

## **NATO's Military Transformation**

**The following is an edited transcript of the afternoon session of the international conference 'NATO on the Eve of the Riga Summit', which was held on Friday 13 October 2006 in Hotel Sofitel in The Hague. Here, successively, are the introductions by Klaus Kleffner, Stephan de Spiegeleire and Martin van Creveld. The afternoon session was chaired by General (ret.) Arie van der Vlis (former Chief of Defence Staff of the Netherlands, and Member of the Board of the Netherlands Atlantic Association).**

### **Allied Command Transformation**

*Klaus Kleffner*

Transformation of the Allies' capabilities depends on a shared understanding of the challenges of the security environment, both as we perceive it now, and as it may develop in the years to come, a shared understanding also of how NATO should adapt itself to meet these challenges. But perhaps even more important is to translate this understanding into practical effects. In the first instance this should be through an agreed concept for future military requirements that will allow nations to adapt their own capabilities accordingly. The Allies have agreed that the Strategic Concept, which was approved at the Washington summit in 1999, still expresses NATO's enduring purpose, nature and fundamental security tasks and that it provides, in broad terms, the guidelines for the first adaptation of the Allies' military forces.

Is a summit in itself always a point where you must have a change, where you must have something new? In my personal experience, I do not think that it is necessary. In 1999, the Washington summit was an important step. In 2002 the Prague summit was an important step. What we are doing now is basically stocktaking. And the indications that you do not have major new requirements could also prove that the work undertaken so far is not so bad. It is not a lack of imagination.

The idea of transformation is a process, not a destination. This has been captured at the military level by the new Allied Command Transformation, which aims to be NATO's forcing agent for change. It was approximately two years ago that the heads of state and government called for the development of the Comprehensive Political Guidance to support the Strategic Concept on capabilities' development. And the intention was never more than that. It was to act as a kind of up-to-date translation of its provisions to a security situation that continues to evolve. The Comprehensive Political Guidance that we expect to be endorsed by the heads of state and government at the Riga summit sits neatly between the Strategic Concept and other capability guidance documents such as the Ministerial Guidance 2006 (which was approved in June 2006 by the nations that participate in force planning). It analyses the probable future of the security environment, but it acknowledges the possibility of unpredictable events.

The evolving security environment requires a commitment from nations, recognizing that the primacy of national political decisions to NATO operations be translated in concrete terms by the development and fielding of flexible and sustainable contributions, and also by a fair sharing of burdens. It is quite understandable that NATO needs to have an early indication of the likely military demands and potential availability of forces and resources when making a decision to launch an operation. It is very awkward for a Secretary-General to beg nations to get (admittedly big) helicopters. It is all available in the inventory of the Alliance, but it is the political will that is sometimes not so easy.

The development of capabilities is difficult without the commitment of sufficient resources. It will therefore remain critically important that the resources that Allies make available for defence, whether nationally for multinational projects, or through NATO mechanisms, are used as effectively as possible, and are focused on priority areas for investment. Increased investment in key capabilities will require nations to reconsider prioritization and the more effective use of resources, also through multinational approaches.

However, sixteen allies spend less than two per cent of their GDP on defence (the Netherlands 1.5 per cent). If nations are not prepared to spend more, they must spend more wisely. Put bluntly: more hard choices are needed, especially if nations are to achieve more expeditionary capability. They should minimize in-place forces, and offer to the Alliance forces and capabilities that match both our aspirations and our rhetoric. Of course, some capabilities are so expensive that an individual nation cannot afford them, like the AWACS fleet or Alliance Ground Surveillance. There we aim for multinational cooperation.

Turning to the NATO Response Force (NRF), it is fair to say that this is a central element of transformation. It not only has an operational value, but also a specific significance as a catalyst for the wider transformation of NATO forces. Notwithstanding the advances in the NRF, generation of forces for the NRF is still a challenge, despite the large number of troops apparently available to the Alliance. We have a number of initiatives in place to minimize the problem. These focus *inter alia* on ensuring that a greater percentage of Allied forces are truly usable, that nations have a full picture of likely commitments well into the future, to facilitate advance planning and burden-sharing, and, related to this, that the generation of forces for the NRF is put on a much longer-term footing. We are also considering financial support for short-notice deployments, so that the costs of deployment of the NRF, which can be substantial, would not fall entirely on the nations making up the NRF at the moment of use. Joint logistics, which are great in principle but not fully realized, would represent a huge gain in efficiency. By such means we expect nations to find it easier to commit to operations and to the NRF. But behind these largely procedural devices lies the simple fact that we depend on the political will of Allies to mount successful operations. Without that, NATO cannot do its job.

What are we expecting from the Riga summit? The summit will take stock of where we stand with the implementation of the Prague initiatives. Heads of state and government are expected to consider the NRF in light of the significant progress made so far, and to underline its importance for the future. They will receive a report on the progress in capability commitments and will be told something about NATO's command structure, defence against terrorism, nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) defence initiatives, Alliance Ground Surveillance System, usability and missile defence.

What may possible new initiatives for Riga be? Airlift will be considered, talking about recent initiatives by the UK and France. We will look at the NATO Training Initiative. We will look at multinational logistics and information superiority and probably at special operations forces. We will also consider how to take forward the findings of the Comprehensive Political Guidance and the relation to the interaction between military and civilian instruments of crisis management. We hope that decisions that were made at the summits in Prague and Istanbul, supplemented by new initiatives adopted in Riga, will demonstrate that NATO and its nations are putting their guidance into practice.

Klaus Kleffner is Head of the Defence Capabilities Section in the Defence Policy and Planning Division at NATO Headquarters.

## Transformation in Trouble

*Stephan de Spiegeleire*

I am a true believer in transformation in the British/American sense, namely to bring our militaries into the information age. Many people have already seen it. The military are starting to see it too, but still have a long way to go. We have been surprised so many times over recent decades. We did not see the fall of the Soviet Union coming, we did not see the proliferation of small-scale wars and we did not see the advent of hyper-terrorism. The nature of the international system today is such that you need much more agility than I think we are currently planning into our security systems.

The Clingendael Centre for Security Studies has done quite a bit of work for NATO over the last few years. We have come to the conclusion that transformation is in trouble and that defence planning has not changed nearly as much as it probably should. A second reason why we came to this conclusion is through our Dutch contacts. We do a lot of work for the Dutch Ministry of Defence, where you see that national transformation gets only very little support from the defence planning process at NATO. The gap between member states and what is happening in Norfolk, Virginia (where Allied Command Transformation is located), and what is happening in the Alliance as a whole is only growing.

Allied Command Transformation (ACT) is failing. I looked at the entire international press and counted how many times ACT has been quoted since its inception. The biggest peak is 30 articles, not much if you are the forcing agent of change. Former NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson used to say that 'ACT is this virus, the transformational bug that we are implanting into the Alliance to generate change'. If a bug does its work you have to see it. Another example: I counted how many times ACT is mentioned on the websites of the Ministries of Defence of a couple of countries. It is in the 0.01 range.

This just shows you that ACT is not registering. A slide from a presentation that Lt Gen. Soligan, the new Deputy Chief of Staff at ACT in Norfolk, has been giving for the last couple of months about how NATO generates capabilities, nicely illustrates the problem. The nations on this slide are on the receiving end of the process. Ultimately they are the ones that are confronted with force requirements. The nations themselves are somehow not organically included. Nations are the heart of NATO. Nations are the ones that have the money. Nations have the democratic legitimacy. They are the ones that should be empowering change. The defence planners in the member states should be networked with their colleagues in the other countries. They should jointly generate ideas that can then be transplanted into the NATO organization as a whole – in other words, a more nation-centric and network centric approach to defence planning.

There are, however, also some examples of areas where things are going better. For instance, on education and training ACT has a much more bottom-up approach than for instance the top-down approach that is used in defence planning. On Concept Development and Experimentation, the work that NATO is doing is also quite positive. Still, we are talking about transformation, but what we are doing in fact is just defence planning. How do you generate the forces that will be required tomorrow? The military in general has been quite good at this forward-thinking process over the past couple of years, but the process is really in dire need of change today.

Let me make a couple of key points with regard to military transformation. In a recent CSIS/TNO paper, I differentiate between transformation Mark I and transformation Mark II. What we do today is to transform our forces to be able to fight the battles that we have today. We are finding it a daunting task indeed, in Afghanistan, for instance, but also in other places around the world. But that is just not good enough. We are once again making the same

mistake as in the past. We do need transformation Mark II, which tries to embrace some of the new opportunities that are provided by new technologies and that we are not very good at. Our military planners are very good at operational planning, but forward planning comes much less naturally to them. There is always an inclination to push operational planning into defence planning, which is just not right.

Second, Afghanistan is such a difficult problem for the Alliance that the whole longer-term issue is crowded out by operational primacy. We even see this in the NRF. For operational and political reasons the certification process in the NRF, which was supposed to be the generator of change, is not taken very seriously. There is so much pressure on being able to call the NRF fully operational at the Riga summit that the transformational process has just been thrown out of the window. But the NRF really has to fulfil *both* of these functions. In its operational role it serves very much as the cutting edge of the Alliance – and not as a provider for humanitarian support in Pakistan, however important that might be, for that was not why the NRF was created. However, we have to make sure that there is a custodian for the transformational part of the NRF within the NRF, and that should be the certification process.

Third, how can we talk about transformation if we do not even measure it? The Alliance should develop a series of rigorous benchmarks that are not just percentages. Look at the logistics systems of our different nations. On what are they based? How can we compare them? What are the parameters along which they vary, and where do the different countries fit? These benchmarks would allow us over time to see where different member states are heading.

Fourth, practice what you preach. ACT talks a lot about network centrism and about effects-based operations, but does it really do it itself? ACT *is* quite good at that, but not on the defence planning side, which is still a sort of outsourced occupation in which member states give over to ACT and then get something back. That is not network-centric. If ACT is interested in the effects in the theatre, it should also be interested in its own effects. ACT should take a look at the doctrines within the member states for instance. There is a whole body of very interesting and very solid transformational doctrines.

Another important point is that the defence planning process within NATO, which is really the heart of our forward planning, should be central again. Whenever there is a summit, there is a new incentive to come up with a new term (such as Prague Capabilities Commitment, Defence Capabilities Initiative). Now we have the Evolutionary Capability Criteria within the NRF. By putting the spotlights on those things, we detract attention from the real process that we should take seriously. Defence planning is a horrendously difficult enterprise. Small countries, such as the Netherlands, are critically dependent on NATO for this. We have to re-empower the defence planning process. The Long-Term Requirements Study, for instance, in 2006 was not funded. That does not make much sense to me. You have to take this much more seriously than the sort of political exercise that we engage in regularly and where we come up with nice-sounding priorities, but that are not really carried by the member states. And if we were to place the nation-centric defence planning process more centrally, then the requirements that would be generated would also affect the nations and not just Norfolk or Brussels.

Finally, the NRF's dual vocation really has to be maintained. If ACT was supposed to be the blacksmith of transformation, the NRF was to be the anvil on which the blacksmith would hammer its transformation. That has not materialized yet. With respect to certification, a lot more should be made public. If you want to make sure that there is an agent for change in this sense, you have to show how countries are actually cutting it. That is not thumbs up or thumbs down, as the certification process works right now, whereby thumbs down is politically almost impossible these days. It should really be a sort of scale on which different

contributions from the different member states are ranked. Certification in most fields of public life is done by third parties, not by the parties themselves. When businesses want to be certified, they go elsewhere. There is plenty of expertise around on both sides of the Atlantic that could actually take a really hard-nosed look at the capabilities that countries are throwing into the NRF basket, and that could probably provide a more independent and objective assessment of where we stand with this transformation than is the case today.

Stephan de Spiegeleire is Programme Director for Defence Transformation at the Clingendael Centre for Strategic Studies.

## Another Kind of Transformation

*Martin van Creveld*

For the second day running we have been talking about transformation. Even though I invented the term back in 1991 with my book *Transformation of War*, I still do not get it. As far as I can see, there is only one transformation. And it has not been happening for six months, six years or ten years. It has been happening for 65 years, since 1941 to be precise. That is the year when the German *Wehrmacht* – at the time the world's most powerful and most modern armed force – invaded Yugoslavia, took just two weeks and 100 dead to smash Yugoslavia to pieces, and then found itself confronted with a resistance that lasted and increased in spite of everything that no fewer than 27 Axis divisions could do. Compare this to Iraq or Afghanistan. German, Italian, Hungarian, and Bulgarian troops found themselves entangled in a war that they could not and did not win, and ended, as we all know, by getting the hell out.

The one important transformation that I can see is a transformation from war between armies to a conflict between on the one hand armies and on the other hand a very different kind of organization whose principle characteristic is precisely that it is not an army. And that it very often does *not* wear uniforms. And that it very often does not have a strong hierarchical chain of command. And very often that it cannot be distinguished from the people among whom it lives. And that it almost never has a government to tell it what to do.

All the other transformations that we have been discussing will be forgotten within six months. And then some other brilliant guy in the Pentagon will invent a new kind of transformation, publicize it, hold conferences about it, and have money thrown at it.

War was transformed 65 years ago. And just as the *Wehrmacht* failed to deal with it, so did practically everybody else who has tried since then. The British tried it against the Israelis – they failed. The French tried it against the Vietnamese and the Algerians – they failed. The Americans thought that they would do it much better than those weak-kneed Europeans. So they went to Vietnam and we all know what happened. Recently, the Israelis tried it in Lebanon – they also failed.

At every moment in this 65-year-old history of transformation, there have been people saying: 'I know what to do. We need more money'. Israel, for example, has a GDP of approximately 110 billion dollars. About ten per cent of this goes to the Israeli Defence Forces, and to that you have to add another two billion dollars in American aid. So we are talking about a total of thirteen billion dollars. By the best available information, Hezbollah have between 50 and 100 million dollars a year coming from Iran. So it is clearly not a question of money.

Others say: 'we need more troops'. Let us use the example of Israel once again. In 1948, 100,000 British troops occupied Palestine, and they retreated in front of a few hundred

Jewish terrorists. In Algeria, the French had a massive 400,000 troops, and they retreated. In Vietnam, the Americans had three or four times as much manpower available as the Vietcong and North Vietnam, and they retreated. And I do not have to mention Iraq. So it is not a question of troops.

Some say: 'we need more technology'. We need computers, data links, the kind of technology that will make 'swarming' possible. This is one of the new terms coming out of the Office of Force Transformation in the Pentagon. However, in the recent Israeli adventure in Lebanon this new technology was a total and utter failure. Never has any Israeli operation been commanded so badly. Every commander was sitting with his laptop. This is the worst way to command war.

Finally, there are those that recommend more study. I have a story about that. Years ago I wrote a book called *The Training of Officers*, and I wondered what pictures to include. I sent pictures to my editor in New York, and one picture showed an Afghan Mujahid. The Mujahidin had just finished fighting the Soviets, and the picture showed this guy in a white *jalaba*, bare-footed, balancing across a tree trunk that somebody had thrown over a stream. Naturally I got a fax back from New York saying: 'Martin, what is wrong with you? What does that picture have to do with the subject of your book, which after all is the training of officers?' And I said: 'Wait until you see the caption', for the caption was: 'He did not go to military academy'.

And what do we do in front of this almost endless chain of failures? We talk, and we talk and we talk. I do not have time to go over the nature of transformed war in detail. I do not have time to go over the question of why we are losing all these wars. Nor can I go over the question of how we can break the chain of failures and what needs to be done. All I know is one thing: what I have just called transformed war – my own term is actually non-trinitarian war, some people call it asymmetric war, some call it guerrilla, some call it terrorism – that kind of war is spreading. It is slowly but surely taking over the globe. And even in the Netherlands it is no longer inconceivable that one day you will find yourselves involved in it. Either we stop talking and come to terms with it, or, as sure as the sun rises in the morning, it will come to terms with us.

Martin van Creveld is Professor of Military History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.