteristics of SOF is their ability to operate in hostile, denied, and politically sensitive areas. Tucker and Lamb note that a significant difference between SOF and GPF is found in the “unique training, capabilities, and skills [that] allow them to operate successfully in such an environment.”<sup>165</sup> The ability of SOF to operate with a smaller operational footprint than GPF, and yet with great flexibility and adaptability, make them ideal for certain roles and missions. However, Gray astutely warns that the capabilities and strategic utility of SOF “are not a panacea.”<sup>166</sup>

As NATO continues the initiative in developing an Alliance SOF capability, it is important for leaders to be well educated about what SOF capabilities are, as well as how SOF should be employed. In crises that demand an immediate response, such as hostage rescues, it stands to reason that the individual Ally’s government and law enforcement agencies will have primary responsibility for the crisis, which almost certainly holds true both within the country and outside the country. There are precedents for both scenarios, and the law enforcement personnel that have been called upon to execute the operations have been by and large successful. However, in the event that a country’s law enforcement agencies are incapable of resolving *in extremis* problems, there may be a need for one or a number of Allies to render assistance, potentially requiring the capabilities found in SOF.

Since U.S. SOF are the most robust and the largest in the world in terms of manpower and resources, it stands to reason that NATO, with the United States as an Ally, ought to be capable of meeting all threats that would require the use of SOF. However, Gompert and Smith note that this fact, in and of itself, does not mean that U.S. SOF are “superior in every mission or skill set.”<sup>167</sup> They note that some NATO Allies possess “deep cultural awareness and access” to countries that the United States simply does not, and that this can provide a solid foundation for operations that require the

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<sup>165</sup> Tucker and Lamb, 147.

<sup>166</sup> Gray, 219.

<sup>167</sup> Gompert and Smith, 4.

development of “indigenous antiterror forces,” particularly in previous colonial areas in Africa and the Middle East and in Europe itself.<sup>168</sup> However, the process of education, training and exercises will certainly have a mutually beneficial effect on SOF of all participating nations as tactics, techniques, and procedures are shared among partners and refined over time. Additionally, the cultural skill set that European SOF may excel in as a result of long-term exposure to countries in high-priority regions can be shared with Allies that have had less exposure to these regions.

NATO SOF have been operating in Afghanistan since 2002. However, the Afghanistan experience may not be the best example of the appropriate use of SOF. Volumes have been written about the impetus lost after incredible accomplishments by SOF. These achievements were marginalized by the insistence on GPF employment in the face of a growing asymmetric enemy. Under the auspices of the International Security Assistance Force, NATO currently leads military operations in Afghanistan with both GPF and SOF contributions for the missions outside the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom. Additionally, NATO continues to fulfill security responsibilities in the Balkans as the United Nations mission transitions to the European Union. Both of these examples demonstrate that NATO is capable of deploying large numbers of armed forces to protracted combat and stabilization operations. Both examples also demonstrate that NATO still has great room for improvement. Until the NRF is called upon to prove its utility in non-humanitarian operations, one can only make assumptions about how well or poorly the force will perform.

This chapter examined SOF roles and missions in general terms, and considered what is expected of NATO SOF under the NSTI. Additionally, this chapter discussed the strategic utility found in properly employed SOF. The previous two chapters discussed NATO’s strategic documents and their most salient threats. In addressing these threats, the criteria for NATO to use existing GPF, either through activation of the NRF or NATO’s traditional forces, or national law enforcement agencies, have not been well defined. The next chapter analyzes the Alliance’s strategic outlook vis-à-vis the potential threats and SOF capabilities.

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<sup>168</sup> Gompert and Smith, 4.

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## V. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. INTRODUCTION

Previous chapters of this thesis often referred to the massive transformation that NATO has undertaken in the post-Cold War era. Some have argued that NATO's transformation came too late, or have questioned the need for such an alliance given the absence of a distinct and potentially existential threat such as the Alliance faced during the Cold War. But even in the months before the actual collapse of the Soviet Union, the Wittmann Paper predicted the rapidly evolving security environment in which NATO would soon find itself.<sup>169</sup> As the Wittmann Paper forecast, the end of the Cold War brought instability, including failed states and terrorism. These and other asymmetric challenges to the global security environment forced NATO to change its posture away from one focused on deterrence and preparedness to defend against a Soviet invasion toward a more flexible and expeditionary force able to confront security threats across the continuum of potential challenges. Quite significantly, the Alliance's post-Cold War experiences brought to light the need to develop a special operations capability, which served as the catalyst for the NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF) Transformation Initiative (NSTI).

Chapter II of this thesis analyzed NATO's strategic vision and how the Alliance is posturing itself for the twenty-first century security environment. The conclusions drawn from Chapter II highlight the fact that NATO views security more globally than was the case during the Cold War and the years immediately thereafter. When viewed collectively, the four primary strategy documents examined—NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept, the 2004 Strategic Vision document, NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism, and NATO's Comprehensive Political Guidance—point to new thinking in security strategy which is focused on asymmetric threats, instability, and terrorism.

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<sup>169</sup> See Chapter III of this thesis for a discussion of the Wittmann Paper and its prediction of the looming security challenges.

Chapter III of this thesis examined the contemporary security environment and identified potential threats to the Alliance. This determination was made by analyzing NATO's presentation of security concerns in publicly available strategy documents and by assessing the Alliance's most significant vulnerabilities. Of these vulnerabilities, terrorism must be considered the gravest concern at present. However, the global and extensively networked nature of terrorist groups magnifies the security threat significantly. Moreover, some terrorists are associated with criminal elements and benefit from safe havens found in weak, unstable, and failing states. The complexity of these combined phenomena is a far cry from the Cold-War era threat of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Despite the standing requirement to posture for high-intensity conflict, the Allies regard the likelihood of this occurring in the near or medium term as low.

Chapter IV of this thesis discussed the current SOF capabilities of the Allies, as well as the expectations in capabilities for troop contributing nations in meeting SOF standards as part of the NSTI. How SOF are employed, and the roles and missions they perform, are significantly different from those of general purpose forces (GPF). Because they are unique, the capabilities SOF are able to bring to bear are ideal for specific missions. However, there are perils in substituting SOF for tasks better suited for GPF or law enforcement agencies. Many experts point to the value SOF have in producing effects, through direct and indirect missions, that contribute to realizing a nation's strategic objectives and shaping problematic security environments toward that end.

This chapter examines the assessments of the previous three chapters. The objective is to identify the opportunities and challenges that the NSTI faces by balancing NATO's strategic vision with realistic threats to security and the capabilities resident in NATO SOF contributing nations. This chapter concludes with recommendations for NATO in developing SOF capabilities.

## B. CHALLENGES

As discussed in the previous three chapters, the area of emphasis for the Alliance's future military operations will probably be outside NATO's geographic borders. It is implied in NATO's strategy documents that collective defense, while still the Alliance's *raison d'être*, is no longer the sole security consideration. Since 1992 NATO has been engaged in military operations outside its geographic borders. The Alliance will continue to be so engaged for the foreseeable future in order to mitigate the dangers to the global security environment caused by terrorism, organized crime, weak and failing states, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means, spillover from instability on its periphery, and related concerns expressed in strategy documents. However, NATO has a number of challenges to overcome if its capabilities are to be developed and used to their fullest potential.

To begin with, NATO's political dynamics and strategic outlook could serve as constraints on the effective use of SOF. Chapter II discussed the two most salient limitations: the lack of a unified strategic vision for SOF, and political shortcomings such as consensus-based decision making, caveats, and "red cards." This is not to imply that NATO has no strategic vision. In fact, just the opposite is true. NATO's publicly available strategic vision is quite broad and far-reaching. However, as far as aligning political priorities with military capabilities is concerned, the strategic vision is rather ambiguous. It does not facilitate the prioritization and development of military capabilities to deal with twenty-first century security concerns. Chapter II took note of the chagrin of General James L. Jones, former SACEUR, when he noted that the consensus model has been adopted in NATO's many committees. The delays and compromises stemming from reliance on the consensus model are exacerbated by national political rivalries between Allies that sometimes hamstring agreements at NATO headquarters.<sup>170</sup> While consensus-based decision making has served the Alliance well in speaking with a unified voice at the highest political levels, this shortcoming at the lower

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<sup>170</sup> David S. Yost, "An Interview with General James L. Jones, USMC, Retired, Supreme Allied Commander Europe," *NATO Defense College Research Paper*, 34 (January 2008), 3-4, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp\\_34.pdf](http://www.ndc.nato.int/download/publications/rp_34.pdf) (accessed 26 August 2008).

levels will not serve the Alliance's best interests in employing SOF effectively. The politically-driven practice of placing caveats and "red cards" on the usability of forces could marginalize the potential effectiveness of SOF even further.

The NATO SOF governing doctrine, while quite comprehensive, has a significant inadequacy in that it does not place emphasis on the unique ability of SOF to shape the operating environment to align with desired Alliance security goals. Ordinarily, this function would fall within the area that NATO terms Military Assistance (MA), which takes advantage of the ability of SOF to use knowledge of the local environment and population to shape the security conditions favorably in meeting strategic objectives. Allied Joint Publication-3.5 (AJP-3.5), *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, rightly notes that "NATO SOF are strategic assets," the proper employment of which is "realized at the strategic and operational levels."<sup>171</sup> The document also notes that special operations are normally conducted "to achieve military objectives that can have military, diplomatic, informational, or economic effects."<sup>172</sup> As Chapter IV describes, AJP-3.5 defines training and advisory missions and captures the extremely broad nature of MA roles and missions, although it falls short of providing the specificity that the Direct Action (DA) and Special Reconnaissance and Surveillance (SR) task descriptions offer. Additionally, the MA capability standards that are outlined in Military Committee 437/1 have not been achieved by the SOF of every NATO troop contributing nation, although these capabilities exist in non-SOF branches of Allied armed forces. In fact, while all NATO SOF troop contributing nations have resident DA and SR capabilities, only a handful have resident MA capability in their SOF.<sup>173</sup> This deficiency may constrain the ability of the NATO SOF Coordination Center (NSCC) to work toward the development

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<sup>171</sup> "Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations, AJP-3.5, Ratification Draft 1" NATO, 2008 <https://nsa.nato.int/protected/unclass/ap/Dr%20AP/AJP-3.5%20RD1.pdf> (available with account access only; accessed 11 August 2008), 1-1.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Author's interview with an expert observer at the NSCC, 9 December 2008.

of critical capabilities. This could also leave the Allies in a precarious position should these skills be required for an emerging crisis at a time when the available contributing nations' SOF do not have such a capability.

Chapter II also highlighted the failure of the Allies to meet their informal pledge in 2002 of an annual two percent of GDP investment in military expenditures. Inadequate defense spending may constrain the effectiveness of NATO SOF, particularly in those nations that are developing SOF capability from low levels that will be expected to meet performance and command and control standards as quickly as possible. Interoperability problems with communications equipment and command and control systems may also hinder the effective development and employment of NATO SOF. As the individual Allies make difficult prioritization decisions regarding resource allocation for their armed forces, equipment unique to SOF that is required for interoperability in NATO operations could fall below the funding threshold if other programs are deemed more critical in an Ally's procurement planning. These funding and compatibility problems exist currently in the NSTI,<sup>174</sup> and could negatively impact the ability of Allied SOF to be employed in NATO Response Force or Combined Joint Task Force operations.<sup>175</sup>

Another possible limitation in SOF capability is in the information realm. Over the years, U.S. SOF have increasingly placed great value on the role of information operations (IO) and psychological operations (PSYOPS) in achieving their goals. This capability is not considered a requirement for SOF under the NSTI. This omission of this capability may actually create a more difficult and complex operating environment for NATO SOF because of the criticality of establishing a positive relationship with the

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<sup>174</sup> Author's interview with an expert observer at the NSCC, 9 December 2008.

<sup>175</sup> The Alliance reorganized its command and force structures as part of its transformation to a more flexible and expeditionary posture. The Combined Joint Task Force is designed to provide command and control during military operations at strategic, operational and tactical levels. According to NATO, CJTFs are multinational and multiservice organizations "formed for a specific mission (task) from within the full spectrum of Alliance military missions requiring multinational and multiservice command and control by a CJTF headquarters." For the full description of NATO's command structure, see "NATO's Operational Military Command Structure," *Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Allied Command Operations*, 16 May 2008 <http://www.nato.int/shape/issues/ncs/ncsindex.htm> (accessed 5 July 2008).

population in the areas in which they operate, and in preventing the adversary from establishing such a relationship. This is particularly true in the struggle against terrorism and insurgency. An Atlantic Council study characterized NATO's use of ideas in persuading populations to turn against terrorism as indirect, consisting essentially of security support to governments. The study points out NATO's shortsightedness in the war of ideas. According to the study, "NATO has the potential, as it did during the Cold War, to offer an attractive, positive vision of diversity, tolerance and progress beneath its security umbrella that could make a valuable contribution to the overall confrontation with international terrorists."<sup>176</sup> Recent disagreements about the information strategy within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan brought to light differences of opinion about how IO and PSYOPS should be employed. The commander of ISAF, General David McKiernan, was forced to reverse his decision to combine public affairs, IO, and PSYOPS at ISAF headquarters.<sup>177</sup>

### **C. OPPORTUNITIES**

NATO has demonstrated its desire to develop a capability to address asymmetric threats, and the NSTI has great potential as a means to that end. The collective SOF attributes that member nations bring to the table could, if employed properly, ensure that the Alliance's security objectives are met in the long and short term. SOF bring the ideal set of tools to work toward meeting the security challenges outlined in the Alliance's strategy documents.

The process of education, training and exercises may have a symbiotic and mutually beneficial effect on SOF of all participating Allies for three primary reasons. First, NSTI intends to provide a unique and focused forum in which the NATO SOF community can learn new tactics, techniques, and procedures as they develop and share

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<sup>176</sup> *NATO's Role in Confronting International Terrorism*, (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council of the United States, 2004), xi, [http://www.acus.org/docs/0406-NATO\\_Role\\_Confronting\\_International\\_Terrorism.pdf](http://www.acus.org/docs/0406-NATO_Role_Confronting_International_Terrorism.pdf) (accessed 4 August 2008).

<sup>177</sup> Jon Hemming, "NATO Scraps Press and Psyops Merger in Afghanistan," *Reuters*, 3 December 2008, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/email/idUKTRE4B23LX20081203?sp=true> (accessed 3 December 2008).

training and experiences over time. Some Allies have experiences in dealing with insurgencies in former colonies that others have not, and the experiences gleaned while conducting counter-insurgency and unconventional warfare operations could be shared with the rest of the SOF troop contributing nations to add value to the SOF capabilities of the individual nations and to NATO SOF more generally.

Second, as suggested above, the cultural skill set that some European SOF have as a result of long-term colonial exposure to countries and populations in regions prone to instability can be shared with Allies that have less experience in unconventional or irregular operations. This keen insight regarding local cultural factors and political circumstances can provide invaluable capability to employ SOF in MA roles and missions to develop indigenous security capacity, eliminate terrorist and criminal safe havens, and most importantly, to serve as a catalyst in bringing NATO's strategic objectives to fruition. The 1999 Strategic Concept recognizes the potential requirement for NATO to engage in operations if countries in the Euro-Atlantic area suffer political upheavals, or if any Allies face spillover from nearby conflicts.<sup>178</sup> NATO SOF employed in protracted MA operations may prevent such crises from emerging in a volatile fashion and preclude the need for a conflict management or crisis response mission such as those reflected in the Alliance's "fundamental security tasks."<sup>179</sup>

Third, NSTI is the first and best opportunity that many nations have to be vital contributors to the Alliance. Developing niche capabilities such as training centers that take advantage of skills or geographic locations will ensure that smaller, newer Allies with fewer resources can become better able to provide key support mechanisms to their NATO partners. NSTI provides an opportunity for NATO nations to develop and commit a more relevant force to an operation than the general purpose forces that they might otherwise be obliged to employ at greater cost in order to achieve comparable effects.

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<sup>178</sup> "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," NATO Press Release, Washington Summit, 24 April 1999, par. 20, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> (accessed 7 September 2008).

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 10.

NSTI provides greater potential reward for the Alliance than simply developing the SOF capability of the troop contributing nations. There is the potential for engagement in troubled regions or states to prevent the emergence of any of the security risks outlined in the 1999 Strategic Concept. If the NSTI is pursued within the framework of NATO's outreach programs, such as the Partnership for Peace, the NATO-Russia Council, and the Mediterranean Dialogue, it may provide the Alliance with the opportunity to establish rapport with potential partners that have similar concerns about the twenty-first century security environment, but have far less capacity and resources to commit to dealing with the problems. A plan to engage NATO SOF with potential partners in unstable regions and countries follows the logic of experts such as Colin Gray, Hy Rothstein, David Tucker, and Christopher Lamb, who essentially argue that the greatest benefit of SOF is found in their strategic utility. NATO SOF, if employed in these roles and missions, could allow NATO to "shape the future" if the political conditions allow it.<sup>180</sup>

#### **D. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

NATO is greater than the sum of its parts. Its strength lies not only in the awesome military capability that can be brought to bear on the battlefield, but also in the diplomatic and economic assets that the 26 individual nations can use collectively to resolve security dilemmas. However, NATO military capabilities are not optimally configured to confront and contend with the unconventional challenges that the Alliance faces in the near-to-mid term. In characterizing NATO's military dominance, John Leech noted that "in the kind of war most likely to face us, we shall find that our weapons have become so highly sophisticated that any traditional conflict becomes largely one-sided" and that "such a war would be unfair and devoid of heroism."<sup>181</sup> With this in mind, and as the Allies acknowledge, it is unlikely that an adversary would confront NATO in a

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<sup>180</sup> Hy Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 43. Rothstein notes that the strategic utility of SOF during operations falls into three categories: economy of force, expansion of choice, and shaping the future.

<sup>181</sup> John Leech, *Asymmetries of Conflict: War Without Death* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 47.

conventional engagement. This highlights the Alliance's vulnerability to unconventional campaigns. NATO's Comprehensive Political Guidance pointedly notes that "special focus" must be placed "on the most likely operations" and that the Alliance must be able to respond "to current and future operational requirements."<sup>182</sup> History has demonstrated repeatedly that a conventional approach to warfare cannot effectively confront an unconventional adversary.

Authors such as John Arquilla, Martin van Creveld and Thomas X. Hammes, among many others, have written extensively about how the nature of warfare is changing away from high-intensity conflict in a conventional major theater war toward an asymmetric style of conflict.<sup>183</sup> This type of warfare has been branded with terms such as low-intensity conflict, asymmetric warfare, and fourth generation warfare. Whatever name this style of warfare is given, it seems clear that it has become the dominant form of warfare in the twenty-first century. As Chapters II and III noted, NATO's own published strategy documents support this judgment, and the perceived greatest threats at the national level of the individual Allies reflect this view as well.

If the Allies truly understand their greatest threats to be asymmetric, it stands to reason that NATO expects future confrontations to be built on a guerrilla model. A NATO publication notes that this type of conflict is not restricted to "centuries-old

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<sup>182</sup> "Comprehensive Political Guidance," NATO Online Library, 29 November 2006 (updated 5 November 2007), par. 7, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b061129e.htm> (accessed 15 October 2008).

<sup>183</sup> For greater detail on the change in warfare to a less conventional and more protracted style, see John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the Twenty-First Century* (St Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), and Thomas X. Hammes, "War Evolves Into the Fourth Generation," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 26, 2 (2005), 189-221. Arquilla and Ronfeldt associate netwar to "lower intensity conflict at the societal end of the spectrum" which, they maintain, will become the "more prevalent and challenging form of warfare" in the current period. Van Creveld states that future war will be waged by "groups whom we today call terrorists, guerrillas, bandits, and robbers" and not by armies. Van Creveld and Hammes note that this unconventional form of warfare has existed for many years, and both cite the example of Mao Tse-Tung's successful employment of this style of warfare. An appendix to a NATO publication discusses Alliance concerns about this type of warfare as well. See Frances L. Edwards and Friedrich Steinhäusler, *NATO and Terrorism: On Scene: New Challenges for First Responders and Civil Protection* (Dordrecht, NL: Springer Publishing, 2006). Appendix 2 of this publication notes that fourth-generation warfare began with Mao and is not just simple insurgency, but a larger phenomenon that transcends borders and traditional limits on time.

guerrilla warfare” but is a convergence of guerrilla tactics with “technological developments of modern times.”<sup>184</sup> From a tactical standpoint, nowhere has the philosophy been more succinctly captured about how a force should engage a better manned, better armed, and better resourced army than by Mao Tse-Tung when he wrote that, “when guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. In guerrilla strategy, the enemy’s rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated.”<sup>185</sup> This strategy was used to great effect against the United States in Vietnam, and against France in Vietnam and Algeria; and it appears to have become the adopted strategy against ISAF in Afghanistan.

The primary threats to NATO are, in fact, asymmetric. The Alliance is not currently structured to respond against non-state entities to whom borders have no significance and who operate freely in weak and failing states with unstable governments that cannot effectively oppose their actions. The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan is evidence of that, as guerrilla-style operations conducted by the Taliban have become more lethal and have diminished political support among the Allies for operations in that country. Forces with expertise in confronting such asymmetric threats must be given priority in the near term so that the Alliance will be prepared to deal with such threats when and as they arise.

This is not to imply that SOF should demand all of NATO’s attention. SOF alone should never be considered absolute answers to all of the Alliance’s security challenges. Nor does this thesis intend to imply that NATO strategy is so poorly articulated that it is destined to cause a failure in military operations. However, transformation efforts designed to create a capability that can meet the Alliance’s overarching security objectives require a well-formulated strategy. If NATO hopes to optimize the strategic utility of SOF, it should consider the following recommendations:

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<sup>184</sup> Edwards and Steinhäusler, 211.

<sup>185</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith II (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 46.

- Craft a strategy document that reflects twenty-first century security concerns and that removes the ambiguity found in the four current publicly available sources: NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept, the 2004 Strategic Vision document, NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism, and NATO's Comprehensive Political Guidance. This will allow the Military Committee to develop a revised MC 400 series document that facilitates the development of SOF to meet overarching Alliance security objectives.

- Require that troop contributing nations for NATO SOF agree to all potential methods of employment during the development of Alliance strategy to ensure that the SOF capabilities are not hamstrung during an operational commitment by caveats and "red cards." Limitations on how a nation's forces can be employed during NATO operations have been imposed a number of times in the post-Cold War era, and they have made the Allies less effective than they might have been at the tactical and operational levels.

- Eliminate consensus-based decision making below NATO's highest political levels to remove the "slow and painful" process that General Jones referred to, especially in committees that provide guidance, direction and oversight of SOF.<sup>186</sup> This is critical because opportunities to train and employ these specialized forces during emerging or ongoing crises are often of limited duration. A prolonged and excruciating decision making process is counterproductive in such scenarios.

- Delegate decision-making authority on SOF employment to SACEUR to avoid the bottlenecks that are so frequent in reaching consensus at political levels at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). Just as SACEUR has been delegated command authority in peacetime with NATO's air defense, so too should he be delegated command authority regarding decisions to employ SOF in circumstances that he perceives as demanding an immediate response. This would ensure that NATO SOF could be employed without the wrangling normally seen in the North Atlantic Council and would provide the Alliance's military leadership the flexibility needed to employ

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<sup>186</sup> Yost, 3-4.

SOF appropriately—either independently or with conventional forces, taking greater advantage of the unique capabilities of SOF in both direct and indirect operations.

- Ensure that development of NATO SOF capability is given sufficient priority so that inadequate funding contributions will not jeopardize the initiative. Chapter III noted that Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom are the only European Allies that view SOF as a priority capability for their armed forces, although all Allies perceive transnational and/or asymmetric threats as being the greatest in currently foreseeable circumstances. As many of the Allies continue to underfund their respective militaries compared to the informally agreed two-percent of GDP benchmark, there may be a temptation to reduce or eliminate funding for lower priority military requirements. Because only three European Allies perceive SOF as a priority requirement, a scenario can be envisaged in which the remaining Allies reduce or eliminate funding for SOF, thereby jeopardizing the NSTI on the whole.

- Place more emphasis on the need to conduct protracted forms of unconventional warfare and require SOF troop contributing nations to incorporate this capability into their SOF. The greatest potential benefit of creating NATO SOF centers not on what can be brought to bear in DA and SR, but the potential strategic and operational success in the MA sphere. NATO SOF can be employed in regions of strategic concern with regard to terrorism and extremism, can operate with a small footprint, and can be successful in operations that directly benefit NATO's collective instruments of statecraft—the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic spheres. By taking advantage of the strategic benefits available in the unconventional MA mission set, NATO SOF can overcome challenges associated with the Alliance's security concerns today and in the foreseeable future.

There will always be a requirement to have resident DA and SR capabilities, but to focus solely on these capabilities would be to disregard SOF roles and missions that could have the greatest strategic return and that could align the security environment in volatile and unstable regions with NATO's desired end state. The effectiveness of the United States and its NATO Allies and coalition partners in Afghanistan can be used as the best example of this logic. As of this writing, military operations in Afghanistan are

well into their eighth year, and the security situation in that country is visibly deteriorating in spite of ISAF and U.S. efforts to control it. In the current Afghanistan security environment, indirect missions such as those associated with unconventional warfare have not only taken a back seat to direct missions, but have arguably been left behind. This may be due in large part to the emphasis seemingly placed on direct action missions in which statistical measures of effectiveness can be derived from the number of insurgents killed or captured.

In order to overcome the many challenges listed above and gain the benefits that may be realized through proper employment of SOF, NATO's political leadership must have a better understanding of the capabilities resident in SOF. With such an understanding, the Alliance's political leaders can facilitate the development of comprehensive SOF capabilities and provide the military leadership the means to employ SOF to meet NATO's political and security objectives.

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