



## NATO'S MILITARY TRANSFORMATION: A VISION FROM SPAIN

**Enrique Fojón Lagoa<sup>1</sup> & Guillem Colom Piella<sup>2</sup>**  
*Spanish Defence Staff*

### **Abstract:**

The end of the Cold War gave rise to a new strategic environment very different from the one that existed when the Atlantic Alliance was formed in 1949. The Alliance began a process of adaptation to the new era and transformation of its military forces to fight and manage new risks and threats. Although this process was initially articulated in a similar way to the American one for dealing with the Revolution in Military Affairs, at present, the allied military transformation is at a turning point since its pillars have been abandoned and new challenges have been identified. This article provides an overview of the history, evolution and current situation of the process of military transformation in the Atlantic Alliance.

**Keywords:** Atlantic Alliance, Transformation, Post-cold War, XXIst Century, Strategic Planning, Armed Forces.

### **Resumen:**

*El fin de la Guerra Fría dio lugar a un nuevo entorno estratégico muy distinto del que existía cuando se constituyó la Alianza Atlántica en 1949 para combatir la amenaza del Pacto de Varsovia. Ello exigió que esta organización iniciara un proceso de adaptación al nuevo ambiente y transformara su músculo militar para combatir los nuevos riesgos y amenazas. Aunque este proceso empezó a articularse de forma similar al estadounidense y relacionado con la conquista de la Revolución en los Asuntos Militares, hoy en día la transformación militar aliada se halla en un punto de inflexión después de que sus principios definidores hayan sido abandonados y nuevos retos y necesidades hayan sido identificados. Este artículo ofrece una visión panorámica de los antecedentes, evolución y situación actual del proceso de transformación militar aliado.*

**Palabras clave:** Alianza Atlántica, transformación, posguerra fría, siglo XXI, planeamiento estratégico, fuerzas armadas.

Copyright © UNISCI, 2010.

Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores, y no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI. *The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI.*

<sup>1</sup> Enrique Fojón Lagoa is Chief of the Unit for Armed Forces Transformation. Spanish Defence Chief of Staff.

<sup>2</sup> Guillem Colom Piella is Senior Expert of the Unit for Armed Forces Transformation. Spanish Defence Chief of Staff.



## 1. Introduction

It is well known that from 1989 to nowadays, the world has experienced profound changes: the bipolar politics that characterized the Cold War period have disappeared, the globalization process has been completed and a new structure of international relations has emerged. At the same time, the traditional threats to the world's peace, security and stability have merged with new risks of a very different nature, reach and intensity, coming from states and non-state actors.

Hence, while during the Cold War the main threat against the West was a war, either conventional or nuclear, against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, today a number of conflicts of very different natures, scope and implications, which receive the attention of the mass media and concern our societies, proliferate around the world and require an appropriate response. This situation has shaped an uncertain and complex security environment that demands continuous and permanent effort from the armed forces in order to respond to those conflicts and perform a wide range of operations, from peacekeeping to high-intensity operations<sup>3</sup>.

In the same vein, the 9-11 attacks in New York and Washington, and their various sequels all around the world, have demonstrated that the use of terror is now a global risk which not only transcends the classical border between internal and external threats but also needs to be fought by all the means states can use: diplomatic, economic, political, cultural, informational or military. Those attacks have also demonstrated that this *new* adversary can acquire several forms and is very different from the traditional state actors. This opponent to our societies and our way of living will use all the means it has at hand to achieve its political objectives<sup>4</sup>.

For those reasons, the armed forces of all advanced countries have initiated a process of *Transformation* to adapt their capabilities and forces to present and future threats. Broadly speaking, the transformation was initiated in 2001 as a means to achieve the desired *Revolution in Military Affairs* (RMA), defined as a profound change in the way of waging war which results from the integration of new technologies, doctrines, tactics, organizations or procedures in the armed forces. This change renders irrelevant or obsolete the pre-revolutionary way of fighting and gives a great amount of importance to the military in exploiting these new capabilities. Consequently, any potential adversary should attain this new set of capabilities, either by joining the revolution or developing a response capable of preventing this advantage. The latest elements of the RMA resulted from the advent of the Information Age and centred the interest of the world's defence community during the nineties<sup>5</sup>.

The origins of this RMA can be found during the Vietnam War, a conflict which revealed the limitations of the traditional *American Way of War*<sup>6</sup> and whose outcome caused a

<sup>3</sup> Richard, Kugler & Ellen, Frost (eds.) (2001): *The Global Century: Globalization and National Security*, Washington DC, National Defense University, pp. 423-442.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous (2004): *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*, Washington DC, Brassey's INC or Peters, Ralph (2002): *Beyond Terror: Strategy in a Changing World*, Mechanicsburg, Stackpole Books.

<sup>5</sup> Knox, MacGregor & Murray, Williamson (eds.) (2001): *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Gray, Colin S. (2002): *Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History*, Portland, Frank Cass or Colom, Guillem (2008): *Entre Ares y Atenea: el debate sobre la Revolución en los Asuntos Militares*, Madrid, Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado.

<sup>6</sup> Broadly speaking, the traditional *American Way of War* was based on an overwhelming material superiority thanks to the American industrial, demographic, material, logistic and economic power. A more detailed analysis



series of profound changes in the structure, doctrine, organization and material of the U.S. military as a means to successfully confront the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact<sup>7</sup>.

It evolved in the European Central Front when, in order to overcome the erosion of the nuclear balance between both superpowers and the profound changes in Soviet strategic thought, the United States planned to improve its conventional capabilities by embracing an ambitious strategy which included both the development of new operational concepts, such as the *Air-Land Battle*, and the use of the initial products of the Information Revolution in new platforms, sensors and weapons. The impact of this manoeuvre was so vast that Soviet strategists deemed it a *Military-Technical Revolution* which, due to the impact of the new “automatised attack complexes” (a name given to the integration of C<sup>3</sup>I systems and precision-guided munitions), could erode the precarious strategic balance that still existed between the United States and the Soviet Union in Europe.

That idea got the attention of the American defence analyst Andrew Marshall, who articulated it theoretically (he deemed that those technologies should be combined with organizational, doctrinal, tactical, human and conceptual changes), identified the revolutionary technologies (precision-guided weapons, C<sup>4</sup>ISR systems and standardized and stealth platforms) and proposed the definitive term (*Revolution in Military Affairs*). Moreover, by using his influential position inside the DoD, he attempted to promote it among the American political, academic and military elites. However, he failed in the attempt since the Pentagon was more focused on adapting the American defence posture to the nineties than in thinking about the existence of a military revolution capable of transforming war<sup>8</sup>.

The first effects of the changes were revealed during the 1991 Gulf War, a conflict in which the coalition led by the United States achieved an impressive victory against Iraq. Although this achievement put the ideas at the heart of all strategic debates, the DoD showed a limited interest, since in those moments of euphoria the main priority of the U.S. defence community was to articulate American strategic pillars for the post Cold War era<sup>9</sup>. Only its armed forces joined the discussions, attracted to both the effects this revolution might have on their way of fighting and because they could use the RMA as leverage in their internal struggles against a decreasing budget, due to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the need to control American public expenditure<sup>10</sup>.

In the midst of the decade, coinciding with the spread of the revolution among the U.S. political and military elites, Admiral William Owens, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1994 to 1996, identified the essence of the revolution: the *system of systems* or the capability of each sensor, platform, combatant or weapon to interact with the rest due to its

---

of its characteristics and evolution can be found in Weigley, Russell F. (1977): *The American Way of War*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press; while Boot, Max: “The New American Way of War”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 4 (July-August 2003), pp. 41-58 studies the way of fighting produced by the RMA.

<sup>7</sup> Kagan, Frederick W. (2006): *Finding the Target, the transformation of U.S. American military policy*, New York, Encounter Books, 2006, pp. 3-73 or Colom, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-137.

<sup>8</sup> Larson, Eric V.; Orletsky, David T. & Leuschner, Kristin J. (2001): *Defense Planning in a Decade of Change: Lessons from the Base Force, Bottom-Up Review, and Quadrennial Defense Review*, Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, pp. 5-39.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-23 and O’Hanlon, Michael (1995): *Defense Planning for the Late 1990s. Beyond the Desert Storm Framework*, Washington DC, The Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>10</sup> Colom, Guillem: “La Revolución estadounidense en los Asuntos Militares”, *Revista Ejército*, no. 816 (April 2009), pp. 16-22.



integration in a common network<sup>11</sup>. Owens argued that the technological basis of the revolution already existed...it was the result of decades of investment to help fight the Soviet Union. However, the revolutionary feature was the integration of every component of the joint force in a system of systems capable of providing timely information about the battlespace and immediately destroying all targets from far away. That possibility, in Owens' words, could revolutionize the way of waging war because for the first time in History the Clausewitzian *fog-of-war* could be lifted<sup>12</sup>.

It was also then when the DoD, which was building the nation's strategic pillars for the post-cold war era, not only considered employing some of the possibilities the RMA offered to solve some of the strategic dilemmas the United States would now face (such as maintaining the strategy of fighting in two simultaneous regional conflicts with a smaller force structure than the one maintained during the Cold War), but also began to seriously analyse the existence of this revolution they deemed essential to maintain both America's military supremacy and political hegemony in the new millennium<sup>13</sup>.

In 1996 the American military elite formally adopted the RMA with the publication of the *Joint Vision 2010*, a joint roadmap which not only recognized its existence, but also fixed the pillars and defining elements of this revolution for the United States. This stated that the dominant manoeuvre, precision engagement, multidimensional protection and focused logistics, amalgamated by information superiority, were essential to win all conflicts, and defined the future capabilities for its armed forces and the path to follow to achieve this revolution, which promised to transform the American Way of War<sup>14</sup>.

This paper established a joint approach to the pillars and objectives of the American RMA, provided the services with common but vague guidelines that allowed them to continue developing and implementing their specific plans and facilitated the political acceptance of the revolution a year later.

The 1997 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) marked the political acceptance of the RMA. This document, which served as the basis of U.S. defence and military policies for President Clinton's second mandate, not only acknowledged the existence of this revolution and accepted the pillars acknowledged by the military elite, but also recognized that its exploitation would be essential for confronting any future threat<sup>15</sup>. As a result, the Pentagon proposed to take advantage of apparent global stability to develop and implement the revolutionary capabilities, adapt the force structure to future risks and modernize Cold War weaponry (legacy systems such as mechanized vehicles, combat aircraft or naval platforms) with revolutionary technologies as a means to maintain enough forces to fight in any present conflict while the 21<sup>st</sup> Century military was being crafted.

---

<sup>11</sup> Owens, William A.: "The Emerging System-of-Systems", *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. 121 no. 1105 (May 1995), pp. 35-39.

<sup>12</sup> Owens, William A. (2000): *Lifting the Fog of War*, New York, Farrar Straus & Giroux.

<sup>13</sup> A deeper analysis of the centrality of the RMA in U.S. defence and military policies during the nineties (and the transformation from 2001 to nowadays) can be found in Colom, Guillem: *Entre la Revolución y la Transformación: la Revolución en los Asuntos Militares y la Configuración de los pilares estratégicos de Estados Unidos para el siglo XXI*, Colección Tesis Doctorales, Madrid, Secretaría General Técnica – Ministerio de Defensa (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1996): *Joint Vision 2010*, Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>15</sup> "Quadrennial Defense Review, 1997", *Department of Defense (DoD)*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington DC.



This process, which meant to carry out the revolution while preparing American defence architecture for the risks and threats that would arise in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as a means of maintaining U.S. military supremacy against any present and future adversary, was designated *Transformation*<sup>16</sup>.

Although the 1997 QDR called for a comprehensive transformation of the U.S. defence posture and military structure, as a means of carrying out the revolution and preparing its security and defence architecture for an uncertain future, the scarce funds for the development and acquisition of new capabilities (the planned expenditure proposed by the QDR was never provided) and the growing involvement in military operations (they were financed by funds originally intended for modernization of equipment and training of units since Congress and Senate were reluctant to approve additional funds for operations) paralysed the process<sup>17</sup>.

However, with the election of George W. Bush the RMA had its final and definitive boost. Captivated by these ideas and aware of the central role this revolution might have in the foundation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century global order, President Bush and his Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, planned a comprehensive transformation process which, formally presented in the 2001 QDR, intended to carry out the revolution and prepare American defence architecture for the challenges it would face in 2020. To that end, the QDR not only projected suitable security, defence and military strategies for the new strategic environment, but it also placed the transformation of the defence establishment (from the structure, size, equipment and capabilities of the American military to the organization, functions, administration and budgeting of the DoD) as one of the main priorities of the new government<sup>18</sup>.

Although initially deemed as a means for aiding the revolution, promptly the concept of *Transformation* replaced the *Revolution in Military Affairs* as the axis of the political, military and academic debate in the United States and all around the globe. Specifically, the fascination of Donald Rumsfeld with this idea and the tragic events of 9-11 terminated the strategic pause initiated with the end of the Cold War and confirmed the need to adjust American military might to the post 9-11 strategic environment<sup>19</sup>.

Conversely, the Afghan and Iraqi experiences revealed the changing face of war and exposed the limits of the revolution, the flaws of technocentric transformation and the inadequacy of Western militaries when operating in non-conventional environments, fighting against irregular or hybrid enemies and conducting stabilization, reconstruction, nation-building or counterinsurgency operations<sup>20</sup>. These issues are currently focusing the interest of

---

<sup>16</sup> Roxborough, Ian: "From Revolution to Transformation, the State of the Field", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 32 (Autumn 2002), pp. 68-76.

<sup>17</sup> Kagan, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-234.

<sup>18</sup> "Quadrennial Defense Review, 2001", *Department of Defense (DoD)*, Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office or Rumsfeld, Donald H.: "Transforming the Military", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81 no. 3 (May-June 2002), pp. 20-32.

<sup>19</sup> An analysis of the characteristics and implications of the current strategic environment can be found at Fojón, Enrique: "El análisis estratégico: la vuelta al pragmatism", Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos, *Working Paper*, no. 15 (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Examples of the current reality can be found in McIvor, Anthony D. (ed.) (2005): *Rethinking the Principles of War*, Annapolis, U.S. Naval Institute Press; Hoffman, Frank G. (2007): *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies or Biddle, Stephen (2004): *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*, Carlisle Barracks, U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute.





the world's strategic community and guiding the transformation processes of Western militaries, including the Atlantic Alliance.

## **2. The Allied Military Transformation**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a political organization originally intended for protecting the liberty and security of all its members under the principles of the United Nations Charter. To that end, the Alliance has political and military means to be used against any threat that might arise against the security of its members.

Although NATO was originally created in 1949 to defend Western Europe from a hypothetical aggression from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the profound transformations the world has experienced since the fall of the Berlin Wall have entailed profound changes in its structure, organization, capabilities and strategic objectives. In the institutional and political arena, NATO launched a new framework of relationships with its former adversaries, developed new initiatives, assumed new tasks and agreed to operate worldwide to fight against any threat to Euro-Atlantic stability<sup>21</sup>. Conversely, since the demise of the Warsaw Pact, the Alliance has been improving, homogenizing and transforming its military capabilities to successfully meet new requirements. To this end, NATO has renewed its command structure and force catalogue, it is defining a new planning process and also developing new military capabilities to successfully face 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges<sup>22</sup>.

In other words, since the end of the Cold War the Alliance has been transforming its political structures and military capabilities to successfully confront the challenges of the current and future strategic environments.

Although NATO's transformation was formally launched in 2003, its foundations were established four years before, during the Washington Summit, with the approval of the 1999 Strategic Concept. In general terms, this document, which will be replaced in 2010 by a new Strategic Concept tailored to the current strategic environment, states that the risks the Alliance is facing are multidirectional and difficult to predict. In other words, while the chance of a generalized conflict in Europe (which was the *raison d'être* of the Alliance from its constitution to the fall of the Soviet Union) is almost nonexistent, NATO must confront new risks and threats of a military and non-military nature, such as ethnic cleansing, violation of human rights or political, social and economic instabilities. Dangerous threats are the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, or the flow of dual-use technologies capable of providing NATO's adversaries with advanced military capabilities.

At the same time, the Concept states that NATO has also to take into account global issues since the allies could be threatened (as occurred in the United States, Spain and Great Britain) by terrorist attacks, sabotage, organized crime or the disruption of flows of essential resources and so on.

---

<sup>21</sup> A general view of the evolution of NATO since the dawn of the Warsaw Pact can be found at Caracuel, María Angustias (2004): *Los cambios de la OTAN tras el fin de la Guerra Fría*, Madrid, Tecnos.

<sup>22</sup> In the context of NATO, a *military capability* is defined as the combination of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Interoperability (DOTMLPFI).



In order to face 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges, the 1999 Strategic Concept asserts that the Alliance must maintain Euro-Atlantic stability, serve as a consultation forum on regional and global security issues, dissuade and neutralize any attempt at aggression against any member<sup>23</sup>, progress in cooperation, dialogue and partnership with neighbouring countries, while actively participating in conflict prevention and crisis management. Accordingly, the 1999 Strategic Concept reasserts NATO's compromise to act under the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations<sup>24</sup> and confirms its willingness to perform crisis management operations and peacekeeping missions all around the world<sup>25</sup>.

These requirements also call for an improvement in NATO's military capabilities<sup>26</sup>. The shortfalls of allied military means were revealed during the Kosovo War (1999), a conflict in which only U.S. military capabilities, especially the force enablers such as C<sup>4</sup>ISR and precision-guided munitions, made the operations possible and revealed once more the growing capability gap between the American and European allied militaries<sup>27</sup>. However, the strategic environment following the 9-11 attacks was the enabler of NATO's military transformation since it demonstrated the urgency to develop new military capabilities, streamline the command structures and perform new missions...in other words, to adapt NATO's forces to current and future threats.

The 2002 Prague Summit entailed the formal termination of Cold War strategy, rooted in the defence of the Atlantic Ocean lines of communication, the forward defence of the European Central Front and the maintenance of a flexible nuclear response, and its substitution by a new strategy based on the defence of Allied populations against a broad range of present and future threats and the rapid projection of forces ready to fight against any menace to Euro-Atlantic stability.

That is why Prague marked the starting point of Allied military transformation, a process that should provide NATO with the required capabilities to confront present and future strategic challenges. In this summit a new command and force structure was agreed, a joint crisis response force was defined, a new catalogue of military capabilities was discussed and several initiatives aimed at the fulfilment of these objectives were launched<sup>28</sup>.

---

<sup>23</sup> It must be borne in mind that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty – the real *raison d'être* of NATO – establishes that any attack against one ally will be regarded as an attack against all of them. The first time Article 5 was invoked was after the 9-11 attacks against New York and Washington.

<sup>24</sup> Although the Concept bonds any Allied intervention with international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, this does not indicate that all actions will require prior approval of the UN Security Council. This decision responds to the necessity that NATO must maintain a certain degree of autonomy to confront exceptional situations.

<sup>25</sup> Although the missions contemplated in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty related to collective defence are restricted to the traditional area, the Non-Article 5 interventions are not limited to any given geographical area. This should allow the Alliance to flexibly respond to any future threat that could arise.

<sup>26</sup> That situation led to the definition of the Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), predecessor of the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC); and the empowerment of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), which should allow the European members to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities of the Alliance while helping them to act alone depending on the situation. In this way, NATO could provide military capabilities for carrying out operations under European command following the idea of "separable but not separated capabilities".

<sup>27</sup> An interesting discussion on the growing gap between the European and American allies due to the RMA can be found at Grant, Robert P. (2000): *The RMA – Europe can keep in step*, Occasional Paper No. 15, Paris, Institute for Security Studies – Western European Union.

<sup>28</sup> "The Prague Summit and NATO's Transformation", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), NATO Public Diplomacy Division*, Brussels, Belgium (2003).



First, the Cold War command structure, composed of Allied Command Europe and Allied Command Atlantic with responsibility for planning and conducting military operations in the European and Atlantic area<sup>29</sup>, was replaced by a new one divided into Allied Command Operations (ACO), a strategic command in charge of planning and conducting all NATO operations<sup>30</sup>, and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), a functional command responsible for adapting Allied forces to meet current and future challenges.

To that end, ACT harmonizes, oversees and promotes the transformational efforts of the allied nations, acting as a *think tank* by providing the conceptual framework for NATO's military transformation, exploring the future strategic environment, defining how operations will be conducted and which military capabilities will be needed, and finally developing and implementing new capabilities, procedures and concepts for the employment of NATO forces.

Second, to develop new military capabilities while improving and harmonizing the existing ones, the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) was launched. Although the member states agreed to enhance their competence in critical areas (such as strategic lift, air refuelling, combat support, C<sup>4</sup>ISTAR, tactical and strategic surveillance, precision-guided munitions, suppression of enemy air defences, CBRN defences or theatre missile defences<sup>31</sup>) the enduring *peace dividend*, the reluctance of some European partners to take responsibility for their commitments<sup>32</sup> and the current economic turndown have compelled NATO to reconsider the PCC and rely on other methods to overcome these shortages (national specialization, joint procurement, multinational development or pooling of specific capabilities).

Finally, to provide the Alliance with the ability to rapidly project its power anywhere in the world while implementing the transformational capabilities provided by ACT, the *NATO Response Force* (NRF) was created. This joint, multinational, highly deployable and technologically advanced force, whose full operational capability was announced in the Riga Summit (2006), is composed of 25.000 troops and is capable of deploying globally and sustaining itself autonomously, for not less than thirty days, an army brigade, a naval task

---

<sup>29</sup> Originally, NATO's command structure was composed by three strategic commands (Europe, Atlantic and the English Channel) and a joint planning group for Canada and the United States.

<sup>30</sup> The ACO – which is led by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) – is located in Mons (Belgium) and it is composed by a strategic headquarters and two joint forces commands capable of planning and conducting operations from their HQs or deploying a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF).

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that similar critical capabilities and force enablers – such as attack and support helicopters, CBRN defences, unmanned aerial vehicles, medical protection, special operations forces, suppression of enemy air defences, in-flight air refuelling, combat search and rescue, precision-guided munitions, cruise missiles, theatre missile defences, deployable communications, tactical and strategic surveillance, early warning and target acquisition or strategic lift – were identified by the European Union in both the *Helsinki Headline Goal* (1999) and the *Headline Goal 2010* (2004). A more detailed analysis of these initiatives can be found in Lindstrom, Gustav (2004): *The Headline Goal*, Paris, Institute for Security Studies – European Union.

<sup>32</sup> Although formal commitments within the Atlantic Alliance (*Prague Capabilities Commitment*) and the European Union (*Headline Goal*) and between both organizations (*NATO-EU Capability Group*) have been taken to bridge the military gap between Europe and the United States, the *American Revolution in Military Affairs* and the unwillingness of several European partners to commit more resources to their security is widening this gap, in particular in the field of advanced weaponry and force multipliers. A more detailed analysis of this military breach and its possible implications for collective defence can be found in Lindley-French, Julian (2006): *Military convergence between NATO and the EU*, The Hague, Clingendael Center for Strategic Studies.





force and the required air support for the fulfilment of the mission<sup>33</sup>. The NRF, which can be employed independently, as a component of a larger force or as an initial entry force, is also the catalyst of NATO's military transformation since it constitutes the force in which sophisticated weapon systems, the newest operational concepts, the latest doctrines and the newest training procedures developed by ACT are being tested<sup>34</sup>.

### **3. How the Allied Military Transformation is Being Carried Out**

In November 2002, the four-star U.S. Admiral Edmund Giambastiani was appointed as the first Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), a position which also entailed the chair of the United States Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), the Combatant Command in charge of the transformation of the American military. Close to Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Giambastiani was an enthusiast of the RMA and he tried to impose the U.S. approach to transformation, founded in the technological dominance needed to conduct *Network-Centric* (NCW/O) and *Effects-Based Operations* (EBO)<sup>35</sup> as the guiding principle of NATO's military transformation.

These ideas were formalized in the *Bi-SC Strategic Vision: the Military Challenge* (2004) a document written by ACO and ACT to examine the current and future strategic environment, identify their implications for NATO and define the required capabilities to successfully confront the new challenges<sup>36</sup>. Among other findings, the paper asserted that the management of any present and future conflict would not only require the use of a broad range of instruments (diplomatic, informative, military or economic) but also the effective cooperation of all actors<sup>37</sup>. That assertion settled the ground for both the *Effects-Based Approach to Operations* (EBAO), a controversial concept which guided NATO's military transformation until recently, and the *Comprehensive Approach* (CA), a concept in development which is becoming the pillar for crisis management, stabilization and reconstruction efforts all around the world.

At the Istanbul Summit, the heads of State and Government endorsed this white paper and urged ACT to proceed on the Alliance's military transformation by improving its military capabilities, the deployability and sustainability of its forces and developing a transformation roadmap. That led to the development of the *Concept for Alliance Future Joint Operations* (CAFJO), a wide-ranging document which established the pillars of the Allied military transformation, the concepts of employment of NATO forces and the capabilities required to successfully conduct all the spectrum of operations.

---

<sup>33</sup> Kugler, Richard D. (2007): *The NATO Response Force 2002–2006: Innovation by the Atlantic Alliance*, Washington DC, National Defense University.

<sup>34</sup> Rynning, Sten: *NATO's Response Force: does it have the capacity to transform NATO's force structure?*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association (5 March 2005).

<sup>35</sup> "Military Transformation: a Strategic Approach", *Department of Defense* (DoD), *Office of the Secretary of Defense*, Washington DC (2003).. On the other hand, a deeper analysis of both concepts can be found in Smith, Edward (2002): *Effects-Based Operations: Applying Network-Centric Warfare in Peace, Crisis and War*, Washington DC, CCRP Press.

<sup>36</sup> "Strategic Vision, the Military Challenge", NATO Strategic Commanders *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO), *NATO Public Information Office*, Brussels, Belgium (2004).

<sup>37</sup> Pareja, Iñigo & Colom, Guillem: "El Enfoque Integral (Comprehensive Approach) a la gestión de crisis internacionales", Real Instituto Elcano, *Análisis*, no. 115/2008 (25 September 2008).



The CAFJO (jointly written by ACT and ACO but never approved by the political authorities) was built around the EBAO, considered by the Strategic Commanders – and in particular, by the U.S. Air Force General Lance Smith, the SACT from 2005 to 2007 – as the basis of NATO's military transformation<sup>38</sup>. That document stated that although the *Comprehensive Political Guidance*, approved by the North Atlantic Council in 2005 and endorsed by the heads of State and Government at the Riga Summit one year later, establishes that NATO will not develop any specific capability for civilian purposes, the Alliance should use all its available instruments and actively engage with other relevant international actors, in particular the United Nations and the European Union. That assertion settled the ground for the EBAO, defined as “...the coherent and comprehensive application of the various instruments of the Alliance, combined with the practical cooperation along with involved non-NATO actors, to create effects necessary to achieve planned objectives and ultimately the NATO end state.”<sup>39</sup>

According to the CAFJO, the Allied instruments of power were defined as follows: *political* (NATO's political and diplomatic means cooperating with other actors such as international organizations and NGOs); *economic* (the use of member states' economic incentives and disincentives); *civilian* (legal, constabulary, training, informational, infrastructural or civilian administration); and *military* (both the threat to use force or its actual use).

To allow the Alliance to conduct this revolutionary *Effects Based Approach to Operations*, it should be able to rapidly project its forces and effectively sustain them with integrated logistical support and suitable reinforcements. Once deployed, it should be able to decide better and faster than its adversaries, so it should achieve information superiority (the capability to obtain, manage and disseminate information faster and more effectively than the adversary) and convert it in knowledge superiority. Finally, the effects produced by military operations should be coherent with the ones produced by the rest of instruments of Allied power. As a result, the *Coherence of Effects* (allowed by the effective employment of forces, the joint manoeuvre and the enhanced CIMIC), *Decision Superiority* (thanks to information superiority and the Network-Enabled Capability) and *Joint Deployment and Sustainment* (permitted by the expeditionary capability and integrated logistics) were not only the key elements for effectively conducting the EBAO, but they were also the Alliance's military transformation areas.

Although the CAFJO was never accepted by the Alliance's political authorities as the roadmap for NATO's military transformation, the EBAO was informally launched as its basis. Paradoxically, at the Riga Summit the heads of State and Government approved and launched the *Comprehensive Approach* (CA), which was originally defined either as the civilian part of the EBAO or the context in which crisis management operations would take place<sup>40</sup>. This proposal, originally presented by seven allied countries under the name of *Concerted Planning & Action* and coinciding with the debates on the EBAO, is aimed at establishing mechanisms oriented towards the improvement of internal coordination within NATO and its relationships with other relevant international organizations (in particular the United Nations and the European Union) in crisis management operations. This is under the

<sup>38</sup> Colom, Guillem: “EBAO: el principio fundamental de la transformación militar aliada” *Revista Ejército*, no. 808 (July-August 2008), pp. 6-12.

<sup>39</sup> “MC Position on Effects Based Approach to Operations”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), MCM-0052-2006* (6 June 2006).

<sup>40</sup> “Joint Discussion Note 4/05 : the Comprehensive Approach”, *UK Ministry of Defence, Joint Doctrine & Concepts Centre, Shrivenham* (2006).



limits marked by the *Comprehensive Political Guidance*, which establishes that NATO will not develop specific capabilities for civilian purposes<sup>41</sup>.

Although politically the CA was warmly welcomed and, since it might be one of the pillars of the forthcoming 2010 Strategic Concept, is generating fruitful debates on its nature, reach and implications for the Alliance the EBAO was deemed as a purely military issue and received neither any attention nor formal support by the political authorities. That let ACT, with the active support of ACO, autonomously develop the concept without political supervision while improving the other desired transformational capabilities (effective employment of forces, joint manoeuvre, enhanced CIMIC, information superiority, NEC, expeditionary capability and integrated logistics).

However, when the U.S. Marine Corps General James N. Mattis was appointed as the third SACT, Allied military transformation started to change. As USJCOM Commander, he wrote a memorandum criticizing the EBO, one of the pillars of American military transformation heavily based on the RMA, and urging the services to throw out this concept<sup>42</sup>. General Mattis asserted that the Afghan, Iraqi and Lebanese experiences not only demonstrated the changing face of war but also the inherent limitations of the *Effects-Based Approach* to warfare, which considers war as a matter of science but not an art. That decision paused *de facto* the Allied EBAO and halted NATO's military transformation<sup>43</sup>.

Meanwhile, ACT, which was analysing the lessons learned from the latest military campaigns while also analysing future risks and threats, came with some conclusions and with a document, the *Multiple Futures Project* (MPF) which, published in May 2009, seems to be the first step in the new allied military transformation. This document has shown that NATO will have to face a wide range of threats, either conventional, irregular or hybrid, coming from both states and non-state actors. That situation will compel the Alliance to continue improving its deployability and sustainability while developing new capabilities to operate effectively in this new environment. Among the required capabilities there is strategic communication, security force assistance, stabilization operations, deterring non-state actors while improving traditional deterrence methods or countering hybrid threats<sup>44</sup>.

The appointment of a French General as the SACT, a decision which resulted from France's full integration to NATO's military structure, has reinforced this attitude started by General Mattis, so we will possibly see that the findings of the MPF will be used as the basis of current and future Allied military transformation, a more realistic, human-oriented and flexible process aimed at adapting NATO's military instruments to current and future threats.

---

<sup>41</sup> Smith-Windsor, Brooke: "Hasten Slowly: NATO's Effects Based and Comprehensive Approach to Operations: making sense of past and future prospects", NATO Defense College *Research Paper*, no. 38, Rome (2008).

<sup>42</sup> Mattis, James N.: *Assessment of Effects Based Operations*, Memorandum for U.S. Joint Forces Command (14 August 2008)

<sup>43</sup> It is paradoxical that, from the perspective of the JFCOM Commander, EBAO is invalidated for being heavily technically-oriented, and, from the perspective of SACT, because it had to adapt to NATO complexities.

<sup>44</sup> Hoffman, Frank G. (2007): *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.



#### 4. Conclusions

Lacking a proper military strategy, the basis of the original Allied transformation was the EBAO. This RMA-based concept was just theoretical and real life experiments have proven the *Effects-Based Approach* to warfare to be unsuccessful, but the Alliance still has no substitute for it as its guiding principle.

Currently, the EBAO tends to be regarded as the military part of a *Comprehensive Approach*, but its limitations are obvious since it is just a theoretical construct and has no practical use at all. The EBAO and its related theory were put into practice without acknowledging the operating environment in which it would have to develop. The publication, in May 2009, of the *Multiple Futures Project* (MPF) should be the first step in allied military transformation.

The MPF has shown other challenges such as the hybrid threat. However, this document is still not endorsed by the Alliance, and without this requisite, any action taken will not be more than a mere investigation task. The concept of hybrid threat must be accepted before starting its development, determining its scope and, if it is deemed valid, it should be included in the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept. The arrival of a French SACT may not only come with new ideas but also may reach new agreements on the fundamentals, and in this sense contribute to the attainment of the necessary political support for the new transformational concepts.

Another important aspect that should be taken into account is that Allied defence planning should have a solid concept for the employment of forces as a reference, comprising from deterrence to humanitarian assistance. On the contrary, planning should not be made in a vacuum because it will lack any intellectual and strategic basis.

It seems evident that the development of the Afghan war will decisively affect NATO's future and will determine its transformation. NATO should adopt a comprehensive approach for the future. The concept for the employment of forces should be comprehensive and cannot be the result of a sum of partial approaches. In this context the task of Allied transformation is to serve as a guide, a guide for the future.