





Centro Militare di Studi Strategici - Roma



Centre for Defence Studies - London

# The ERRF and the NRF

The European Rapid Reaction Force and the NATO  
Reaction Force: Compatibilities and Choices

A joint project between  
Military Centre for Strategic Studies (Rome)  
and Centre for Defence Studies (London)

## **Project team**

*Michael Clarke (CDS)*

*Paul Cornish (CDS)*

*Carlo Finizio (CeMiSS)*

*Andrea Grazioso (CeMiSS)*

*Giovanni Gasparini (CeMiSS)*



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Centro Militare di Studi Strategici  
Piazza della Rovere, 83 - 00165 Roma (RM)  
e-mail: relest.cemiss@casd.difesa.it

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## Executive summary

- The political context in which current debates about the creation of both the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) and the NATO Response Force (NRF) are far more pressured than was the case in 1999 when the Helsinki Headline Goals to create an ERRF were first articulated.
- Since that time there has been a more general move among the Europeans to make their forces more flexible and rapidly deployable in response to the challenges of crisis management and the deficiencies that have been exposed in recent operations.
- In addition, the events of '9/11' and the US 'War on Terror' have added a major political impetus from the United States for the Europeans to provide forces that Washington regards as most relevant to its security needs. All this takes place against a backdrop of major structural reform in both NATO and the European Union as they both prepare for big enlargements.
- The outcome of the efforts to create an ERRF and the NRF will have important effects on the Transatlantic relationship for some time to come. The NRF, in particular, has taken on major symbolic importance for the US, both as a symbol of European military status in the Transatlantic relationship and as a vehicle for technical 'transformation' of modern forces.
- The ERRF and the NRF are different, not only in their military focus and their respective requirements. They also represent quite divergent strategic conceptions between war-fighting and crisis management. While war-fighting and crisis management both overlap in some significant ways, the separate origins of the ERRF and the NRF stem from a desire to undertake different sorts of operations.
- Progress towards meeting the original Helsinki Headline Goals to create the ERRF, and the likely requirements of the NRF, suggest that there is no automatic compatibility between the two concepts. While some military

requirements are common to both, others are not. Though the NRF is based on a comparatively small force of 21,000 (compared with the 60,000 of the ERRF), the reality of keeping such a number at a high state of readiness and able to be deployed into a wide range of combat situations, should not be under-estimated.

- A wide range of assets are potentially available to the Europeans for both ERRF and NRF purposes if forces can be rotated in and out of their role on stand-by for deployment under these auspices. Actual numbers of personnel are probably realisable, as are numbers of available combat aircraft and frontline ships. Nevertheless, important deficiencies in the 'enabling technologies', the headquarters facilities and the doctrine and training requirements continue to exist.
- The Europeans can certainly make more of their existing resources to help engender greater rapidity in all their frontline forces, but the major deficiencies that remain have not been much diminished by all the activity surrounding the Helsinki Goals since 1999, and will not be easily addressed under existing resource constrictions.
- The prospects that the Europeans will be able to meet their full responsibilities to both the ERRF and the NRF concepts are not good. Some careful prioritisation will have to take place in national defence planning to ensure that one initiative does not significantly diminish the other.
- Decisions on the specific requirements of both force initiatives therefore go well beyond the realms of the technical. The fate of these initiatives is not only bound up with the practical future of the Transatlantic relationship but also with that of the European defence industrial base and the Transatlantic defence market.
- The European Convention and the new EU Treaty cannot be expected to provide detailed answers to the problems analysed in this report. The Treaty will, of necessity, represent delicate political compromises and will couch future defence relations in terms of familiar political ambiguities. The Europeans, however, now urgently need some political device or forum that is capable of both maintaining the impetus to reform their defence structures and also to handle some of the political trade-offs which need to be made between the different strategic and tactical conceptions underlying the ERRF and the NRF.

## Preface

The widespread sympathy and solidarity shown towards the United States by many in Europe after the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 (9/11), proved to be remarkably short-lived commodities. In the two years following 9/11, the strategic and security relationship between the US and its European allies was characterised at best by a gradual divergence of judgement and policy, and at worst by an irreversible parting of the ways. Transatlantic consensus proved to be in short supply in all key areas of the post-9/11 security policy and debate: the Bush administration's 'war on terror'; European military capabilities and preparedness; the evolving US 'doctrine of pre-emption'; military operations against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan; subsequent attempts to stabilise and reconstruct Afghanistan; and latterly the actions of the US-led coalition to unseat the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. As on a number of occasions since the end of the Cold War, some US and European commentators were driven to predict the end of NATO, and perhaps even the collapse of the broader US-European relationship.

Beneath the doom-laden rhetoric and headlines, however, both sides of the seemingly unbridgeable transatlantic divide continued to pursue complex initiatives to improve collective and individual security and defence capabilities. In spite of their disagreements, a spirit of co-operation continued to inform the US-European relationship. Of course, not all European governments shared the same level of enthusiasm for co-operating with the United States, but all acknowledged that the transatlantic alliance had been severely damaged, and all were anxious that the long history of security and defence co-operation with the United States would not now come to an abrupt end.

An especially significant area of discussion has been the development of substantial military capabilities for 'rapid reaction' deployment. Rapid reaction and the use of lightweight, mobile forces on interdiction and rescue operations has become very much part of the post-9/11 mood. But the requirement for rapid reaction capabilities is nothing new. NATO and its constituent,

national armed forces experimented with various types and levels of rapid reaction throughout the Cold War. The need for adequate rapid reaction capabilities was also felt at frequent intervals during the strategically confused 1990s, resulting in a set of rapid deployment initiatives by NATO. Although a much more recent arrival on the military scene, the European Union responded similarly to the security challenges of the 1990s, with its 1999 project to acquire a rapid reaction capability. With the EU's initiative being launched well before 9/11, NATO's decision in late 2002 to establish a strategic-level rapid reaction capability can properly be regarded as a consequence of 9/11.

The fate of each of the main rapid deployment initiatives (the EU's European Rapid Reaction Force or ERRF, and the NATO Response Force or NRF) is of profound importance for the institutions they represent. For the EU, the ERRF has emerged as a key indicator for the future development of the EU. For many, the ERRF symbolises the final achievement of the post-1945 European project, with the maturation of the EU into a fully competent political union with the capacity to use armed force on its own terms. For others, however, the ERRF represents the hubris of the European 'federalists', a wasteful diversion of resources away from NATO, and a symbol of what the EU must *not* become. As far as NATO is concerned, having spent over a decade seeking a clear and unequivocal mission, the NRF is a central feature of the much-vaunted 'transformation' of NATO into a 21<sup>st</sup> century political-military alliance, geared to meet new threats from global terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The need for a co-operative relationship between NATO and the EU, and specifically between NRF and ERRF has been acknowledged – explicitly or otherwise – by both parent organisations. NATO's November 2002 Prague summit declaration insisted that 'The NRF and EU Headline Goal should be mutually reinforcing while respecting the autonomy of both organisations.' In June 2003 Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for CFSP, published a strategy document – 'A Secure Europe in a Better World' – in which he referred to the importance in the international system of the transatlantic relationship, and to NATO as an 'important expression' of that relationship: 'the transatlantic relationship is irreplaceable. Acting together, the [EU] and the United States can be a formidable force for good in the world.' And later that month, the Presidency Conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council referred approvingly to a 'strategic partnership between the two organisations [EU and NATO] in crisis management'. The idea that there could be anything other than co-operation between NATO and EU, NRF and ERRF, should al-

so be rejected by those EU governments that, together, make up the bulk of NATO's membership. By agreeing to both military initiatives, governments with dual EU-NATO membership must have assumed that co-operation between NRF and ERRF would be possible, not least because each government has only one set of national military resources to allocate to a range of strategic tasks.

Nevertheless, the prospect of the west's two leading multinational organisations preparing to do apparently similar things militarily, has prompted discussion about the coherence and direction of the transatlantic security relationship. Just as the NRF and ERRF are seen to embody the prospects of their parent organisation, so the connection between the two initiatives has become an indicator of the broader relationship. For those inclined to a pessimistic view, the simple fact that there are two such initiatives is yet more proof of the parting of the ways between the United States and her European allies. It is claimed that the duplication of military effort is symptomatic of the obsolescence of NATO as a provider of new-style, 21<sup>st</sup> century security for Europe, and its substitution by the EU. Others, more relaxed, consider the US-European relationship to be intact but still evolving after 9/11 (and, perhaps, even after the end of the Cold War). By this view, the US-European relationship will, over time, become re-established, and when it does the value and distinctive role of both NRF and ERRF will become clearer, and any wasteful duplication will be resolved. The most optimistic commentators argue from the particular, seeing duplication as a valuable opportunity: the two military efforts are so close that means will have to be found by which they can co-exist, and this will in turn act to consolidate and improve the beleaguered US-European relationship.

The fate of both the NRF and the ERRF is crucial for their respective organisation (NATO and EU), while the relationship between them is of great importance for the broader transatlantic alliance. The relationship between NRF and ERRF is complex, and cuts across several levels; political, strategic, operational and technical. But what are the prospects for a close and sustainable relationship between the two initiatives? Can NRF and ERRF co-exist, or will governments, in the end, have to choose one or the other? In short, is the NRF/ERRF relationship – and the broader NATO/EU relationship – a zero-sum competition, or can ways be found to achieve constructive collaboration? In order to answer these questions, the Centro Militare di Studi Strategici in Rome (CeMiSS), and the Centre for Defence Studies at King's College London (CDS), have joined to produce a consolidated assessment of the ERRF and NRF initiatives and the relationship between them.

This joint CeMiss/CDS study begins by setting out the political and military background to both ERRF and NRF, discusses in outline the potential of both projects, and examines the quality of the political, strategic and operational interface between them. In the first section we outline the background to the ERRF and NRF initiatives. In section two we examine a range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives related to the development of the European Union's Common European Security and Defence Policy. The scope and potential of the NRF is assessed in detail in section three, with section four analysing the military compatibility of NRF and ERRF. Underlying issues of European defence procurement and military capability are examined in section five. The study concludes with a summary of principal findings.

## Section 1

# The NRF, the ERRF, and US-European security relations after Iraq

The similarities between the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) and the NATO Response Force (NRF) impressed many analysts, and persuaded some to question the motives behind the NRF, the newer of the two. One commentator noted that 'By apparently stealing a march on the [EU] Headline Goal work, the new NRF strengthens a perception that the NATO [sic] has seized back the initiative'<sup>1</sup>, while a NATO official described the NRF as 'the intellectual equivalent of a raid'<sup>2</sup>. Was the NRF a US-led attempt to crowd out the ERRF, to ensure that Europeans coalesced around an admittedly much-needed rapid response capability configured along US rather than European lines? Or was the NATO initiative simply a reflection of the US loss of patience with Europe, with the NRF a cunning device to test the resolve and *bona fides* of European allies, by giving urgent and decisive backing to an idea which European governments had been nursing for several years but with little practical results (at least, in US eyes)?

The pursuit of rapid reaction capabilities must confront two main difficulties. First, although the idea of rapid reaction is not new, it has historically proved hard to achieve, for military, political and institutional reasons. Practical and doctrinal experience of successful rapid reaction is therefore lacking, in both Europe and the United States. During the Cold War, several governments developed their own quick reaction forces, and NATO itself encouraged allied co-operation to generate mobile and deployable capabilities. Generally though, the results were small-scale and often half-hearted, principally because the costs involved in keeping front-line forces at instant readiness were difficult to justify. After the Cold War, however, the value of well-trained rapid reaction forces began to be better understood, not least in light of the

<sup>1</sup> E. Foster, 'NATO-EU Capabilities', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in S.J. Mariano and B. Wilson, 'NATO Response Force: Political Deftness, Economic Efficiency, Military Power', [www.ccc.nps.navy.mil.rsepResources/si/apr03/europe.asp](http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil.rsepResources/si/apr03/europe.asp), 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003.

fact that the deployment of US forces to the Persian Gulf region for Operation Desert Storm in 1991 took over six months to complete<sup>3</sup>. Expanding on its limited Cold War experience, in 1992 NATO established the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC). Much later, in 2000, NATO identified a further need for as many as nine, corps-level deployable headquarters, with three at high readiness and six at a lower state, to take command of crisis response operations. As far as NATO is concerned, therefore, the idea of rapid response has plainly moved to the top of the agenda in recent years. Yet because in the past, rapid reaction was a largely subsidiary and (often literally) peripheral activity, the Alliance cannot be said to enjoy a wealth of experience in this area. For the EU, for so long the paradigm of civil co-operation in matters of trade and industry, the path to explicit foreign, security and defence policies has been uncomfortable. The acquisition of an EU rapid reaction capability has therefore been doubly contentious, given the EU's non-military pedigree and the standards of military preparedness, interoperability and politico-military command and control which will be expected as ERRF develops. As well as these institutional challenges, the idea of rapid reaction and deployment also generates unavoidable diplomatic, political, legal and budgetary challenges. To have not one, but two such initiatives operating in parallel, in an area which has not had an unblemished record of success, can only compound the difficulties already described.

The second difficulty is that the broad politico-military context in which each initiative is embedded is itself in flux. Both NATO and the EU are undergoing considerable change: NATO with its complex transformation process and enlargement timetable; the EU with its own expansion agenda, the pending IGC debate on the Convention, and calls for CAP reform, for example. Relations between NATO and the EU are also shifting. The 1990s saw sustained efforts to construct a working relationship between the two organisations, the nature of which is bound to influence the success of both NRF and ERRF. Yet the formal NATO-EU relationship was settled only as recently as March 2003, in the form of an intelligence-sharing arrangement without which the long-awaited 'Berlin Plus' agreement could not be put in place. NATO-EU relations, in other words, cannot yet be said to be mature and stable.

The purpose of this chapter is to account for the origins of the two initiatives, and to describe the evolving political environment in which both are embedded. Part One provides the background to the two projects, summarising the critical debate in each case. Part Two argues that the prospects for each initia-

<sup>3</sup> M. Leibstone, 'Rapid Deployment: What it Takes', *Military Technology*, August-September 2003.

tive, and the scope for co-operation between them, can only be assessed in the context of three broader issues: the nature and durability of the transatlantic relationship; perceptions of threat and response; and the availability of resources.

## BACKGROUND

### The European Rapid Reaction Force

Prompted by the December 1998 Blair-Chirac summit in St Mâlo, the Helsinki European Council agreed 12 months later on 'Headline Goals' to establish a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) bureaucratic infrastructure in Brussels, and to work towards a 60,000 strong deployable force by the end of 2003 (with a lesser capability available by late 2001). So began the project to construct a European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF). Set in the context of the 1992 Petersberg Tasks<sup>4</sup>, the ERRF would be expected to conduct, simultaneously, a 'heavy' operation such as the prevention of a conflict or the separation of belligerent forces, and a 'light' operation such as the evacuation in a crisis of an embassy's civilian staff<sup>5</sup>. A November 2000 Capabilities Commitment Conference brought promises amounting to 100,000 troops, 400 aircraft and 100 ships; forces well in excess, in other words, of the Helsinki Goals. However, a great deal of work by the Headline Goal Task Force (HTF) – the body of officials set up to gauge progress towards the Headline Goal – would be necessary before these promised national contri-

<sup>4</sup> The 1992 Petersberg Tasks cover a broad range of military scenarios, from humanitarian and rescue tasks, to peace-keeping tasks, to tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making. It was never clear precisely what each of these tasks would entail politically and militarily, and there was in any case little capacity to carry them out. Nevertheless, the Petersberg Tasks were incorporated into the EU's Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 (Article 17). The 2003 draft EU constitutional treaty proposes updating the Petersberg tasks as follows:

Joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking, and post-conflict stabilisation. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories (Article III-210).

The proposed amendments to the Petersberg Tasks will be debated in the 2003-2004 EU Intergovernmental Conference. See *A Constitutional Treaty for the EU: The British Approach to the European Union Intergovernmental Conference 2003* (London: HMSO, Cm5934, September 2003), p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> M. Annati, 'Shaping the requirements for the European Rapid Reaction Force,' *Military Technology*, February 2001.

butions could be said to be sufficiently co-ordinated and deployable<sup>6</sup>. The HTF addressed deficiencies in key military capabilities, without which an independent EU military deployment would be either impossible or ineffective. The list of capability gaps was daunting, including airlift and sealift, combat search and rescue, suppression of enemy air defences, air-to-air refuelling, offensive electronic warfare, all-weather precision-guided and GPS-guided munitions, conventional air-launched cruise missiles, command, control, communications and intelligence, and logistics. Many of these deficiencies simply could not be filled in the short term (and certainly not within the two years from the launch of the project), and would require significant, and co-ordinated, increases in defence expenditure by EU governments. In an effort to invigorate the development of these key capabilities, the EU established the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) in late 2001. Rather than produce an ambitious and overwhelming list of capability deficiencies (rather as NATO had done in 1999), ECAP took a more subtle approach; seeking to identify 'bottom-up', multinational projects which had a reasonable prospect of being delivered, and which could be the focus of various ECAP development panels, launched in February 2002. The series of Helsinki Goal capabilities review conferences was also formalised in a new Capabilities Development Mechanism.

The budgetary, manpower and equipment realities were widely acknowledged, but not by all. By May 2001, the EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, accepted that that lack of certain capabilities meant that the EU would not, after all, be able to undertake the most demanding military missions within the timetable set at Helsinki in 1999. The meeting of EU defence ministers on 12 October acknowledged the unlikelihood of reaching even the interim capability by December 2001, and preferred to speak of the EU's military ambitions being achieved 'progressively'<sup>7</sup>. Yet at the 19 November 2001 Capabilities Improvement Conference in Brussels, the same defence ministers insisted that by 2003 the EU should be able to manage the *full* range of military tasks, from humanitarian missions to the use of combat forces in crisis management operations. The European Council meeting in Laeken 14-15 December was bolder still, claiming that the EU 'is now able to conduct some crisis-management operations.' The declaration continued: 'The Union will be in a position to take on progressively more demanding operations, as the assets and capabilities at its disposal con-

<sup>6</sup> G. Messervy-Whiting, 'The development of a military capability for the European Union,' *Military Technology*, August 2001.

<sup>7</sup> 'EU rapid reaction force 'will not be ready this year'', *The Independent*, 13 October 2001.

tinue to develop<sup>8</sup>. In January 2002 the chairman of the EU Military Committee declared the ERRF to be at 70% capacity and capable of conducting light missions such as humanitarian tasks, rescue missions and peacekeeping<sup>9</sup>. Sceptics saw this as a hollow declaration; nothing more than an acknowledgment that some EU governments were in a position to conduct such operations, a capability they would have had with or without the ESDP project. The illusion was exposed when the Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel suggested that ESDP was now sufficiently developed for the EU to become militarily involved in Afghanistan – a suggestion which was quickly rejected by key European governments; any contribution to the operations in Afghanistan would be in the form of individual national contributions, rather than a discrete EU military force<sup>10</sup>.

The ERRF debate was frequently obscured by deteriorating relations between the United States and several European governments in late 2002 and into 2003. US-European relations (and intra-European relations) were severely challenged by the Franco-German statement on European defence integration in January, and reached their nadir in April 2003 with the so-called ‘mini-summit’ on European defence organised by Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg. Relations had hardly improved by the end of the year, with renewed disagreement over the scope of the EU’s relationship with NATO under the Berlin Plus scheme. An October summit on European defence between Britain, France and Germany alarmed the United States considerably, with what appeared to be the apparent defection of Britain to the Europeanist camp. One US diplomat reportedly complained ‘We don’t know where we stand with Blair over EU defence. We get one answer from the foreign office, a different one from the ministry of defence and another one from Downing Street’<sup>11</sup>. With mounting uncertainty in the United States over the EU’s defence plans, an emergency meeting was called between NATO and the EU to discuss the EU’s plans which had earlier been described by the US Ambassador to NATO as ‘one of the greatest dangers to the transatlantic relationship’<sup>12</sup>.

Yet in spite – or perhaps because – of this tension and deep disagreement, the ERRF project and the EU’s overarching Common European Security and

<sup>8</sup> ‘Declaration on the Operational Capability of the Common European Security and Defence Policy’, Presidency Conclusions, Laeken, 14-15 December 2001, SN 300/1/01 REV 1.

<sup>9</sup> J.M. Calha, ‘Reform of NATO Command Structure and the NATO Response Force’, NATO Parliamentary Assembly Draft Report, 53 DSCTC, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2002.

<sup>10</sup> ‘A declaration on the operational capability of the [ESDP] was made at the Laeken European Council on December 14-15’, *Oxford Analytica*, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Nato and Eu try to defuse defence dispute’, *Financial Times*, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Germans want British Army to be run by EU’, *Sunday Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

Defence Policy were by no means abandoned. The February 2003 Anglo-French summit at Le Touquet was firmly and – given British and French differences over Iraq – surprisingly supportive of the ESDP and the ERRF. The joint declaration not only called for the EU to improve upon the readiness criteria agreed for the ERRF, but insisted that the ERRF should strengthen the European contribution to the NRF and ensure compatibility between the two initiatives. The EU's practical experience of co-ordinating military and police operations was also advanced considerably during 2003. In January, the EU took control from the United Nations of the international police mission in Bosnia Herzegovina, and on 31<sup>st</sup> March took command of NATO's military mission in Macedonia. Known previously as Operation Allied Harmony, the EU military deployment to Macedonia (Operation Concordia) was the first mission of the ERRF, deployed under the Berlin Plus arrangements. Another milestone occurred in June 2003, with the first EU military mission outside Europe and independent of NATO; Operation Artemis, the French-led stabilisation mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other possible missions were discussed, including the establishment of a police mission in Macedonia, the take over of NATO's SFOR operation in Bosnia, and the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to Moldova.

## **The NATO Response Force**

Following a surprise initiative by US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, a new 'NATO Response Force' (NRF) was announced at NATO's Prague Summit in November 2002<sup>13</sup>. Together with the Prague Capabilities Commitment (replacing NATO's flagging Defence Capabilities Initiative, launched in September 1999 after NATO's operations in Kosovo, when the lack of interoperability within the alliance became apparent), and a programme to restructure the Alliance's command structure, the NRF was presented at Prague as a core component of NATO's 'transformation' agenda. According to the summit declaration, the NRF – with some 21,000 NATO-earmarked (i.e., from existing national troops already allocated to NATO) troops including land, sea and air elements – would be 'technologically advanced, flexible, deployable,

<sup>13</sup> At an informal NATO defence ministerial meeting in Warsaw 24<sup>th</sup> September 2002, Rumsfeld warned: 'If NATO does not have a force that is quick and agile, which can deploy in days or weeks instead of months or years, then it will not have much to offer the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.' Quoted in O. Pengelly, 'Rapid Reaction Forces: More Questions than Answers', *Basic Notes* (Basic Publications, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003).

interoperable, and sustainable', would achieve an initial operating capability by October 2004, and a full operating capability (FOC) by October 2006<sup>14</sup>. NATO's existing rapid reaction forces, such as the Allied Command Europe (ACE) Mobile Force (AMF), and the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) already offered some rapid reaction capability, ranging from the lightweight/short notice 'footprint' deployment of the AMF, to the heavyweight/lengthy deployment (of up to 90 days) of the ARRC. Rather than replace these forces, the NRF was regarded (at least in the view of the UK Ministry of Defence) as a complementary effort, offering a different combination of rapid deployment with heavier weight<sup>15</sup>. At its full operating capability, the NRF 'spearhead force'<sup>16</sup> would be deployable within five days for missions of up to 30 days. Roles envisaged for the NRF include demonstrations of solidarity in order to face down potential aggressors, stand-alone operations for either Article V (i.e., collective defence) or non-Article V (i.e., everything else, including non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian aid and crisis response operations, peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and embargo operations<sup>17</sup>), and providing an entry force, airhead or bridgehead for a larger, follow-on force. The expeditionary force would have secure communications, NBC protection equipment, precision-strike capabilities, and sufficient airlift capacity, and would be commanded by a NATO Combined Joint Task Force (CJTf) headquarters. The NRF would also serve as a vehicle with which to exploit the niche capabilities of new and aspiring members of NATO: Baltic troops skilled at explosives disposal; Czech NBC defence troops; Romanian mountain warfare troops<sup>18</sup>.

Development of the NRF idea parallels efforts by NATO to achieve sufficient capacity in deployable headquarters. In 2000, NATO established a Deployable Headquarters Task Force (DHQTF) to identify a set of nine rapidly deployable headquarters for crisis response operations. By late 2002, at a cost of over Euro 1 billion, European NATO nations had achieved NATO approval and full operational capability for no fewer than six, NATO-assigned, high-readiness, deployable headquarters, each able to command multinational forces of up to 60,000 troops. Five headquarters would come under the opera-

<sup>14</sup> NATO, Prague Summit Declaration 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002, Press Release (2002) 127, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002.

<sup>15</sup> UK House of Commons, Select Committee on Defence, Minutes of Evidence, Questions 40-59, Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

<sup>16</sup> H. Binnendijk and R. Kugler, 'Europeans should say 'yes' to Rumsfeld', *International Herald Tribune*, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2002.

<sup>17</sup> NATO (SHAPE) Press Release, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Pengelly, *op. cit.*

tional command of NATO's SACEUR – the ARRC; the Italian Reaction Corps; the Spanish Reaction Corps; the 3<sup>rd</sup> Turkish Corps; and the German/Netherlands Corps – with a sixth headquarters available from the five-nation Eurocorps, under a technical arrangement with NATO. By late 2002, a further two low-readiness headquarters were being developed: from the Danish-German-Polish Multinational Corps Northeast, and the Greek Reaction Corps. In both cases, the achievement of full operating capability is planned for late 2005<sup>19</sup>.

A Comprehensive Concept for the NRF was agreed by NATO defence ministers in mid-June 2003. The concept covered military and operational issues, with Secretary General George Robertson describing the NRF as 'a sharp-edged tool for a range of missions, equipped for long-distance projection and high-intensity conflicts'<sup>20</sup>. Guidance was also offered on political-military issues, particularly the relationship between NRF and ERRF: 'the developing relationship between the NRF and the related work of the EU Headline Goal... must be mutually reinforcing while respecting the autonomy of both organisations'<sup>21</sup>. The theme of NRF/ERRF co-operation was revisited in the final communiqué of the defence ministerial: 'Establishment of [the NRF] will be a significant step in providing NATO with a capability for rapid action and a catalyst for the development of advanced capabilities. Because nations have only a single set of forces, work on the NATO Response Force should be mutually reinforcing with related work in the EU'<sup>22</sup>.

Having received high-level political endorsement, the next step in the development of the NRF was the initial Force Generation Conference that took place at SHAPE on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2003. Attended by some 70 representatives from national governments and NATO headquarters, the conference examined the air, sea and land forces that would be required for the first two 'rotations' of the NRF, from 15<sup>th</sup> October 2003 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004, under the command of AFNORTH. A press release described NRF as 'NATO's military transformational vehicle for the future', and DSACEUR Admiral Rainer Feist took a similarly upbeat line: 'The results of the conference are very encouraging. We can't talk about definite numbers and figures at this point, but with the great enthusiasm of NATO nations we will be able to meet the challenging deadline

<sup>19</sup> J.J. Lok, 'High readiness forces', *Jane's International Defense Review*, January 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in International Security Information Service, *NATO Notes*, 5/6b, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* NATO Notes, 5/6b, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group, Brussels, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2003, Final Communiqué, NATO Press Release 2003(64), 12<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

to stand up an initial credible force, based on an 'Initial Entry Brigade', with air and maritime components, by 15 October 2003<sup>23</sup>. At the informal meeting of NATO defence ministers in Colorado Springs, 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> October 2003, the NRF concept was subjected to a crisis management study seminar, known as 'Dynamic Response '07'. The aim of the seminar was to examine the implications of the Prague transformation agenda for the Alliance, and to see how the NRF could be used in future crises and conflicts. The main conclusion of seminar was that NATO's decision-making procedures, together with the requirement for national parliamentary approval of military commitments, would not be rapid enough for the NRF. The possibility that complex and sensitive decision-making procedures would make it difficult for SACEUR to be confident that NATO's rapid deployment plans could be put into effect, suggested that the move towards rapid deployment forces and headquarters would require a wholesale alteration of NATO decision-making procedures.

The inauguration of the NRF took place on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2003 at HQ AFNORTH in the Netherlands. Once again, praise for the initiative was fulsome. A SHAPE press release described the development of the NRF as 'a centrepiece and an engine of change for the Alliance as it transforms and positions itself to meet the threats to security and stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'<sup>24</sup>. SACEUR, General James Jones, spoke of NRF as 'one of the most important changes in the NATO alliance since the signing of the Washington Treaty over 50 years ago... For the first time in its history, the alliance will have a combined air, land, sea and special operations force under a single commander, maintained as a standing rotational force'. Under command of AFNORTH commander General Sir Jack Deverell, the first two rotations of NRF would proceed as live trials: 'NRF 1 and 2 are designed to be prototypes and living testbeds to develop and further evolve the NRF conceptually and in practice'<sup>25</sup>. A new headquarters arrangement would also be tested: a Deployable Joint Task Force (DJTF) HQ, comprising 140 personnel on 12 hours' recall and 5-30 days notice to move, forming the forward element of a full-scale Joint Force Headquarters deployment. National pledges to NRF 1 and 2 amounted to some 9,000 ground combat forces, with associated naval and air forces. The minimal US contribution – 300 troops, one ship and some aircraft – was reportedly a deliberate attempt to forestall the expected European tendency

<sup>23</sup> 'NATO Response Force Development on Target', *SHAPE News* ([www.nato.int/shape/news/2003/07](http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2003/07)), 16<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>24</sup> NATO (SHAPE) Press Release, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>25</sup> 'Alliance launches triservice rapid response force', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2003.

to free-ride on US military assets, such as strategic air transport and air-to-air refuelling. With the NRF concept shrouded in so much high-flown rhetoric, it was left to a US official to make clear that the fate of the NRF concept would depend fundamentally on more mundane issues of military capability and defence expenditure: 'This is about the Europeans making a decision to increase their defence expenditure and spend more efficiently. If they deliver the capabilities for the NRF, the Pentagon might review its contributions'<sup>26</sup>.

With broad agreement on the overarching politico-military framework and the operational scope of the NRF, with efforts to develop a parallel, deployable headquarters structure, and with reasonably encouraging contributions from NATO governments, 2003 was arguably a very good year for the development of the NRF. In the process, however, certain deficiencies have been exposed, both practical and political: European armed forces still lack appropriate military capabilities; the speed of decision-making within NATO's political structure will also need to be addressed if the NRF is to enable a rapid and flexible response to crises. Other, yet more awkward questions are also yet to be resolved. Whatever the preparedness of the NRF, politically and militarily, what overall strategic goal will it serve? When will it be deployed, to what end and on whose authority? In this respect, connections have quickly and easily been drawn between the NRF initiative and, the US advocacy of rapid response by NATO, and President Bush's June 2002 call for NATO to become more active:

NATO's core mission – collective defense of the transatlantic Alliance of democracies – remains, but NATO must develop new structures and capabilities to carry that mission under new circumstances. NATO must build a capacity to field, at short notice, highly mobile, specially trained forces whenever they are needed to respond to a threat against any member of the Alliance. The Alliance must be able to act wherever our interests are threatened, creating coalitions under NATO's own mandate, as well as contributing to mission-based coalitions<sup>27</sup>.

Closer analysis of Bush's speech exposes several assumptions which were to become the source of some controversy. First, apparently in the US view, NATO forces (including the NRF) would be deployable anywhere in the world, 'wherever our interests are threatened'; almost certainly, therefore, beyond the NATO treaty area. Second, the legitimacy for such operations would

<sup>26</sup> 'US holds back on commitment to Nato force', *Financial Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Speech, West Point, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2002. Reprinted as Annex VIII to *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

not necessarily be sought from the UN but could be self-generated, with deployments taking place ‘under NATO’s own mandate’. Finally, US thinking was clearly heading in the direction of ‘mission-based coalitions’, whereby NATO could become, according to critics of US thinking, a toolbox in which the US might (or might not) search for specific tools, as and when required. A typical inference from all this was that the goal of the NRF proposal was simply to draw European governments into line with the new, post-9/11 US strategic vision:

What the [US administration] wants to do is increase the assets available to the US and to the alliance in general for dealing with a whole range of potential threats, regional conflicts, terrorism [and] rogue states outside of Europe. And in the process, it wants to commit the European allies in what is really an American-designed strategy, that is, the new strategy of pre-emptive action<sup>28</sup>.

## PROSPECTS

### The Transatlantic Relationship

The main challenge to both NRF and ERRF – and certainly to the development of a constructive relationship between the two projects – is that US and European values and visions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century international order are less than fully compatible. There cannot be said to be a settled, transatlantic consensus on what it means in national and international politics to be part of ‘the West’, and even less so on the price and qualifications for membership and the obligations that result. While the development of the two rapid deployment initiatives generates a host of practical questions, military and political, the fate of the two projects – and whether the relationship between them will be defined by coexistence or competition – will in the end be determined by the quality of the transatlantic relationship.

Most accounts agree that US-European relations generally, and particularly in the area of defence and security co-operation, were significantly affected by the dispute over the recourse to force against Iraq in 2003. For some analysts, the crisis was so deep that they feared NATO and the EU had been irreparably damaged. Others argued that the damage was severe, but that the two organisations could nevertheless overcome divisions among member gov-

<sup>28</sup> M. Brenner, quoted in J. Donovan, ‘NATO: Alliance and EU Forming Separate Rapid-Response Forces’, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, transcripts, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

ernments and would in time proceed with 'business as usual'. Indeed, even by summer 2003 there were already indications that bureaucratic momentum and the instinct for organisational self-preservation within NATO and the EU, coupled with the acceptance among key governments that the dispute had got out of hand, were beginning to mask the divisions revealed over Iraq. Another group of critics, however, argued that 'business as usual' was precisely the problem, and that the deep disagreements over Iraq paradoxically represented an opportunity to strengthen NATO, the EU and the US-European relationship by finally confronting and rectifying deep-seated and established strategic differences which had been festering since the end of the Cold War.

Clearly, US perceptions of the loyalty and capability of several of its European allies did reach something of a low point over Iraq, and as a result impressions of the EU as a strategic actor are often far from favourable; in early 2003 one US commentator notably described the EU as 'a dung heap, upon which a cock occasionally crows'. In the US, public discussion of Europe's contribution to the transatlantic alliance after 9/11 became dominated by cynics who noted that the EU's risible response to 9/11 was to become preoccupied with devising a new definition of terrorism and agreeing upon a new arrest warrant, while some EU governments were subsequently prompted by the Iraq crisis to reinvigorate an EU defence effort explicitly independent of the US (the summit held between France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg in late April 2003). For these critics, the EU's rhetoric of hard power was revealed after 9/11 to be an insubstantial, dishonest fantasy, entirely unsupported by military capability and the will to act. For them, the EU lacks credibility and is characterised by political indecisiveness, military incapacity and a tendency to appease. US commentators focus on two core questions, to which satisfactory answers have yet to be heard: Can the EU agree a policy for the use of armed force? Can the EU generate military capability by increasing defence spending, or by spending more wisely?

Moderate apologists for Europe take a different line. On the one hand, if there has been a breakdown in US-European relations, it can in part be attributed to the dismissive tone adopted by Washington towards its European allies in the aftermath of 9/11, and as military operations in Afghanistan developed. On the other hand, the credibility of the EU is not, and has never been, solely a function of its military capability; as far as the broad relationship with the US is concerned, in terms of trade, foreign aid and even culture, the EU and its member states are extremely significant actors and are unlikely to be ignored or marginalized by the US, however acerbic the rhetoric has become. Less moderate voices are concerned that the United States' engagement in the

international system appears increasingly to be driven by exceptionalism and a sense of manifest destiny – the City on a Hill – and question whether the US sets the best example in maintaining, exporting and protecting western values. Whether or not it is reasonable for sections of the US public and the Bush Administration to consider themselves to be at war with the perpetrators of 9/11, it is apparent to critics that US foreign and security policy is becoming increasingly self-righteous, strident and insensitive, prone to imperialism and neo-conservative crusades, and certain to create more enemies than friends: ‘Over-militaristic and hyper-unilateralist, the United States has somehow become a destabilising factor in traditional European security thinking’<sup>29</sup>. The Iraq conflict in 2003 has become the core of the complaint against the United States, which is in consequence perceived to be an unsophisticated political bully, prone to use military force to achieve its national ends, drawing upon its unrivalled wealth and prowess in military and communications technology. For the least moderate critics of the US stance after 9/11, Bush has become at best the greatest current threat to world peace, and at worst (along with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair) a terrorist, or war criminal, or both.

During 2002-2003 the transatlantic security and defence debate became worryingly preoccupied with caricatures. An otherwise thoughtful and provocative commentary on US-European relations by Robert Kagan offered the striking observation that ‘on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus’<sup>30</sup>. Shortly after the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime in early summer 2003, Kagan’s analysis became something of an obsession in several European capitals, reducing the Euro-Atlantic security debate to a struggle between cartoon images of Americans and Europeans<sup>31</sup>. For many Europeans, the United States was perceived (and resented) as both arrogant and powerful: convinced of its cultural and political superiority, with a mission to engage in and democratise the world and make it safe for MacDonaldis, the United States was seen to be too willing to act as a ‘hard power’, using military force unilaterally to protect its interests and pre-empt attacks. From a popular American perspective, the cartoon European was temperamentally inclined to conciliation and to a belief in the equivalence of different cultural and political systems: more convinced of

<sup>29</sup> N. Gnesotto, ‘ESDP: The Way Forward’, *Military Technology*, December 2002, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> R. Kagan, ‘Power and Interest’, *Policy Review* (No. 113, June-July 2002). See also R. Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> See, ‘You can be warriors or wimps; or so say the Americans’, *The Economist*, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

the value of 'soft power' routes to stability and prosperity, appeasement-oriented Europeans would be willing to use military force but only grudgingly, and only after having exhausted all methods of non-military conflict prevention. For most observers and participants, of course, the real debate takes place somewhere in between these two extremes, which serve only as a point of reference, if at all. The problem, however, is that when relations become strained, these caricatures come to life and dominate the debate, rather than lurk in the background. In such circumstances, substantive issues of military and political preparedness – as embodied in the NRF and ERRF projects – are shown to be contingent upon the evolution of the transatlantic security relationship.

## **Threat and Response**

Threat can be defined as the sum of an adversary's intentions and capabilities, together with the observer's vulnerabilities. Taking this simple definition, it could reasonably be argued that international terrorists equipped with chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons constitute a serious and imminent threat to all western societies. In policy terms, western vulnerability to CBRN and other terrorist attack seems almost complete; physical vulnerability of national infrastructure combines with a psychological sense of vulnerability on the part of the public. In this way, all western societies can all be said to be structurally vulnerable; a term which not only describes the range of opportunities for terrorist attackers, but which also summarises the common security challenge.

However widely this threat might be perceived in the West, it is plain that it has not so far prompted a unified western response. During the Cold War, western solidarity was often explained in terms of the common, external and unifying threat posed by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. After 9/11, although many would agree that the West faces common, external threats in the form of international terrorism, weapons proliferation, organised crime and so forth, these threats do not have the consolidating effect seen during the Cold War. In part, this is because the threat to the West is itself not monolithic, but comprises many disparate and disconnected phenomena. In part also, there is room for disagreement among western governments as to whether the terrorist/CBRN has been privileged over other challenges such as environmental security, crime and migration, which might be more keenly felt in Europe than in the United States. But the clearest divisions

emerge over the response to the terrorist/CBRN nexus, and whether western governments should act in a partnership of equals, or expect to be led by the United States, and it is these differences which could most directly influence the employment of both NRF and ERRF.

The Bush Administration is regarded by many Europeans as preoccupied with the idea of eliminating vulnerability, and is seen to be willing to tolerate certain impingements of rights and liberties in the process, and to interdict threats before they materialise. Europeans, on the other hand, are seen to be more tolerant (or even complacent) regarding the risk of a terrorist attack, and more concerned that any counter-measures should not be so authoritarian and repressive as to undermine the essence of life in a western liberal democracy. As far as the possible employment of both NRF and ERRF is concerned, this difference of approach could have important repercussions. European allies might, for example, be uncomfortable with US wishes to use the NRF to eliminate terrorist threats at source. In the US, however, the ERRF is widely thought to offer little of any substance in the so-called 'war on terrorism', and is barely able to meet peripheral tasks such as non-combatant evacuation.

At the heart of this debate lies the question of pre-emption. It is generally understood that while preventive military intervention against a potential threat would not be legal, pre-emptive action against an explicit and imminent military threat would be justifiable in terms of anticipatory self-defence. The difficulty, however, is that in both politics and practice the distinction between prevention and pre-emption is not clear. For that reason, many in Europe suspect that the US has redefined pre-emption to mean prevention, as part of its 'global war on terrorism', and are unwilling to countenance involvement in operations of that sort. European thinking is also influenced by the idea that responses to threats are responses that are already too late; many Europeans would prefer full-scope *conflict* – rather than *threat* – prevention in key regions, using a range of multinational diplomatic, political and economic measures, with military action as the very last resort rather than an early preference<sup>32</sup>. These differences of opinion could mean that the availability and utility of the NRF could be narrowed considerably, through European suspicion of US motives, while European unwillingness to act pre-emptively could mean that the ERRF was simply not taken seriously by the US, particularly when access to US assets is sought through the Berlin Plus arrangement.

The dynamics of the transatlantic partnership must also be considered. At one level, the dynamics could not be simpler: commonality of cause and

<sup>32</sup> For a flavour of this thinking see interview with Joschka Fischer, 'Stronger Europe needed to counter terrorism', *Financial Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

effort, generating rewards to be enjoyed mutually. For some Europeans, 9/11 represented an opportunity to rebalance the transatlantic partnership and install more sophisticated dynamics: European powers would combine to offset and restrain the potential for hegemony of the US; while an enlightened US would accept the need to be so restrained. From the US perspective, however, the prospect of being balanced by partners and allies seems both unwelcome and unnecessary. For traditional realists (and there are many in the US Administration), power balancing should be a response to an external threat, rather than a feature of a partnership or an alliance. In that case, the question is whether partnership between the US and Europe is to be driven by the deterrence and defeat of external threats, or whether the common cause which unites European allies is little more than a caucus dedicated to preventing US leadership. This difference of approach has direct implications on the institutions involved, which in turn affects the NRF/ERRF debate. There are sceptics of all institutional approaches, for whom the most effective partnerships between Europeans and the US would be bilateral (or multi-bilateral), and for whom NRF and ERRF represent expensive and unnecessary distractions. Among the institutionalists are those who argue that the 'transformed' NATO should still be the West's preferred security and defence forum, in spite of the aura of obsolescence which has hung around the Alliance since 9/11. But its critics regard NATO as having been co-opted by the US agenda. By this view, a mature partnership with the US would be one in which Europeans first unite more closely in the EU, the CFSP and the ESDP. Clearly, the development of NRF and ERRF, and the interface between them, will not take place in a policy vacuum but will inevitably be highly complex, as well as a microcosm of often heated debates between contending transatlantic visions and institutions.

## Resources

The US-European alliance has been preoccupied with issues of resources and burden-sharing since the foundation of NATO in 1949. Put in stark terms, European members of NATO were largely free-riders on the security benefits of the US strategic deterrent and the US military presence in Europe throughout the Cold War. Although there were frequent and often bitter burden-sharing disagreements, it proved possible (perhaps necessary) to accommodate such disagreements: the West was united by perceptions of a massive Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact threat to Europe and the United States, and the

US enjoyed the strategic advantages of vast military basing facilities in western Europe. This uneasy compromise began to fall apart as the Cold War came to an end in the late 1980s, when critics in the United States voiced their suspicions that the European habit of free-riding would be difficult to dislodge and impossible to accept in the post-Soviet era.

There is no doubt that both economically and in terms of manpower, European states enjoy more than adequate resources upon which to build security and defence co-operation. What proved far less abundant during the 1990s, however, was the settled will on the part of European governments to realise achievable efficiencies in defence industrial and procurement matters, and in military interoperability. To a large degree, this reluctance to collaborate industrially and operationally ‘as Europe’ reflects visceral objections to what is perceived by some governments to be an unwelcome expansion of the EUs agenda. For the British government and others in Europe, this prospect inheres not only the ‘surrender’ of the final bastion of state sovereignty to ‘Brussels’, but also the final parting of the transatlantic alliance. For broadly similar reasons, there has also been an absence of collective political will to devote a sufficient proportion of Europe’s vast collective GDP to ensure that European forces have the military equipment needed to meet the security challenges of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to achieve reasonable levels of compatibility with their US colleagues. Table 1 illustrates what many US observers would consider to be the parlous trajectory of European (in this case, NATO-Europe) defence financing, and the inadequacy of the European effort when compared to that of the United States:

**Table 1 - NATO Europe and United States Defence Expenditure (US \$m constant 2000) and Defence Expenditure as% GDP<sup>33</sup>**

|                | 1985   |       | 2000   |       | 2001   |       |
|----------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|                | US\$m  | % GDP | US\$m  | % GDP | US\$m  | % GDP |
| Belgium        | 6223   | 3.0   | 3212   | 1.4   | 3017   | 1.3   |
| Czech Republic | n.a.   | n.a.  | 1148   | 2.3   | 1167   | 2.2   |
| Denmark        | 3161   | 2.2   | 2395   | 1.5   | 2409   | 1.5   |
| France         | 49378  | 4.0   | 34053  | 2.6   | 32909  | 2.6   |
| Germany        | 53303  | 3.2   | 27924  | 1.5   | 26902  | 1.5   |
| Greece         | 3521   | 7.0   | 5528   | 4.9   | 5517   | 4.8   |
| Hungary        | 3588   | 7.2   | 805    | 1.7   | 909    | 1.8   |
| Iceland        | n.a.   | n.a.  | n.a.   | n.a.  | n.a.   | n.a.  |
| Italy          | 25974  | 2.3   | 22488  | 2.1   | 20966  | 2.0   |
| Luxembourg     | 96     | 0.9   | 129    | 0.7   | 145    | 0.8   |
| Netherlands    | 8991   | 3.1   | 6027   | 1.6   | 6257   | 1.7   |
| Norway         | 3129   | 3.1   | 2923   | 1.8   | 2967   | 1.8   |
| Poland         | 8706   | 8.1   | 3092   | 2.0   | 3408   | 2.0   |
| Portugal       | 1853   | 3.1   | 2221   | 2.1   | 2226   | 2.0   |
| Spain          | 11390  | 2.4   | 7063   | 1.2   | 6938   | 1.2   |
| Turkey         | 3470   | 4.5   | 9994   | 5.0   | 7219   | 5.0   |
| United Kingdom | 48196  | 5.2   | 35655  | 2.5   | 34714  | 2.5   |
| United States  | 390290 | 6.5   | 304136 | 3.1   | 322365 | 3.2   |

Similar analyses can be found in other leading defence data sources such as NATO<sup>34</sup> and SIPRI<sup>35</sup>. In spite of appearances to the contrary, therefore, it is plain that the resource base (economic and manpower) for both the ERRF and NRF is politically constrained. By one assessment, the aggregate burden of the ERRF will stretch European defence resources to the limit<sup>36</sup>. The achievement of the ERRF to the scale and timetable proposed will be difficult enough, if not impossible, and

<sup>33</sup> IISS, *Military Balance 2002-2003* (London: IISS, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> 'Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence: Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries 1980-2002', Press Release M-DPC-2 (2002) 139, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2002, [[www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-139e.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-139e.htm)].

<sup>35</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security 2002*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), Part 2, Appendix 6b, p. 292.

<sup>36</sup> See 'The European "Rapid Reaction Force"', in IISS, *Military Balance 2001-2002* (IISS, December 2002).

the arrival on the scene of the NRF can only exacerbate the problem. Just as an ERRF of 60,000 actually requires at least three times that number of troops to be earmarked (and taking part in a cycle of training, deployment and recovery), so the NRF could well involve some 60,000 troops. According to Barry Posen, average European defence spending is equivalent to about \$80,000 (£50,000) per soldier per year, as compared to the US \$200,000. The British, Posen calculates, spend about \$155,000 dollars per soldier per year. Given that the British 'produce combat units with which the US feels comfortable', the British level of expenditure can be used to calculate the cost of bringing 60,000 troops up to a standard acceptable to the United States; the sum is a massive \$4.5bn a year<sup>37</sup>. Others have made less pessimistic calculations as to the direct burden of the NRF, but then argue for the distorting effects of the patterns of distribution of European defence spending to be considered. By one estimate, the cost of implementing both the Prague Capabilities Commitment and the NRF will be about US\$15bn over five years, with one-third allocated to training costs and two-thirds to equipment procurement. As Calha notes, however, European NATO allies spend on average about 55% of their defence budgets on personnel and only 14% on equipment. On that basis, the US\$10bn/five years required for equipment represents a much more significant 15% of total annual equipment expenditure<sup>38</sup>.

## A Modus Vivendi?

Various devices have been suggested with which to construct a *modus vivendi* between the European Union's ERRF and NATO's NRF. One of these would be for NATO to assume the responsibility for the exercise of 'hard' power (whereby the NRF is used to 'break down the doors') while the EU would be made responsible for the exercise of 'soft' power such as peacekeeping and stabilisation missions, and other expressions of non-military 'civilian power'<sup>39</sup> (often dismissed as expecting the EU to 'do the dishes'). This would be a tidy outcome, and one which might have some support on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet it would scarcely respond to the insistence of the Bush Administration that the burdens and responsibilities for ensuring western security be shared more equitably between the United States and Europe. Furthermore, those who are most committed to the development of a European defence policy and capability would see this arrangement as preventing the EU from ever acquiring 'hard'

<sup>37</sup> B. Posen, 'Europe cannot advance on two fronts', *Financial Times*, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Calha, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> A. Moravcsik, 'How Europe can win without an army', *Financial Times*, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003.

military capability. One variant upon this argument would be for the ERRF to be trained and equipped specifically to act as the follow-on force for the NRF; moving into and stabilising a theatre of operations, once the NRF had completed the combat mission. The difficulty here is that initial decision to intervene and deploy would be taken in NATO's North Atlantic Council, rather than under the auspices of the EU, which could not in such circumstances be said to be acting on its own terms and according to its own foreign policy objectives. Another idea would see ERRF becoming more explicitly the European component of the NRF. This approach would unite the two initiatives most closely. It would serve the purpose of raising European military standards to something closer to those of the United States – one aspect of the thinking behind the NRF – and would also see a net improvement in European military capability; without which ERRF and ESDP will, arguably, never come to much. But questions would be raised regarding peacetime and operational command and control of the ERRF, and the sensitivities of the EU's so-called 'neutral' members would also have to be addressed. Finally, there is the proposal for a division of labour along geographical lines, with the NRF being available for missions anywhere in the world, while the ERRF would be limited to crises in and around Europe. Once again, however, the rationale behind such an approach would be lost on those who envisage the development of the EU as a global actor with appropriate foreign, security and defence policies.

Much of this discussion is reminiscent of the mid-1990s debate between 'bifurcation' and 'binarism' as options for the development of NATO<sup>40</sup>. Then as now, however, the core problem was much more political and cultural, than technical; a question of all parties being sufficiently determined to ensure that the Euro-Atlantic security and defence relationship was not driven ever downwards in a vicious circle of indecision and incapacity. Constraints on defence resources are such that European governments will be unable to support two, more or less identical and simultaneously deployable rapid deployment forces. Political constraints, however, are such that a clear choice of one over the other is simply not available to most governments. What is needed, therefore, is some way by which a virtuous circle of efficient co-existence between ERRF and NRF can be achieved. Until that device is found, either budgetary or political constraints will ensure that the rapid deployment debate will go unresolved. And without a durable settlement of that debate, the transatlantic defence and security relationship will continue to be unproductive and become ever more soured.

<sup>40</sup> See P. Cornish, *Partnership in Crisis? The United States, Europe and the Fall and Rise of NATO* (London: RIIA/Cassell/Pinter, 1997). chapter 4.

## Section 2

### The ERRF: recent bilateral and multilateral initiatives

This section provides an assessment of the present status of institutional and government-to-government discussion on the establishment of a European Rapid Reaction Force. Many arguments have been widely discussed in appropriate institutions (the EU Council, Parliament, the European Convention, NATO) as well as in a restricted meeting between a sub-group of countries. Two high-level meetings, in particular, were dedicated to the future evolution of the defence sector in Europe: the Le Touquet summit between France and the UK, and the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2003 meeting between Belgium, France, Germany and Luxemburg.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Franco-British Summit, held in Le Touquet in February 2003, drew the attention of the media because of the ongoing Iraqi crisis, that saw the United Kingdom and France in different positions vis-à-vis the actions to be taken against the Iraqi regime. Yet at the same time the summit renewed the well-established tradition of strong co-operation. A Franco-British initiative to further co-operation in defence offers a great opportunity for the enhancement of Europe's ability to manage security and defence issues between the two countries, as had happened at the 1998 Saint-Malô summit, given that France and the UK own the most efficient and responsive military instruments among EU nations.

Among the main issues discussed during the summit, the intention to create a Defence Capabilities Agency that would encompass the work of OCCAR and the Letters of Intent, the decision to increase the ability quickly to deploy ground, air and maritime reaction forces, as well as the decision to establish a higher interoperability between respective carrier-based air wings, created a greater opportunity to affect European Union defence capabilities in a very positive way.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 2003, in the midst of military operations in Iraq, NATO members France, Germany, Belgium and Luxemburg, strongly criticised by the USA and the UK, gathered in Brussels for a quadrilateral meeting on the future of European Defence Policy. Some interesting proposals emerged from

the final joint communiqué, among them the institution of a European Security and Defence Union (ESDU), the adoption of a common solidarity clause between EU members, the development of reinforced cooperation in defence matters, within the provisions of the new EU Treaty, the development of operational capabilities and the establishment of a European Armaments Agency. An additional measure, the creation of an autonomous planning and command capacity for EU missions in which NATO would not necessarily have to be involved, has been particularly criticised by other NATO members as it is considered detrimental to the future of transatlantic relations. Analyses of the results of both meetings and of the official positions of the European institutions offers an interesting insight on where European defence policy stands today and on its possible evolution in the near future.

### **The Need for a Real Rapid-Reaction Capability**

The issue of rapid reaction in case of a precipitate crisis has been under investigation for several decades. The relative decline in the Cold War confrontation during the sixties prompted a revaluation of the importance of military assets for force projection outside the classical scenario of full scale war in Europe.

For the United Kingdom and France, these assets were still included in their military structures, due to the enduring quasi-global commitments as the remnants of colonial empires. For all the other European countries, the focus on territorial defence against a Warsaw Pact assault in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance drained almost every available military resource, leading to a narrower approach in terms of respective areas of responsibility.

Although capable of projecting a certain level of military force well outside NATO boundaries, the United Kingdom and France were still limited in their ability to react quickly to unexpected events, due to the lack of several key strategic mobility assets and the absence of a functional doctrine. During the Falklands crisis, the UK had to rely heavily on merchant ships, some of them under non-British flags, for transportation and to sustain at a distance the expeditionary force assembled to re-capture the islands. The projectable forces were so limited that part of the ground contingent was assembled with battalions only immediately freed from their ceremonial duties. Several problems of coherence between this rapidly assembled force of Army, Navy and Royal Marines clearly showed the need for a great deal more joint training and planning during peacetime.

French operations in Chad and in other African countries, while quite demanding in terms of distances and natural environment, never faced an organised and technologically advanced enemy. Also, the extended network of military bases and bilateral agreements allowed France to operate in a familiar context, and the 'rapid reaction' consisted mainly in a planned reinforcement of local garrisons. Moreover, the Cold War acted as a containment factor, avoiding the possibility of a regional or global spillover of local crises. Thus, with a quite simplified geopolitical scenario, the requirement for a reaction force was basically addressed with the availability of lighter forces, like paratroopers or naval infantry composed of professional soldiers.

When other European countries, like Italy and Spain during the eighties, started to plan and assemble their own Rapid Reaction Forces, they followed a similar path, usually putting under a joint command the available elite units. Such decisions, while useful for the modernisation and rationalisation of national defence structures, were still clearly unable to create a real reaction capability, because of the negative economic background and the absence of a general revision of the strategic scenario.

The Balkan crises of the early nineties dramatically showed European weaknesses in rapid reaction and projection capabilities. Most of the European countries still relied on large armies based on conscription, and their operational mobility was assured by the exploitation of in-theatre railroads and motorways. These two combined factors, the unwillingness to risk the life of young conscripts and the material inability to project credible power, even in the European region, caused the substantial failure of the European attempt to play a major role in the international arena. The Balkan crisis provided a clear indication of the operational assets that would henceforth need to be acquired for effective military operations.

The first element that emerged as a primary requirement for the planning and the execution of a power-projection operation was a deployable Headquarters with a combined joined staff and relevant resources in strategic and field intelligence.

Secondly, the available light forces – mainly paratroopers and marines – while reasonably capable of being quickly deployed, showed a general weakness in tactical mobility, and the ability to move and operate in a combat scenario with dispersed but deadly menace.

Thus, while a 'forcible entry' could still be executed by light elite units, follow-on forces needed a higher level of combat mobility, to be provided by an adequate number of armoured vehicles. As for the air component, the Balkans experience illustrated the key importance of C3, battle management and early

warning assets. These aircraft, while conceived for the air defence of the Alliance against intruders flying at very low levels, proved their usefulness in the enforcement of no-fly zones and in the general containment of a crisis. In the likely scaling up of western intervention after an entry, the ability to locate and precisely destroy enemy targets became of paramount importance. Here, the Europeans discovered further gaps in capabilities – especially when compared to US forces. While several European countries could field precision-guided munitions, they lacked the assets and the related doctrine for the waging of a precision-strike campaign. The virtual absence of stand-off weapons, such as the US Tomahawk missile, resulted in the need for costly and politically complex deployments of air assets to bases around south-eastern Europe. In terms of air mobility, European resources were able to transport only light units, without the armoured vehicles or the long-range artillery that became decisive military assets in the local context. Heavy equipment all had to be transported by sea.

European maritime components generally performed well in these crises, allowing the enforcement of international embargoes, guaranteeing the logistical support for coalition troops and providing useful intelligence gathering and C3 capabilities. Nonetheless, the limited power-projection capabilities embedded in European navies, or the ability to exert a certain level of military pressure from the sea to the battle on the ground, showed the relative asymmetry between traditional European sea-power and the emerging requirements of the new strategic context. European navies enjoyed virtual freedom of movement and action, due to the absence of a credible maritime opponent, so their real contribution to the crisis response was relatively marginal.

Above all, European militaries showed a general inability to quickly react to rapidly evolving scenarios both in the Balkans and in other crises of the nineties. Their structures, both in terms of recruitment and procurement processes, were based on the traditional pattern adopted during the Cold War. After more than a decade of crisis, in the Balkans, in the Gulf, in several part of Africa and east Asia, the need for a truly responsive military instrument has become the cornerstone for the modernization of national European forces, as well as for the creation of a European Rapid Reaction Force.

## **The ERRC and the Opportunity to Improve the Immediate Reaction Capability**

The Helsinki Headline Goal provided a decisive impetus for the creation of a European reaction capability. Although the interpretation of the tasks for

the European force varied from one country to another, the military requirements for the Reaction Corps clearly fixed the potential for European intervention. By the end of 2003 a 60,000-strong reaction Corps should be ready to deploy in no more than 60 days, and remain in a crisis area for a year at least, performing a wide range of tasks, from peacekeeping to the restoration of international legality. These requirements proved to be quite demanding for European militaries, not least because of existing commitments within NATO and enduring deployment in several peacekeeping operations.

Even so, a two month 'reaction and deployment' time seems to be a relatively long period for an effective intervention in the early stages of a dangerous crisis. Recent experiences have showed that the ideal timeframe for intervention lies between one and four weeks, particularly given the time required for finding political consensus on action which may well allow time for a crisis to spill over to another territory.

The Le Touquet joint declaration between France and the UK states the need for a military capability to deploy ground, naval and air units in a timeframe between 5 and 10 days. With this announcement, France and the UK clearly affirm their intention to use the European Rapid Reaction Force as a tool for crisis management and the early reaction to the future crisis, going far beyond the limits of post-war stabilization or peacekeeping.

The perceptual shift from two months to less than two weeks of reaction time, albeit for a much smaller force, dramatically changes some of the mobility and planning requirements.

In terms of mobility, the strategic deployment of an immediate-reaction force could hardly rely on naval transportation, except at very short distances, such as inside the Mediterranean basin, where a landing force and related vessels could be permanently maintained on high readiness. For all other potential contingencies, air transport is the only viable solution, stressing again the need for a quick and substantial improvement of European air transport. This is even more the case given that the proposed immediate reaction force, though numerically limited, should be capable also of dealing with a crisis and acting as a deterrent to it spilling over. So the proposed RRF is designed to act as an entry force to facilitate the later arrival of the bulk of the contingent, but also possess all the tools for acting alone. For this reason air deployment must include more than the lighter commando or airborne units, and be capable of moving some of the heavier engineer and artillery equipment.

As for any naval component tasked with immediate-reaction duties, the general availability of combat vessels among European navies should allow for the advanced presence of task groups, on a rotational basis, in strategic areas.

Such task groups should include a certain level of projectable force 'from ship to shore', in the form of long range artillery, cruise missiles, combat raiders or a combination of these assets.

The logistic chain for this advanced presence would require a larger force of seagoing support vessels, but could also require the availability of British and French bases in the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The reaction time for air forces is usually much shorter, if they are called to operate from home bases. But the conceivable contingencies suggest a need for either long-range operations starting from the European mainland or more likely the deployment of contingency task forces nearer crisis areas. As a consequence, Europeans should develop more robust air to air refuelling capacities, both for the support of operations and the deployment of air assets, while perhaps refining the requirements of future aircraft for a wider combat radius.

Above all, the main requirement is force structure planning and the operational doctrine to make it all work. This is a difficult task, even for the most experienced military organisation. For the Europeans, the multinational character of their combined forces poses further constraints. The practical functioning of any force entails the highest level of integration among the units and the assigned Headquarters, leading toward a 'supranational' level of command. Given that European governments would virtually lose the availability for their own national purposes of any strategic assets they committed to such a high readiness force, the decision to contribute to the Force could be interpreted as a *de facto* commitment toward a stronger European common defence policy.

## **Enhanced Co-operation Among European Navies**

One of the most effective instruments for a flexible response to regional crises is carrier-based air power, since it offers the wider options of selective involvement, while assuring the quickest disengagement, if needed. France and the United Kingdom have long experience in naval aviation, providing both countries with a valuable military asset over the last five decades. Nevertheless, during the nineties, defence budget cuts slowed the renewal of these assets, in the case of France reducing the ability to maintain a carrier-based air group in operation for long periods, and in the case of the UK reducing the ability to exert air superiority and offensive air power over enemy territory.

In 1997 the British decision to build two large new aircraft carriers, to be operational by 2012 and 2015 respectively, and able to operate a powerful group of around fifty aircraft, prompted a renewed interest in the issue. France has decided to build a second carrier, after the present *Charles de Gaulle*, and the opportunity to obtain relevant savings is clearly pushing for the co-operation between the two navies in this strategic sector.

After the Le Touquet summit, the UK and France seem to agree on the opportunity to strictly co-ordinate their efforts in the acquisition and operation of respective aircraft carriers and air groups.

From the industrial point of view, the French adoption of the UK's conventional power design for the construction of its second carrier appears a logical decision, given the British choice of the Thales-UK as design leader for the project. Thales (France) could thus become the prime contractor for the French project, with DCN acting as the major sub-contractor. Such arrangements, while dramatically changing the traditional work sharing among French naval contractors, could allow the consolidation of a strong European company with the required know-how for the design of the most complex of combat vessels.

In terms of operational co-operation, the UK and France could synchronise the maintenance, training and deployment cycles of their carrier groups, to have at least one carrier always available for combat operations. It should be noted that an unofficial agreement between France and the UK appears to regulate the activities of their respective SSBN forces. Also, while not planned, the UK, Italy and France maintained for several months a 'European carrier' in the Indian Ocean for Operation Enduring Freedom, since their navies sent their respective carriers in different, slightly overlapping periods. Such naval co-operation among Europeans could easily be expanded in the future, even beyond the Franco-British agreement on aircraft carriers.

Italy will likely adopt the same STOVL version of the F-35 joint strike-fighter selected by the Royal Navy. Hence, in principle, the two navies could easily exchange their air groups and crews. The Horizon project for the next generation of air-defence destroyers will allow a greater level of interoperability among Britain, France and Italy, as indeed will the other bilateral or multilateral joint projects currently under development among France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands.



## Section 3

# The NRF: requirements and prospects

NATO's Prague Summit of 20 November 2002 represents the latest major attempt to adapt the Alliance to the fast changing security environment that now faces the Europeans. It established three different but interdependent tracks for reform within NATO:

- the constitution of a military force (the NATO Response Force, NRF);
- improvements in military capabilities (according to the Prague Capabilities Commitments, PCC);
- reform of the command structure, with the constitution of a single operational strategic command, flanked by a strategic command responsible for transformation.

The Defence Ministers meeting on 12 June 2003 fully endorsed this political decision, calling for initial deployment of the new force by 2004, giving impetus to the new Command structure and initiating some specific training, all leading to a full operating capability as early as 2006. While the restructuring and reshaping of the command structure seems to offer relevant opportunities for saving resources, thus allowing the modernisation of the future headquarters without excessive pressure on members' defence budgets, the creation of the new Response Force looks a costly endeavour.

## The Requirements for the NATO Response Force

The NRF has been presented as a flexible but powerful force, able to be employed in a wide range of contingencies, from peace support operations to high intensity combat, without a defined geographical limitation and with the shortest reaction times.

The Force's size could vary from the battle group level (a reinforced battalion) to divisional strength, according to tactical needs, though the most likely aspiration is for the force to be capable of projecting abroad a brigade-sized

force for sustained combat operations. As such, the Force is clearly designed to play a decisive role in any operational scenario, thus defeating opposition forces or allowing further combat units to enter the theatre of operations. In other words, the NRF could be used either as a 'strike force' for offensive operations ranging from combat raids to limited campaigns, or as first echelon of a wider force, performing the 'forcible entry' in a multi-phased campaign<sup>1</sup>.

This width of potential operational tasks calls for a large spectrum of capabilities, including light, medium and heavy units, special forces, air-mobile and amphibious elements, plus a comprehensive set of supporting elements. The lack of any geographical delimitation for the use of NRF further expands the potential technical requirements, since the Force could be employed in extreme-weather conditions such as sub-arctic regions or hot desert environments. The combined requirements arising from a potentially unlimited mission in an unknown geographical context create the need to rely on a very large pool of resources and combat capabilities, even for a force that is small when it is deployed.

Hence, even if the probable upper limit for the deployed NRF is around 15.000 – 20.000 soldiers, the pool of forces needed for operational capability could be at least three times higher, even before training and rotation is added in – a requirement that normally triples that number again as troops prepare to go into the pool, serve within it, and have to re-deploy out of it.

The pool of resources might include a wide range of assets:

- Amphibious Brigade (one ready battle group immediately deployable)
- Airborne/Airmobile Brigade (one ready battle group immediately deployable)
- Mountain/Arctic Warfare Brigade (one ready battle group immediately deployable)
- Light/Medium Mechanised Brigade (with organic combat support)
- Heavy Armoured Brigade (with organic combat support)
- NBC Regiment
- Artillery Brigade
- Air Defence Regiment
- Special Forces Regiment (one ready company immediately deployable)
- RISTA Regiment
- Signals Regiment
- Attack Helicopter Regiment
- Transport Helicopter Regiment

<sup>1</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003-04*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, for the IISS, p. 29.

- Service Support Brigade
- Medical Regiment/Field Hospital

This pool of available forces would number approximately 60,000 personnel but it is not envisaged that it would be deployed as a Corps level formation, rather, the NRF HQ would construct a modular task force tailored for a specific operation. If this modularity is handled flexibly the commitment of actual resources could be reduced considerably from the general rule that says ‘all contingencies’ require a number (20,000) x 3, and the ‘full rotation’ requires *that* number (60,000) x 3.

### **National Contributions to the NRF**

Ideally, each of the brigades/battle-groups in the pool would be built around a framework nation that would provide the core of a headquarters and at least one battalion-sized unit. Wherever possible, each brigade would utilise common equipment, as this would facilitate the integration of several indigenous forces within a battalion or brigade (e.g. a Dutch Leopard II battalion with a Danish and/or Polish company attached). Germany could, for example, be the framework nation for the Heavy Armoured Brigade with Dutch, Danish, Spanish, and Polish forces contributing units and sub units given that they all operate similar equipment including the Leopard II A4/5. The Mountain /Arctic Warfare Brigade could draw on forces from Germany, Turkey, Italy, the UK, Norway and France; and the NBC regiment on forces from at least the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the UK, and Germany.

Whilst the forces assigned to the Capabilities Pool could be guaranteed for a set period, it is envisaged that all units and personnel would be provided on a rotational basis. This could take several forms. A nation might agree to provide a particular type of capability on a permanent basis (particularly framework assets) but would rotate its own units and/or personnel through this asset (e.g. the UK could commit a marine battalion to the force and rotate each of its three Royal Marine Commandos through that role). Alternatively, individual nations might share responsibility for providing a particular capability in rotation (e.g. Spain, Netherlands and Poland might agree to assign a tank battalion to the force with each taking it in turn to meet that commitment). Alternatively, some nations might agree to provide a permanent commitment to the force but vary the type of capability provided from time to time.

The main aims of this rotational strategy would be to:

- Offer sufficient flexibility to include all nations willing to make a contribution
- Disperse transformational knowledge, capabilities and experience to national armed forces, thereby acting as an engine for change
- Reduce overstretch, particularly for enabling capabilities such as RISTA units.

To ensure the success of the NRF, ensuring seamless interoperability within the force, and with US formations, is absolutely essential. This can only be achieved by doing at least the following:

- Development of common doctrine and tactics, which are compatible with the US
- Procurement of common network centric/enabled command and control systems to ensure full connectivity within the force and with US formations
- Adoption of a common operating language (English)
- Procurement of adequate RISTA assets to ensure shared battlespace awareness
- Better intelligence sharing arrangements
- Formalised programme of combined joint exercises, training, simulation and modelling to ensure that all elements of the force can co-operate with each other and US formations. Exercises at the higher command and HQ level should be given the highest priority in fostering interoperability.

To ensure that this force will be always ready to go when required, a programme of training and exercise will be essential, designed to ensure that all elements of the force can operate with each other and US forces. Not all units need to be held at full ready status and this programme could therefore be graduated to provide a baseline standard, which can be quickly upgraded if additional forces are required. To ensure that this training is effective and that standards are being maintained, an operational readiness evaluation regime would need to be implemented.

## **Quick Reaction and Deployment**

The 5-10 day deployment timeframe obviously creates several problems, both technical and political. The deployment of the Force seems to be assured

by a massive use of airlift. The lack of adequate air transport assets has been acknowledge as a major shortfall among European Allies, leading to a NATO program for the lease of strategic-transport aircraft in the short term.

This solution, while conceived as a gap-filler before the arrival of the new A-400M, could easily induce a further reduction in the Airbus programme, or even its cancellation, if the leasing contract offers an attractive option of aircraft acquisition at the end of the lease. In any case, European countries will have to finance two different programmes at the same time, the short term leasing of Russian or American aircraft and the development of the A-400M. The preference for airlift is strictly linked with the planned rapid deployment goals fixed by the US Army. Recent analysis clearly demonstrates the practical unfeasibility of air deployment for combat units larger than reinforced Battalion/ light Brigade<sup>2</sup>.

With the hypothetical availability of 80 C-17 and virtually unrestricted ground facilities at both sides of the air bridge, it could be possible to deploy a medium Brigade (equipped with 300 combat vehicles of 20 tons each plus about 900 soft-skinned support vehicles) over a 2.500 miles distance in 96 hours. Clearly, European NATO countries will never be able to field such airlift capacity, at least for the next decade. Thus, either NRF will have to rely heavily on US resources, or be substantially smaller and lighter than the US Medium Brigades, or deploy essentially by other-than-airlift means. Also, the future A-400M will offer a significantly smaller payload than the C-17, so even a larger fleet will not be able to deploy heavy units, with 32 ton-plus vehicles.

Alternative deployment means will play, very likely, a prominent role. Considering the geographical proximity of the European continent to many potential or actual crisis areas (and the distances from the continental US), it seems that sealift will provide the large majority of transport capacity for NRF units and its logistic supplies. And given European NATO members' own large merchant fleets and excellent port infrastructures, the likely opposition to the movement by sea of military units and supplies seems to be quite low in a wide range of potential crises. Nevertheless, several remote areas could not be easily reached by heavy equipment disembarked at seaports and the time required for maritime movement is relatively long.

As for the critical question of reaction times, while it is true that sealift can even reduce the *total* deployment time of a medium or heavy force, due to the larger transportation capacity, the arrival of the first, critical combat

<sup>2</sup> Lynn E. Davis and Jeremy Shapiro, eds., *The US Army and the New National Security Strategy*, RAND, Arroyo Center, 2003.

units into the theatre of operations is always likely to be too slow by sea. A possible solution could be provided by amphibious units, able to deploy a balanced air-ground task force in a matter of days, if the amphibious assault naval task force is maintained at high readiness and, possibly, near to the area of intervention. European NATO members are today able to field about ten marine infantry amphibious battalions (UK, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Portugal), plus some other Army battalions able to conduct amphibious operations (France, Italy). It should be relatively easy to rotate at least one (possibly two) reinforced battalions on amphibious ships, able to reach in a few days most of the potential areas of crisis.

The third leg of the deployment triad, the pre-positioning of equipment, could substantially improve the quick deployment of NRF, especially if the heavier equipment is stocked in advance and strategically positioned dumps. It should be noted that most of the US pre-positioned stocks use European territories, both on the mainland and overseas. European NATO members could duplicate this arrangement, stocking forward heavy vehicles and supplies (ammunitions, fuels etc.), near possible crisis areas. A combination of amphibious assault task forces and pre-positioned stocks could allow the rapid deployment of credible combat capabilities, with the airlift as a complementary resource for the quick intervention of lighter units or the in-theatre movement<sup>3</sup>.

## **The Need for Immediate Availability of Committed Forces**

A quick deployment cannot satisfy the overall rapid reaction requirement alone.

By definition, the immediate reaction forces should be maintained at the highest level of combat readiness, and should be able to move into combat immediately. This implies a rotation cycle among training, ready-to-move, deployment and rest phases for every unit included in the pool of forces available for the NRF. Together with the combat and support units, the designated headquarters should be maintained at the highest level of readiness and could either be formed from personnel drawn from all participating NATO members or be built around a framework nation in a similar manner to the ARRC.

<sup>3</sup> This solution is, basically, the typical *modus-operandi* of the US Marines. The geographical features of European states make this solution even more attractive, and probably much less expensive than the air deployments planned by the US Army.

There are advantages to both approaches and both options should therefore be considered. The NRF HQ should be based in Europe and ideally be commanded by a European on a rotational basis. A significant US component should also be attached to this HQ perhaps drawn from the US Joint Force Command with a reciprocal European HQ and liaison contingent available for deployment to an appropriate US command authority for specific operations (e.g. CENTCOM).

In order to lead a force that is both potent and agile, the NRF HQ would require transformational command and control capabilities that would ensure maximum connectivity with all units assigned to the force and with US forces, and provide a shared battlespace awareness.

But actual crises have demonstrated that the political procedures for the activation of a credible military response could hamper every technical and organisational arrangement aimed at the reduction of reaction times. If the essence of the NRF is the possibility of deployment in a very timely fashion, then the political procedure of activation will need to be streamlined and revised. In the required reaction time of 5-10 days it would probably be impossible to activate national contingents, adopt the political decision for the transfer of authority from member nations to NATO commanders, and deploy the Force. The only credible solution seems to be the pre-assignments of national contributions to a unified command, under the authority of a Strategic Commander for Operation. The 'Prototype NRF' has adopted this procedure in designating C in C AFNORTH as the first commander, to be rotated to C in C AFSOUTH in mid-2004. In other words, the NRF should be a standing force, permanently under the Alliance's chain of command, committing the best of European units to a NATO defence or counter-offensive strategy. Adhering to the NRF could probably imply an explicit transfer of authority of committed national forces (those trained, qualified and on the 'ready-to-move' status) by each contributing nation<sup>4</sup>.

Such procedure, while not reducing the political sovereignty of each NATO member (the use of NRF for any specific action would require, in any case, a decision by consensus), could provide NATO military staffs with the stable pool of combat capabilities needed for credible planning. Member states could also decide to withdraw their forces from the NRF, not providing re-

<sup>4</sup> The time between the Transfer of Authority and the actual use of force need not be necessarily short. The Atlantic Alliance activated its forces in the fall of 1998 for possible action against Yugoslavia, but started the offensive campaign only in spring 1999. If Milosevic had decided to comply with NATO requests, the Force would have been de-activated without its actual use.

placements for their committed forces, after their planned 'ready-to-move' period. In a matter of months, therefore, each NATO member could regain full authority over its elite units for the pursuit of national or perhaps EU-specific goals.

## **Risks and Opportunities in the NRF Project**

The operational enhancement promised by the NRF represents a necessary measure to face new threats; such a military force could be helpful to avoid in the future the experience of marginalisation of the Alliance that happened in the operations in Afghanistan after 9/11<sup>5</sup>. The NRF allows NATO to recover the military relevance questioned by inaction in the post 9/11 crisis. Since it is designed to improve dramatically the effectiveness of a European medium size force with a very low reaction time, it could provide the necessary capabilities to operate jointly with US forces in future operations against imminent threats, such as that posed by 'hyper terrorism'.

But there is also the possibility that the forces assigned to the NRF could be considered, in particular by the US, as a 'toolbox' from which to pick the necessary capabilities through bilateral arrangements with particular allies. In political terms, the adoption of such a concept could be quite dangerous and divisive. It could question directly the rationale of NATO as a permanent, standing alliance, radically different from the sum of a number of bilateral arrangements between each European country and the US. The link between the 'toolbox' concept and a 'coalition of the willing' doctrine is not clear and any incompatibility could politically undermine the process of consensus that lays at the foundation of the Atlantic Alliance.

On the other hand, as a positive result, the NRF process will increase the pressure on European partners to modernise their military forces and keep them interoperable.

The overall acceptance of the NRF by the European countries, including France, has been so far vocally positive. The reality of the NRF will depend on the internal defence dynamics within each member state, part of which will be national perceptions of the compatibility between NRF and simultaneous commitments at the European level. This will, in particular, revolve around perceptions of growing role specialisation among the allies.

<sup>5</sup> The recent takeover by NATO of the ISAF stability operation in Kabul may be significant in its own way but it cannot 're-balance' the absence of any NATO role during Operation Enduring Freedom.

The overall success of the reform will ultimately depend on the reconciliation of two different perceptions of the NRF, represented mainly by the British and France positions.

From the British point of view, the force represents the last opportunity for the Alliance to demonstrate its willingness to act and remain militarily relevant, as well as to strengthen the transatlantic link. France, on the other hand tends to consider the force as a way to improve an increasingly independent and relevant European pillar in NATO.

Ultimately, the NRF is a way to keep the US committed to the Alliance, but at the price of a possible reduction of EU strategic aspirations.



## Section 4

### **The compatibility of the ERRF and the NRF**

There was some resistance within national European capitals to the declaration of a Full Operating Capability for the EU's European Rapid Reaction Capability at the end of 2003, as originally envisaged. The number and technical suitability of the numbers and units pledged by the member states meets the original requirements of the Helsinki Headline Goals. The assessed military capability of these units, in a joint multinational deployment, however, must remain fairly low. If the units are available, at least on paper, the 'enabling capacities' that allow for deployment, sustainability, and effective combat power, are still lacking in some key areas.

At this stage it is still not clear whether the concept of the NATO Reaction Force will help or hinder the achievement of these necessary enablers, and whether the detailed military requirements of the ERRF and the NRF will prove to be contradictory or synergistic.

### **The Key Available Force Components for the ERRF**

Though the European Capability Commitments Conference of 2000 and the Capabilities Improvements Conference of 2001 both identified national force pledges to the Helsinki Headline Goals that more than met the required numbers, the key players who might be able to provide the core of any ERRF capabilities have not made more than modest progress towards key targets for some of the most important enabling capabilities. Seven European nations may be regarded as the most important providers of core military capabilities and it is on the basis of their potential contributions that the military success of the ERRF will stand or fall. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the key combat components each of these countries might provide: it is a menu from which EU military planners might choose, though the troop numbers in column 4 represent the maximum level of anticipated ground commitments,

which gives some idea of the likely scale of contributions to any combined force and provides an index of the anticipated level of ‘associated air and maritime assets’. The table does not represent a full listing of those elements offered at the two capabilities conferences, but is an independent assessment of which units and numbers are likely to be most relevant to the creation of any ERRF capabilities.

**Table 2 - Key European Force Components for the ERRF**

|             | <b>Air</b>  | <b>Maritime</b>   | <b>Ground</b>  | <b>Troops nos</b> | <b>HQs</b>                  |
|-------------|---|---|--|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Bel</b>  | 24 cbt ac<br>8 tpt ac   | 2 frig<br>6MCMV   | 1 mech inf bgde  | 4,000             | 1 cmnd ship                 |
| <b>Fra</b>  | 75 cbt ac<br>27 tpt ac<br>8 tank ac<br>1 AWAC<br>1 air/nav gp | 4 frig<br>2 amphib ships<br>2 a/carr<br>3v spt ships<br>1 SSN | 1 armd div<br>1 AB div<br>1 amphib div<br>1 inf bgde             | 12,000            | National HQs                |
| <b>Ger</b>  | 108 cbt ac  | 8 frig  | 7 cbt btns<br>all arms units                                     | 18,000            | GE/NE Corps                 |
| <b>It</b>   | 26 cbt ac<br>4 tpt ac<br>2 tank ac<br>3 marit ac<br>6 CSAR    | 4 frig<br>2 amphib ships<br>4 MCMV<br>1 a/carr                | 1 mech bgde<br>1 AB/airmob bgde<br>1 mtn bgde<br>1 armd cav bgde | 12,500            | Maritime HQ<br>National HQs |
| <b>Neth</b> | 36 cbt ac   | 4 frig<br>1 amphib ship                                       | 1 mech inf bgde<br>1 airmob bgde<br>1 amphib btn                 | 5,000             |                             |
| <b>Sp</b>   | 24 cbt ac<br>2 tpt ac   |   | 1 mech bgde<br>1 lt inf gp                                       | 6,000             |                             |
| <b>UK</b>   | 72 cbt ac<br>58 strat tpt ac                                  | 4 frig<br>1 hele carr<br>1 a/carr                             | 1 armd bgde<br>1 mech bgde<br>1 amphib bgde                      | 12,500            | PJHQ<br>Mobile jt HQ        |

The realistic total of available troops on this calculation is some 70,000 – above the level required by the Helsinki Headline Goals. Another independent assessment that looks at all 14 (rather than this selected 7) potential European contributors calculates the available numbers at almost 90,000<sup>6</sup>. The as-

<sup>6</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2002-03*, London, IISS, 2003, p. 219.

assessment also calculates the number of combat aircraft available at 341 and medium and long range transport as 99. This is fewer than the '400 combat aircraft' normally claimed within the Headline Goal assessments but still represents a high number of relevant air assets, at least on paper. In the maritime field, though the units of analysis are more difficult to compare, it is evident that the Europeans should be well capable of deploying at least one, and possibly two, potent maritime task forces with attendant maritime logistics and organic air support.

## **The Problem of Enabling Capabilities**

These numbers, however, cannot disguise the inadequacy of the enabling capabilities that would allow for timely deployment, sustainability in-theatre, and combat potency. The original Helsinki Headline Goals and the subsequent European Capabilities Action Plan to address some of the enabling deficiencies drew heavily from NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative. An independent study calculated that around 70% of the DCI's targets were directly relevant to the European Helsinki Headline Goals<sup>7</sup>. The DCI process has now been subsumed into the Prague Capabilities Commitments, whereby the deficiencies previously identified shall now be subject to precise national actions to address them. Whereas previous initiatives identified collective deficiencies and invited member states to offer forces and capabilities to help alleviate the problems, the PCC is designed to hold member states to particular national commitments that will help meet the deficiencies that have already been well-identified.

It remains to be seen how successful the PCC will be in having an effect on the national defence plans of the member states and of encouraging either greater defence spending, or re-orientated defence spending to provide some financial headroom for the acquisition of enabling technologies and systems.

The list of major enabling deficiencies identified by the Europeans in late 2001 at the Capabilities Improvements Conference reflected a familiar list of problem areas, only a few of which were due to be addressed by existing national defence plans. At the end of 2001 such areas were defined in particular as:

- Protection of deployed forces
- Logistics
- Operational mobility and flexibility for ground forces

<sup>7</sup> Centre for Defence Studies, *The Helsinki Headline Goals*, London, Centre for Defence Studies, 2001, section 1.

- Naval aviation
- Maritime medical evacuation
- Combat search and rescue
- Air-launched precision-guided weapons
- Deployable communications
- ISTAR and intelligence collection and sharing
- Wide-bodied aircraft and Ro-Ro shipping<sup>8</sup>.

The areas that might be expected to offer an improvement on the basis of existing national plans have not changed significantly since the beginning of 2002. They are mainly in the areas of strategic transport, air to air refuelling, amphibious capabilities, ISTAR, satellite communications and satellite surveillance, and in a number of aspects of air superiority. Even here, however, it has to be acknowledged that such capacities will be some years in coming on-stream and cannot realistically be assumed within the equation of the Full Operating Capability as of the end of 2003. In some respects, as in the case of strategic air transport, progress has slowed markedly by a number of recent developments in the A400M joint programme and cannot be taken for granted as a key enabler that has now been successfully addressed.

An objective assessment suggests that for all ERRF operations other than lower-end Petersberg Tasks, and whatever national defence plans may bring on-stream by the period 2008-12, the immediate capability shortfalls are in tactical transport, air-ground surveillance, suppression of enemy air defence, data fusion and ground linkage and, not least, in all-weather combat capabilities. More controversially, the Europeans may be regarded as deficient in the elements of a more active Theatre Missile Defence capacity<sup>9</sup>.

For the ERRF, the present reality is that for operations that are now underway or contemplated – such as in Macedonia and in Bosnia in 2004 – there are adequate military forces and assets as long as they can build upon the infrastructures provided by previous NATO operations in these areas. Peacekeeping should be well within their technical capabilities in these cases. The same is true for the predominantly European NATO forces from AFNORTH that are deployed to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. In addition, national European forces that might be counted in both the ERRF and NATO totals have been deployed on peacekeeping operations in Cote d’Ivoire, and Congo, and other relevant forces are also deployed

<sup>8</sup> Capabilities Improvements Conference Declaration, November 2001, House of Commons Debates, 21.11.2001, col.295w.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Bell, NATO/Institute for Defense Analysis Forum, 3 March 2003.

in Uzbekistan and in a number of minor deployments East of Suez. As of July 2003, according to NATO Secretary General George Robertson, some 37,000 European troops could be expected to be tied into such operations<sup>10</sup>.

In none of these cases, however, are the Europeans in a position to undertake joint, combined operations of any size that require medium to significant combat power. Indeed, they might find themselves stretched if any of the peacekeeping operations in which they are presently engaged suddenly required a major injection of combat power – such as the largely European NATO operation for ISAF in Afghanistan if that theatre of operations were to slip into chaos. In such a situation they would remain heavily dependent on US, and ‘US in NATO’, combat assets. Indeed, in committing only a token number of troops to the NRF concept, the Pentagon was at pains to point out that, ‘With the NRF, we do not want to perpetuate the over reliance on the US by [our European] NATO allies’: a decision aimed to break European dependence on crucial US military assets<sup>11</sup>.

At the Colorado Springs meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in October 2003, the NATO Secretary General pointed out these limitations very forcefully. He privately deplored the status of European forces and the fact that they ‘feel overstretched’ while having a total of 1.4 million soldiers under arms, pointing out in detail where he felt individual member states were failing to provide an adequate number of deployable troops from within their national totals<sup>12</sup>.

## **The Requirements of the NRF and the ERRF**

The Europeans will be meeting commitments to the ERRF and the NRF from the same pools of national forces. The activation of a ‘Prototype NRF’ on 15 October 2003 under the Joint Operational Commander at NATO’s AFNORTH<sup>13</sup> was designed to provide a force of 9,000 troops drawn initially from France, Spain, Germany, and the UK, with a very small (300 strong) US contingent. The purpose of the Prototype NRF – apart from sending the appropriate political signals to the United States Congress – is to generate experience in organisation, training and doctrine of this first ‘combined... force

<sup>10</sup> NATO Secretary General, reported in *Financial Times*, 25.7.1903, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> ‘US holds back on commitment to Nato force’, *Financial Times*, 28 August, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> International Security Information Service, *NATO Notes*, 5(7), October 2003.

<sup>13</sup> General Sir Jack Deverell at Headquarters in Brunsum, Netherlands. See also, section 1, above.

under a single commander, maintained as a standing, rotational force'<sup>14</sup>. At this stage, this is an ambitious undertaking for the NRF concept and it is still not possible to determine whether its military requirements are entirely consistent with the need to make the ERRF more of a military reality than it is at present. A number of key variables still remain uncertain.

### *The Available Numbers*

Though the pool of 70,000 troops mentioned in Table 1 looks impressive, the likely numbers available for a given contingency at any particular time would almost certainly have to be drawn from a much smaller pool. Though non-US NATO in theory has some 238 combat brigades of around 5,000 troops each among the non-US states of the Integrated Military Structure – producing a paper total of over one million combat troops, the number of combat brigades realistically which the Europeans could deploy – with present enabling technologies – is judged even by the Secretary General of NATO as an absolute maximum of 50<sup>15</sup>. On the basis of around 5,000 troops each this gives a total maximum pool of 250,000. When training and roulement schedules are taken into account this suggests that available forces would have to be drawn from a maximum of 16 combat brigades which would provide a total of some 80,000 troops. Given that around 37,000 troops are already committed to existing deployments including the Balkans, Afghanistan, Congo, Ivory Coast and Macedonia any additional commitments would have to be drawn from an absolute maximum of around 43,000, unless operations were reduced elsewhere. This figure would fall short of the projected Helsinki Headline Goal total, but is well within the requirements for the NATO Reaction Force if such troops could be regarded as of sufficiently high readiness and if a flexible deployment structure, such as that outlined in Section 3, were adopted. This however would still require considerable expenditure to ensure that something like half of the available troops were at sufficiently high readiness to meet NRF requirements.

Of course, commitments change and the 'brake' that existing commitments put on numbers will not be constant. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that PSO duties will decrease in the next few years: if anything they are more likely to increase. So without double counting troops available, holding numbers of troops ready for emergency contingencies and keeping them

<sup>14</sup> SACEUR, General James Jones, reported in *Jane's Defence Review*, 22 October 2003, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Pointed out by NATO Secretary General. See, International Security Information Service, *NATO Notes*, 5(7), October 2003. See also, *Financial Times*, 25 July 2003, p. 9.

out of holding operations such as PSOs will still be a strain on numbers when *deployable* military units among the Europeans are so low. This will be all the more so if any of the PSO holding operations – such as that in Afghanistan for example – turn out to need rapid reinforcement and an injection of combat capacity.

### *The Deployment Cycles*

There is some relief from the numbers problem however in the deployment cycles required by both forces. Whilst the ERRF concept envisages forces deployed for up to one year – which implies at least one complete rotation of any forces sent abroad – the NRF envisages deployments for 7-30 days. The Prototype NRF is presently based on a 12 hour recall and a 5-30 day notice to move period, for deployments in which the force should be self-sustaining for 30 days. In the concept of the NRF such forces would merely be spearheading a presence, pending the arrival of other military units. For this reason we could anticipate that a small cadre of high readiness forces might always be available in sufficient numbers to meet the NRF requirements among the European forces. In principle, therefore, the requirements for NRF deployments would not necessarily have a deleterious effect on forces available for ERRF deployments.

On the other hand military prudence suggests that once deployed, forces may well be required to stay longer than their original deployment cycles suggested. The NRF is only designed to be ‘self-sustaining’ for a period of 30 days: that does not rule out leaving the high-readiness personnel in-theatre for a prolonged period once it can be backed up with other enablers. Initial forces have been sustained for longer than anticipated in almost all western deployments over the last 10 years, with the possible exception of Sierra Leone in 2000. Even small high-readiness deployments also require some relief and ‘stand-down’ time once being withdrawn from a combat zone: they cannot simply be recalled to home bases and still kept at high readiness for the remainder of their standby period. In reality, once forces are committed to a *combat* situation, they are effectively off the high readiness plot for the rest of that rotation.

### *The Costs of Transformation*

The NRF is intended, among other things, to be a vehicle for the technological transformation of NATO forces and it is undoubtedly the case that maintaining troops on a high readiness cycle such that they can operate within combined, joint task forces suggests expensive investments in many of the

areas identified as capability deficiencies in the Helsinki Goal process. High readiness for multinational combat operations is intrinsically expensive. Barry Posen has suggested that the extra costs of the NATO Reaction Force could amount to 4.5 billion euro per annum, most of which would be spent on key enablers in the Command and Control, and ISTAR spheres<sup>16</sup>. A lower estimate suggests an expenditure of some \$3 billion (roughly equivalent to 3 billion Euros) per annum, over a minimum period of five years and on the assumption that \$2 billion of that amount is dedicated to equipment procurement – an assumption that would require some significant restructuring within most European defence budgets<sup>17</sup>.

NATO is already focussing on key deficiencies in the enablers that the NRF will require, in particular, strategic airlift, air-to-air refuelling, precision-guided munitions and suppression of enemy air defence technologies – all relatively slow making progression in the old DCI process and all certainly expensive to attain<sup>18</sup>. At this stage it is not possible to offer precise costings for the NRF or the effect that those costings may have, both positively and negatively, on projected expenditures for the ERRF, but it is possible that this heralds the beginning of a more fundamental shift in defence expenditures among European militaries. Certainly, all countries are facing major internal reallocations of defence resources as they try to find headroom for some of the technologies of network-enabled warfare, and the revolution in military affairs. This trend is at least consistent with the identified shortfalls in the enabling technologies necessary for an efficient ERRF, so to the extent that the NRF concept – as a vehicle for transformation within the Alliance – stimulates realignments in Europe's national defence budgets, it may be beneficial to the ERRF project.

### *The Doctrines for Contingencies and Combat*

A key area of potential incompatibility between the two force concepts is in the expectations of combat. The Petersberg Tasks which drove the ERRF were never originally conceived as likely to concentrate on high intensity combat operations (though it was acknowledged that some high intensity combat

<sup>16</sup> B. Posen, 'Europe Cannot Advance on Two Fronts' *Financial Times*, 24.4.2003; D. Keohane, 'European Union Defence Policy: Beyond the Baltics, Beyond Peacekeeping, *Weltpolitik*, net. 1 July 2003.

<sup>17</sup> J. M. Calha, 'Reform of NATO's Command Structure and the NATO Response Force', NATO Parliamentary Assembly Draft Report, 53 DSCTC, April 2002.

<sup>18</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003-04*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, for the IISS, p. 29.

might be involved) but rather on crisis management and peacekeeping. The NATO Reaction Force, by contrast, is more explicitly geared to the expectation that NATO will play a global role, that it will contribute to the 'War on Terror' and that it would provide the vanguard for more extensive combat operations should the need arise. Preparing forces among the available 43,000 who have appropriate readiness and combat abilities may serve to soak up both resources and training expertise in ways which may harm the ERRF concept. If, however, the Peterberg Tasks are now reinterpreted to stress the possibility of operations at the higher end of the conflict spectrum, this area of incompatibility may not be so great, and the fact remains that effective peacekeeping requires significant elements of combat capability. Nevertheless, there remains a significant difference in the contingencies for which one pool of national forces are expected to address both ERRF and NRF requirements. The aspiration to develop an NRF has had the effect of exposing a great doctrinal deficiency both within and between the militaries of Europe.

### *The Inter-relationship of NATO and EU Military Assets*

The role of American owned assets within NATO and their availability to both NRF and the ERRF still remains subject to finalisation. However the experience of the last 4 years may prove helpful in this regard since the resolution of the Greek-Turkish dispute over the ESDP-NATO relationship in December 2002 allowed for an agreement on the use of NATO assets by EU forces<sup>19</sup>. The Declaration of 13 December 2002 covered the 'Berlin Plus' arrangements (para 10 of the 1999 NATO Washington Summit Declaration), which comprise four elements:

- assured EU access to NATO operational planning;
- presumption of availability to the EU of NATO capabilities and common assets;
- NATO European command options for EU-led operations, including the European role of Deputy SACEUR;
- adaptation of the NATO defence planning system to incorporate the availability of forces for EU operations.

The creation of a new capabilities agency arising from the Le Touquet Summit was a positive step in this direction which has been recognised also in the EU/NATO declaration on ESDP at the Prague Summit. At the end of March 2003 the EU took over responsibility from NATO for the internation-

<sup>19</sup> NATO Issues, 'NATO-EU: A Strategic Partnership', 19 September 2003.

al operation in Macedonia. While this is a small operation, the planning structure for it is, in outline, common to a large operation, so the ability of the EU to take over from a NATO operation stands as a good example of the workability of the Berlin-plus formula<sup>20</sup>.

Much of the groundwork has been successfully laid, therefore, for a sharing of assets where the need arises. The Iraqi crisis has indicated, however, that political sensitivities in prosecuting the 'War on Terror' are entirely capable of knocking all such contingency arrangements off track, where allies may seriously disagree on a political level about the military appropriateness of action. In such cases it is entirely possible that the ERRF might be denied access to essential enablers available within NATO that would be available to the NRF.

<sup>20</sup> NATO Update, 'NATO-EU Cooperation Taken to a New Level', 19 March, 2003.

## Section 5

# The Defence Capabilities Agency, European Armaments Agency, Occar and the Loi-Framework Agreement

As a previous joint CeMiSS/CDS report indicated at greater length, the whole prospect of enhanced capabilities initiatives among the Europeans raises longer term issues for the defence industrial base (DIB) in Europe. In the short term, such initiatives as the ERRF and the NRF have few direct implications for the European DIB, given the length of the procurement cycle and the fact that new equipments ordered now will not come on stream until well after the target dates for ERRF and NRF to be fully operational. Nevertheless, such initiatives imply deeper changes in defence policies that may have some profound effects on the European DIB<sup>1</sup>.

Both the defence industrial base in Europe and governments within the EU bear the burden of the inefficiencies generated by a very fragmented approach to the defence industrial base, particularly in the realm of aerospace<sup>2</sup>. An institutional and legal restructuring is long overdue, but in themselves none of the force initiatives outlined here have the political or financial weight to drive a major restructuring. National governments feel themselves compelled to respond to the requests of defence companies for consolidation of the supply side of defence production or else face a strategically and socially disruptive reduction in their national industrial potential. On the other hand, industry must take seriously government's request for better value for money as a return on defence investment.

This supply and demand side dynamic, in which there is presently no obvious equilibrium, could either generate a positive and self-reinforcing cycle or – if neglected – destroy large parts of the current technical and productive capacity of the European defence industrial base. National solutions are nowadays ineffective given the limited scope of defence budgets and the slow

<sup>1</sup> CeMiSS/CDS, *Towards a European Security and Defence Policy*, CeMiSS, Rome, Artistic and Publishing Company, 2002, pp. 119-145.

<sup>2</sup> See, Burkard Schmitt, 'From Cooperation to Integration: Defence and Aerospace Industries in Europe', *Chaillot Paper 40*, Paris, Institute for Security Studies, WEU, July 2000.

but persisting globalisation of the market. The competitive threat posed by US-based defence companies cannot any more be met at the national level. The European convention on the future Treaty of the European Union proposes to enhance cooperation in security and defence matters and offers a particular opportunity to define a common European legal framework for the defence industry. Bilateral and multilateral initiatives such as the Franco-British agreement Le Touquet and the quadrilateral meeting in Brussels could be interpreted as reinforcing this general institutional and legal trend. Certainly, they offer national or bilateral initiatives which other European institutions are willing to rationalise at a communitarian level. Equally the growing integration of the defence industrial base on the supply side creates competitive pressures which can help guarantee within all markets heavy disincentives to dumping and cross-subsidisation by companies having a dominant position in a fragmented marketplace.

For all of these reasons, therefore, defence industries in Europe are ripe for further restructuring and rationalisation to meet a number of imperatives: strategic needs for both national and European requirements; technological and industrial innovation; budgetary limitations imposed by constrained national defence budgets; and the drive to improve value for money in a period of increasing taxation.

### **The Defence Capabilities Agency – European Armament Agency**

The European Convention proposes a new treaty which would include provision for the constitution of a European Armament Agency (EAA) which would be designed to act as an important incentive to the creation of new military capabilities and, in the longer term, to further the process of integration between national defence policies. The Le Touquet Franco-British summit had outlined the creation of a 'Defence Capabilities Agency' and in November 2003 this initiative was adjusted to create the EAA, whose work would be incorporated into the political package being articulated in the European Convention<sup>3</sup>. The vision of what role the EAA might play varies from country to country within the EU. At a minimalist extreme it could be limited in scope and strictly controlled by national governments, rendering it a small improvement on the existing OCCAR arrangements. For the maximalist, the EAA

<sup>3</sup> Closing Remarks by the NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Parliament Meeting on Defence, 25 November 2003.

could embrace a broad set of missions in a highly communitarian fashion within the provisions of a future EU treaty. In choosing between a minimalist and a maximalist interpretation the relevant questions concern firstly, the institutional framework in which the EAA might be set; and secondly, decisions on which part of the security production chain should be included in any such agency (basic research, definition of requirements, design, development, production, acquisition or project management). The political answer to such questions will establish the scope and limits of the EAA and will determine the likely effect of such an agency in facing the complex problems of demand-side reorganisation in European defence industries<sup>4</sup>. The EAA could encounter fierce opposition by those countries more inclined to affirm their national independence in defence matters (such as the United Kingdom or Denmark) as well as those less willing to compromise on traditional foreign policy guidelines (as in some of the smaller and former neutral states such as Finland and Ireland), and not least among those who may fear for the survival of their national defence industries.

Ultimately, the relevance and effectiveness of the EAA will be determined by the availability of its own funds, given directly or indirectly, by member countries but managed by some sort of independent board according to directives emanating from a supranational authority such as the European Council, the PSC or a multinational ad hoc control arrangement.

## **Supply Side Regulation Reform**

There is no such counterpart looming on the supply side. The most advanced agreement in this respect is the outcome of the so-called Letter of Intent (LoI) Framework Agreement (FA) process. This framework agreement is far from being a truly Europe-wide initiative. There is no organisation to support its implementation and the LoI has not produced any form of permanent secretariat structure. If anything, the LoI process has taken second place to limited reform of national regulations, which have to engage in a time-consuming process of bargaining and national ratification before they achieve any international, still less supranational, status. Nevertheless such dynamics as the LoI and national regulatory reform represent should be regarded as a potentially significant first step towards greater regulation between the six main

<sup>4</sup> See, Peter Norman, *The Accidental Constitution, The Story of the European Convention*, Brussels, Eurocomment, 2003.

national defence producers within the European Union who are responsible for 80%-90% of the overall value of defence equipment production across the continent. The next prospective step is represented by the involvement of the European Commission in the reform process, as foreseen in the communication of March 11, 2003 to the European Parliament concerning the possible reduction or even complete phasing out of Article 296 of the Rome Treaty, which would open the door to direct involvement of European authorities in the defence market.

Clearly there is great potential scope for multinational initiatives in further reorganisation of both the supply and the demand side of the European defence industrial base. Ultimately, the reform of both sides of the defence market in Europe is a precondition for the survival of Europe's strategic aspirations as well as of its defence industries. National governments face increasingly difficult decisions either to dilute their formal control in the procurement and regulatory field or face a situation in which their national vetoes are retained but increasingly too weak to affect the final outcomes within the growing global competition over scarce resources devoted to defence.

Both the ERRF and the NRF will make such policy dilemmas even more acute since the necessary enablers for both types of force structure are expensive and generally only feasible as multinational or shared initiatives. In this respect, the future of the European Convention and the new EU Treaty, and the degree to which it establishes power over the defence industrial base in Europe, will be a critical indicator of future trends.

## Section 6

### Conclusions

All significant military forces in the Transatlantic community are currently facing the challenges of rapid reaction. As was made clear in Section 1, there is an operational need for military forces to be able to deploy rapidly and be sustained for significant periods in a theatre of operations. These requirements are being addressed at a time when both NATO and the European Union are undergoing major structural changes. So the process of trying to create more rapid deployment – inherently political in itself – is taking place during a phase of heightened political sensitivity among all the Transatlantic allies.

To this must be added the much greater urgency and focus that the United States has put on the ‘War on Terror’ since the ‘9/11’ events of 2001. For both good and bad, the US has adopted the War on Terror as a yardstick of effectiveness which the Europeans cannot ignore, even if they remain uncertain among themselves about its true implications. As Section 2 points out, the record of previous operations in which the Europeans have been involved, even France and the UK, reveals some real structural deficiencies. Forces who for two generations were structured to fight a major land war in Europe have been slow to adapt to the operational demands of the last decade and a half

The greatest rapid deployment capabilities among the Europeans lie potentially within the maritime assets presently deployed and those now planned. The UK and French carrier forces presently under development offer some important elements of rapidity and flexibility for European task forces, especially if their operations are coordinated. In most respects, however, the drive since 1998 to create a European Rapid Reaction Force by the end of 2003, has not centred on rapid deployment as much as some of the more basic elements of military capability. The requirements for the NATO Reaction Force, though it is intended to be rather smaller than the ERRF, are challenging to the Europeans in a different way.

As Sections 3 and 4 point out, the operational requirements for the NRF are more challenging than they first appear, even if the Europeans contribute earmarked forces on a rotational basis to a flexible pool. The fact remains that the pool will have to be relatively large, both to allow for proper rotation and to ensure that it includes all the necessary combat elements for a force that might be deployed in a wide range of conflict scenarios that cannot be predicted in advance. The military requirements for the NRF and the ERRF do not automatically all run in the same direction and it is not yet clear which elements of the NRF will tend to reinforce the ERRF concept and which may tend to undermine it. The principle that duplication must be avoided is a fundamental building block of all new military initiatives. As Sections 3 and 4 make clear, however, mere 'double-hatting' of existing forces will not suffice for both requirements, and the analysis here offers some pointers to the direction of current trends as each of these initiatives begins to come to fruition.

For the Europeans, this complicated juxtaposition between the ERRF and the NRF suggests four particular conclusions.

### **The Imperative to More Rapid Reaction Forces**

Firstly, the Europeans must continue to recognise the political and military imperative towards more flexible and rapidly deployable forces. The NRF is only the most specific initiative that promotes these concepts; and it is no 'silver bullet' answer to the military problems of the Transatlantic partners. The NRF can only comprise part of an overall allied strategy. While 9/11 and the War on Terror added an overwhelming political impetus to the trend towards rapid deployment it was present, and growing steadily, in any case.

It may remain a matter of contention how far such an imperative should be used to engineer 'transformation' among European forces in the same way that the US pursues technical transformation, but the fact remains that operational flexibility can only be achieved through modernisation in command and control. To have usable forces the Europeans have to meet a number of technical challenges to make a higher proportion of their 1.4 million personnel under arms available for the sort of military operations that can now be envisaged and which have confronted the Europeans almost on an annual basis over the past decade. In this respect the NRF, however politically contentious its wider implications might become, serves as a standard against which national efforts at flexible modernisation can be judged. It should provide a

guideline and a set of good practices that will help all the European allies in their continuing efforts to restructure their national defence forces.

## **The Need to Prioritise**

Secondly, the Europeans are committed to both the ERRF and the NRF so they need to prioritise their own modernisation efforts more than in the past. It is logical that all should be done to make the requirements of the NRF as consistent as possible with the ERRF. Rapid deployment enablers and earmarked military units for immediate deployment will serve both purposes, but the Europeans may well find that in practice this restricts the numbers available for the ERRF agreed under the Helsinki Headline Goals. Two different military concepts are being mixed together in this trend towards rapid reaction forces. *Rapid* and *flexible* deployment is part of the strategic evolution of all forces, including European forces, in the current era. This is bolstered by the needs of technical transformation as militaries embrace evolving civil technologies. On the other hand, rapid reaction force initiatives are also driven by the need to create useable military *capabilities*. This is consistent with the enlarged Petersberg Tasks, where military capability and sustainment of a force may be more important than the rapidity of its deployment. Nor is it entirely clear what 'rapid' should mean in this context. The NRF's rapidity refers simultaneously to its readiness, its deployment, and its combat capacity to act at full power immediately upon deployment. These are not the same thing and can only be met by investment in different technologies and personnel. Investments in combat capacity are likely to be consistent with the requirements of the ERRF; investments in deployment and readiness rather less so.

In an era of defence consolidation where defence budgets are unlikely to rise significantly, national ministries of defence will have to prioritise very carefully how they invest in future defence systems and what they commit to either or both of these military initiatives. The fate of both the ERRF and the NRF will ultimately lie in the way the Europeans prioritise their investments in new military capabilities.

## **The Wider Political Question**

Thirdly, since both initiatives are capability driven, there is still no resolution of the wider political question regarding what these forces are intend-

ed to do: to what extent do they represent an independent European military capability? The avoidance of this question since the St Malo meeting in 1998 has allowed planning for both initiatives to proceed, where attention has concentrated on the capabilities end of the equation, building on the general consensus that military improvements are anyway long overdue and a *sine qua non* of any subsequent arguments over the role of the Europeans in world politics. But since, as we have demonstrated, the requirements for the ERRF and the NRF are not entirely consistent and that national prioritisation will have big implications on their relative success, the fate of these initiatives will have a major symbolic impact on the outcome of the overwhelming political question: what are these military capabilities for?

Added to this is the fact that the United States, in its present assertive mood, is little interested in the ERRF except insofar as it improves capabilities that might contribute to the NRF; and the NRF is only a small contribution to Washington's wider desire that the Europeans play some militarily meaningful role in the War on Terror as the Administration conceives it. From the standpoint of Washington, any new European initiatives should be seen primarily to bolster the Atlantic Alliance and help make the Europeans more militarily relevant to US security concerns. The Europeans see this in a more nuanced way and are not united among themselves as to how far their military capacity should be cast in such a light. The compromises reached by the EU where the Europeans would run a small planning cell, have a cell also in SHAPE, and embark on structured cooperation to push forward with European defence – have done little to clarify the basic political choices the Europeans now face. Whether the Europeans like it or not, the practical outcomes of the ERRF and the NRF initiatives, and the transformational technologies they might embrace, have become a political acid test of Transatlantic military relations.

## **The Need for Political Impetus**

This research has outlined a number of possibilities and uncertainties associated with the development of the NRF at a time when the Helsinki Headline Goals are due to be met with the declaration of a full operating capability for the ERRF. There are more questions than answers, which is inevitable, since these initiatives have been intentionally ambiguous in order to secure political consensus. Many important questions were deliberately left open in EU discussions in 1998 and 1999 and then at NATO's Prague Summit in 2002, so

as to preserve the impetus to make progress in the immediate task of improving Europe's military capabilities. This analysis makes clear, however, that the scope for such political ambiguity has narrowed considerably in the last two years. The ERRF is required to show some real military capability from 2004 onwards; the NRF has become the critical military test of European NATO's relevance in the eyes of the United States; NATO is taking on global security commitments in support of US-led objectives, and the European Union is creating a new constitution to codify the type of actor it wants to be in world politics, prior to its most extensive enlargement ever.

It would be unrealistic to expect the new EU Constitutional Treaty of 2004 to meet the requirements of political clarity. It is, after all, subject to all the same competing political pressures that have built ambiguity into the lesser questions surrounding the ERRF and the NRF. The Treaty is set to achieve a somewhat precarious balance which reinforces the Maastricht aspiration for a separate European military capacity and the genesis of a planning mechanism for it, while at the same time reaffirming the principle of 'no duplication' and strict adherence to the primacy of NATO as the guarantor of Europe's security. A political mechanism at a lower and more practical level is required to maintain the impetus towards more capable European forces in both NATO and the EU, and to help resolve some of the most pressing political trade-offs that must now be confronted.

The creation of the European Armaments Agency might provide a useful political forum to play this role. Certainly, that was one of the intentions behind the proposal at the Le Touquet summit to create a 'Defence Capabilities Agency' which was the forerunner of the EAA. It has a major potential role to play in helping to reconcile some of the political ambiguities that currently surround the military improvement initiatives of the Europeans, as well as making some progress in reconciling the demands of European defence industries with the strains created by limited resources and smarter approaches to defence procurement.

If the Europeans, either in NATO or the European Union, are not able to sustain the political impetus to improve their military capabilities and reconcile some of the long-standing and unanswered questions over European defence and security, then they are likely to be overtaken by political crises both from within and without their treaty structures.

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