

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR NATO COMMITMENT TO EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY

Dragos ILINCA

Institute for Defence Political Studies and Military History

In almost seven decades of existence, NATO adopted seven strategic concepts, which consolidated significantly the role of this organisation in ensuring Euro-Atlantic security. The priorities promoted through these documents derived from the implementation of the North-Atlantic Treaty signed in Washington, in April 1949. Furthermore, it provides the framework for continuous adaptation of the way in which NATO is working, while optimising the Alliance approach towards security evolution. From this perspective, the radiography of the past decades indicates the existence of several decisive stages in the overall development of NATO strategic approach. The outcome of this process has become visible both in the maturity of the organisational profile as well as in the comprehensiveness of the tools developed for providing collective defence. In this vein, the strategic concepts have represented the landmarks of NATO's transformation process providing the practical and conceptual tenets, which have contributed to the efforts of maintaining the stability in Europe and to the consolidation of the activity of this organisation in the field of crisis management.

Keywords: NATO; Strategic Concept; deterrence; resilience; forward posture;

INTRODUCTION

From the very first stages in the establishment of the North-Atlantic Alliance, the topic of ensuring security for all member states has been quintessential for the undertaking to create this organisation. Based on Article 5 of NATO founding act, the implementation process started by adopting a strategic framework designed to support the economic recovery of Europe simultaneously with the development of a defence posture adapted to the specific circumstances in the aftermath of the Second World War. At that moment, Europe was confronted with the risks of a new war, generated by the Soviet expansionist policy, which already made several victims in Central and South-Eastern countries. In this context, the first projects of articulating defence formulas to contain the Soviet threat and generate rapid response in case of revival of aggressive actions from Germany were developed by Western countries. Alongside France and the United Kingdom, Benelux countries signed, on 17 March 1948, the Brussels Treaty, which was focused on creating a cooperation mechanism for providing collective defence. One year later, those countries were among the signatories¹ of the North Atlantic Treaty, the founding act of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). In the preamble of the document, it was firmly affirmed the member states determination to support the stability and prosperity in the North-Atlantic area, while expressing the commitment to be united in the common effort for collective defence and promoting peace and security (Insall, 2015, pp. 459-463).

In implementing these principles, Article 5 provisions introduced the features related to the collective defence of the member states. Thus, in case of one of them is victim of an armed attack on its territory, the others are free to treat this as an attack against all. In accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, they were entitled to adopt all the measures deemed necessary in order to restore and maintain the security of the North-Atlantic area. As the US President, Harry Truman (1945-1953), underlined during the signing ceremony of NATO Treaty, this undertaking was the first step towards the implementation of an international

¹ The first countries which signed in Washington, on 4 April 1949, the founding act of NATO were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

approach in support of peace and prosperity of the community of signatories (Truman Papers, 1964, p. 196). Furthermore, Truman highlighted the importance of the Treaty from the perspective of creating a security system, which could avoid the two world wars in case it would have been created earlier. At the same time, the US position brought to attention the defensive nature of the undertaking of signatories meant to prevent aggression against their people thus providing a “*shield against aggression or threats of aggression*” (ib., p. 197).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SECURITY CONTEXT

Besides the evolution of NATO institutional profile, the decision to establish this organisation should be analysed in the context of international developments. Between 1945 and 1948, several East European countries felt under Soviet influence further deepening the separation between the two zones in Europe. Former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill (1874-1965), brilliantly encapsulated this evolution. On 5 March 1946, he condemned Moscow actions, announcing the fall of an “*Iron Curtain*” over Europe and the start of a new conflict which lasted for almost half of a century (Churchill, 2006, p. 344). The containment of Soviet offensive was the main direction on which US foreign policy focused after the Second World War. In December 1947, Truman made the announcement in the US Congress regarding the determination to help European people in resisting Soviet aggression (Truman Papers, 1963, pp. 515-529). This strategic option was further augmented by launching an assistance plan for the economic recovery of Europe, known as “*Marshall Plan*”.

The Soviet reaction was focused on rejecting the US initiative, while imposing a stricter control on its satellites. Those countries did not have the possibility to access the US assistance programme, being thus forced to participate in several cooperation initiatives developed and controlled by the USSR. All the mentioned elements anticipated the creation of two competing political-military blocs, which confronted each other in the next decades. The first moment of collision occurred in the German area, being triggered by the Soviet decision to introduce the full blockade on Berlin. The United States of America and the United Kingdom engaged in an extraordinary effort to provide the basic needs for the 2.5 million people in that area. For almost a year, these states organised and sustained a true aerial bridge, which lasted until May 1949 when the Soviets decided to remove the blockade.

One of the direct consequences of aggravating the security environment, in the context of Berlin crisis, was the significant increase in the level of military presence in Europe. In July 1948, the nucleus of Soviet forces reached almost 40 divisions increasing, thus, the disparity ratio with the allied presence (8 divisions). From this perspective, the USA decided to consolidate its military presence, by deploying three aerial strategic bombardment groups (B-29) as a first step. Besides military aspects, the Berlin Crisis deepened the rift in Europe. The Soviet total control was introduced in countries that felt under its influence. As regards Germany, in April 1949, it was created the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), followed by the establishment, in August 1949, under direct Soviet control, of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Furthermore, on 29 August 1949, the USSR performed its first nuclear test indicating the significant consolidation of its military potential. In this complicated context, the creation of NATO brought further hopes on containing the Soviet expansion and setting-up an efficient defence for Western Europe.

FIRST STRATEGIC CONCEPTS – DEVELOPMENT OF TERRITORIAL PROFILE OF NATO POSTURE

The imminent escalation of the Cold War influenced the way in which NATO developed. The international security environment suffered extensively because of the outbreak of several “*proxy*” conflicts in different parts of the world such was the case of Indochina (1946-1954), Indonesia (1945) and Vietnam (1945-1946). Furthermore, on 25 July 1950, the Korean Peninsula became the theatre of an enduring war, which significantly affected the evolution of NATO. Although it was a conflict having its roots in the context of the Second World War, the war in Korea revealed the potential of the Soviet Union to sustain a prolonged war effort, thus increasing the concerns in Western Europe regarding the threat posed by the USSR.

Even from 1949, based on the Washington Treaty, NATO drafted strategic documents for overall development of institutional and defence setup. On 5 January 1950, it was adopted the first *Strategic Concept (The Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North-Atlantic Area)*. Known after its acronym, DC6/1, it, along with its supporting document drafted by NATO military authorities (Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning – MC 14), was developed in the logic of territorial defence and by taking into account the relatively modest military potential of member states after five years after the end of the Second

World War (Pedlow, 1997, pp. 60,94). A special attention was placed on ensuring the connectivity between the military potential of member states and their industrial capacity, which was perceived as an essential element for sustaining a military effort. At the same time, the implementation of the Washington Treaty objectives required that the creation of the collective defence should be achieved through a joint effort of the member states based on complementarity and structured within a defence planning system.

According to the NATO founding act philosophy, the first *Strategic Concept* aimed at the creation of sufficient capacity to avoid war through the contribution of member states in allied context and individually. In this regard, the principles that guided the activity of regional planning groups were:

- *Common action in defending against armed aggression, which required specific arrangements for cooperation between member states.*
- *Individual contribution of all member states, tailored to their potential.*
- *Synchronisation between development of national forces and economic recovery.*
- *Coordinated development of forces deployed in specific locations that would allow mutual support.*
- *Focus on the defence planning to optimise the efficient use of available resources.*
- *Responsibility for specific missions of every member state by taking into account the geographical aspects and their potential.*

Based on these principles, the objectives forwarded through the *Strategic Concept* were focused on the development of a coordination mechanism between member states in support of achieving a credible deterrence. Furthermore, it required the development of operational plans for employing the forces in case of conflict escalation because of an armed aggression. Even from these initial stages, it was highlighted the issue of burden sharing of roles and responsibilities as the baseline for the planning process, while maintaining an adequate level of predictability.

Moreover, the *Strategic Concept* comprehensively highlighted the importance of having the right coordinating tools in order to ensure the coherence in generating the operational response. There were identified three main components: standardisation in all the relevant domains for the collective defence planning

process (e.g., doctrines, equipment, services, facilities); specific cooperation arrangements between member states; conducting joint exercises with the participation of the forces made available by member states. The main planning principle in drafting the defence plans was flexibility in joint implementation of the tasks of securing the communication lines and supply centres. Simultaneously, it was meant to neutralise the aggression potential and, consequently, to take the initiative against enemy action by using all the available means and capabilities (air, land, maritime and psychological). (Pedlow, 1997, p. 89). In this context, it was highlighted the role of the United States of America for providing the strategic air capabilities and, together with the UK, the capabilities to ensure the control of maritime communication lines. At the same time, the role of Western allies was focused on providing the air defence capabilities and ensuring the timely deployment of the first land rapid reaction elements which would be subsequently augmented with larger formations.

In structuring this approach, the military considerations for regional planning encapsulated the very first contingency elements. At the same time, it was highlighted the disparity between the NATO potential and the communist one indicating the need for realistic planning and the development of certain procedures meant to compensate for inferiority in forces and capabilities. From this perspective, the first capability target was scheduled for 1 July 1954, framing the cycles of the Allied defence planning to be conducted at every 4 years. At the same time, regional planning groups² were tasked to develop short-term defence plans, reviewed annually in order to ensure immediate reaction in case of aggression. For the sake of maintaining the coherence of defence planning, those plans were integrated in the overall context under the close coordination of a NATO structure.

In the same vein, the enhancement of NATO's operational profile was deepened by adopting necessary decisions for the development of institutional architecture. Simultaneously, it was initiated the process of establishing the NATO Command Structure. In 1950, the first NATO HQ was opened in London where it functioned until 1952 when it was moved in the vicinity of Paris. Following the decision

² The regional planning groups that functioned in the first years of NATO existence were: Western European Regional Planning Group; Southern European – Western Mediterranean Regional Planning Group; Northern European Regional Planning Group; Canada-United States Regional Planning Group; North-Atlantic Ocean Regional Planning Group.

of President Charles de Gaulle (1959-1969) regarding the withdrawal of France from NATO military structures, NATO HQ was moved definitively in Belgium. At the same time, in December 1950, General Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1960), the hero of Normandy landings, was nominated as Supreme Commander Allied Forces Europe (SACEUR) (Zaloga, 2011, p. 60). Afterwards, the military chain of command was to be augmented by the nomination, on 2 April 1951, of General Bernard Montgomery (1887-1976), as the deputy of SACEUR (DSACEUR). In this context, General Eisenhower signed the activation order for Allied Command Europe (ACE) and Supreme Headquarter of Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE). In support of those decisions were initiated concrete measures for making operational the command structure by activating the ACE subordinate commands. In less than a year (13 March 1952), Lord Ismay was designated as the first NATO Secretary General, being also Vice-President of the North-Atlantic Council.

During the North-Atlantic meeting in February 1952 it was initiated the implementation process of the territorial defence posture of NATO. In this context, the Military Committee recommendations regarding the development of long-term defence plans indicated the targets of making operational, by 1954, 96 divisions for ensuring a linear defence system at NATO border on the Rhine. (Larson, 2019, p. 19). Afterwards, in the context of the events in Korea, debates on consolidating the Allied posture in face of the Soviet threat were further intensified. Simultaneously, the debates started to focus on updating the *Strategic Concept* in light of the mentioned evolutions. The procedure was almost the same by generating a comprehensive document (MC3/5), augmented with strategic guidance for military planners (MC14/1), both of them approved in December 1952.

The general coordinates of the second *Strategic Concept* remained connected with the North-Atlantic provisions, being highlighted the relevance of coordination between member states in using the defence capabilities. They were not necessarily limited to the military component, being also forwarded a more comprehensive perspective by approaching member states economic and industrial potential (Pedlow, 1997, p. 190). The strategic guidance indicated a conceptual touch on defence planning in terms of both the deterrence level and the diversification of responses. That approach was developed from an operational perspective better connected with the geographical realities in the area of responsibility.

In case of a large-scale conflict, the main objective of NATO was to ensure the defence of all member states and “*destroy the will and capabilities of the Soviet*

Union and her satellites to wage war” (Ib., p. 191). In this context, it was designed a typology for allied forces employment that would be applied in case of a major aggression. The operational strategy was based on the existence of maximum available forces, while avoiding any shortfalls in logistic support or reinforcement. Therefore, a special attention was placed on providing additional guidance for the planning process as regards the following sequences: until the stabilisation of enemy offensive, including the support for allied air offensive; stabilisation of initial offensive until the development of an allied major offensive; conducting allied major offensive (Ib., p. 206).

The focus continued to be placed on securing Western Europe, the most vulnerable segment of this area being on the Elba. The geographical proximity and the disparity in forces between the two parties indicated the need for a more multifaceted strategic approach. It was taken into account the use of forward posture in order to keep the conflict, as much as possible, out of the western area until a more consistent answer could be employed. However, it could not be implemented without structuring a dedicated process. Practically, the deficit of member states in providing the necessary forces made almost impossible overcome the numerical asymmetry. Consequently, it was agreed to re-evaluate the capabilities target by postponing it until 1956.

MASSIVE RETALIATORY STRATEGY

In the coming years, the efficiency of force generation process in NATO context was placed under a laborious review. The guidelines of transformation were related with the need to have an efficient defence system. The main concern, at least in the medium term, was the shortfall persistence in terms of forces and capabilities. Closely connected with it, on 12 January 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (1953-1959) announced a new course of foreign American policy in which the security of the USA and its allies would be ensured by deterrence in regard of “*massive retaliatory power*” that could be employed by member states in case of aggression (Department of State Bulletin, 1954, pp.107-110). The new approach supposed the development of a new way of managing threats, matching its magnitude and providing financial and economic sustainable solutions. In this context, the focus was placed on capabilities that could ensure a superior deterrence level. The required response to aggression also entailed using the nuclear capabilities that had to be integrated in the overall planning process.

Based on the practical aspects of improving the efficiency of defence system, the massive retaliatory doctrine was promoted during the Eisenhower Administration (1953-1961) merely as a deterrence tool and not necessarily³ as a concrete response formula (Chowdory, 2004, p. 86). Much more known as the “*new look*”, the US new policy materialised in NATO by launching a laborious reflection process focused on defining the modalities in which nuclear capabilities could be integrated in the Alliance strategy. At the same time, the new approach promoted by the USA and other member states must be seen in the overall context of containing Soviet expansionism. One of the pillars of containment policy sustained by Eisenhower was the defence security system in Europe centred on NATO. From this perspective it should be also seen the accession of West Germany to NATO (invited on 29 October 1954), a historic decision for the future development of allied territory⁴ defence. Therefore, NATO enlargement should be analysed in correlation with the process of implementing forward defence, which became more necessary after the creation, in May 1955, of the Warsaw Pact, consisting of European communist countries. The defence line between those two organisations moved from the Rhine towards the central part of West Germany, corresponding with the area of the Weser and Lech rivers. The anticipated West Germany contribution to the defence effort was 12 divisions and 1.300 planes [PDN (2012)0008, 1954, p. 1].

On 23 May 1957 it was adopted the third *Strategic Concept* (MC14/2) that reflected the baseline of massive retaliatory doctrine in a forwarded posture and an extended geographical perspective, including West Germany. A special attention was dedicated to providing an adequate deterrence capacity for a potential Soviet aggression. The risk of escalation was perceived as being accidentally nor as a potential result of intended decisions. In this regard, the main planning premise was the Soviet interest to wage an attrition war. From this perspective, the new strategic concept introduced a certain degree of flexibility in selecting the response model, in addition to the focus maintained on nuclear component (Pedlow, 1997, pp. 7-10).

The implementation measures (MC48/2) took into account a more extended geographic perspective in comparison with the previous concepts. It should be remembered the specific context in which the new strategic concept was adopted,

³ Eloquently in this regard was the strong reluctance of Eisenhower regarding the possibility of using this kind of capabilities in the context of Indochina and China wars.

⁴ On 4 May 1955, the USA, France and the United Kingdom put an end to the military occupation of West Germany, which created the conditions for the new country to join NATO on 9 May 1955.

namely the tensioned international context aggravated by the manifestation of new crisis, including the 1956 crises (Suez and Budapest), which generated significant challenges to NATO early warning and political coordination between member states. From this perspective, the new *strategic concept* indicated the need for further adaptation of NATO capacity to monitor the evolutions in the neighbourhood areas, taking into account the potential impact of security evolutions on the NATO area of responsibility (Pedlow, p. 292).

In implementing the provisions of the new *strategic concept* there was a certain need to adopt tailored measures, which could respond to a potential large-scale war. Therefore, the strategic approach was centred on employing immediate retaliatory measures by using the most efficient capabilities, while creating the conditions for surviving to the initial enemy attacks. From this perspective, it was indicated the central objective to ensure the defence of Europe, which continued to be seen as the central element of NATO defence system. Moreover, measures were structured on a more complex and multidisciplinary pattern, by integrating the aspects related to national undertakings in case of aggression in order to ensure the continuity of governmental actions and economic-industrial infrastructure. From this perspective, the third *Strategic Concept* could be seen as being centred on the idea of consolidating the resilience of member states, simultaneously with forwarding a significant deterrence potential.

FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

It must be underlined that the implementation process, also in Allied context, of the massive retaliation doctrine represented one of the most debated topics at that moment. It can be argued on divergent opinions about the efficiency of the mentioned approach, both in academic areas as well as in political establishments. Moreover, the risks associated with the potential use of nuclear capabilities fed the debates in the overall context of arms race that occurred in the mid-20th century. Practically, the undesired effects generated further expansion of the nuclear arsenal and added to the instability profile of the global security system. At the same time, the questionable functionality of the massive retaliation strategy in the context of the Cold War crisis was an additional question mark on the efficiency of such an approach. It is the case of Berlin Crisis (January – June 1961) and Missile Crisis in Cuba (October 1962). Finding the right form of response to that kind of developments was an opened question due to the asymmetry between available responses and various shapes in which crises could manifest.

John F. Kennedy Administration (1961-1963) launched the idea of transforming the defence strategy by adopting a new course better adapted to the Cold War realities. The central role was played by the implementation of a “flexible response”, supported by the diversification of response options including conventional ones, integrated in gradual operational formulas. At the beginning of March 1961, the new approach (Flexible Deterrent Options) was presented by President Kennedy in front of the US Congress (John F. Kennedy, Public Papers, 1961, p. 232).

In the wake of this undertaking, the USA forwarded the idea of adapting NATO strategy in the sense of more flexibility in generating answers towards aggression. This approach was to represent the central point of a new *strategic concept* being advertised by US Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara (1961-1968). He started the discussion, in the context of NATO defence ministers meeting in Athens (16 May 1962) by proposing to move the focus from nuclear response to conventional ones, simultaneously with gradual and adapted development of reaction in crisis.

In this vein, the member states community was asked to identify a practical solution for defining the appropriate NATO response in case of an aggression that did not make use of nuclear capabilities (Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, pp. 276-281). The US proposal was supported through reconfirming the commitment to ensuring sufficient nuclear capacity to maintain an adequate level of deterrence. At the same time, the American plea highlighted the implications posed by the reprioritisation of responses. It became predictable the need for further consolidation of member states conventional commitments to ensure the full coverage of NATO eastern flank.

From this perspective, NATO Secretary General, Dirk U. Stikker (1961-1964), made first steps by including in the Athens meeting Communique several guidance on structuring the flexible response. It was indicated the need that all member states should attend in the nuclear policy consultations. At the same time, it was underlined the importance of streamlining the defence planning system to strike the balance between nuclear and conventional NATO forces that could be employed (American Foreign Policy, 1966, pp. 541-543).

Beyond the objective of optimising the institutional mechanisms, the debates on nuclear capabilities management in NATO context contributed extensively to the structure of flexible response. The process was further accelerated by the decision of France to leave NATO integrated military structure. In this context, the discussions on defining flexible response were sustained through the existing trilateral consultation

mechanism between the USA, the UK and Germany, which was traditionally used for the management of American and British military presence in Europe. Based on that, the discussions between member states advanced fast, concentrating on a common Euro-Atlantic denominator for implementing the flexible response doctrine.

In November 1966 it was identified the main path on which NATO was to embark in developing “*the entire spectrum of military capabilities*”. The consensus on those aspects allowed the defence ministers endorsement of the development of next stages towards a new Political Directive (May 1967). Additional guidance for the planners reiterated the need for full spectrum capabilities that would include several types of forces such as: strategic nuclear; tactical nuclear; conventional – air, maritime, land [DPC/D (67)23,1967]. Under those auspices, on 16 January 1968, it was adopted a new *Strategic Concept* (MC/43) which incorporated the flexible response doctrine in NATO strategy (Pedlow, pp. 281-313). Thus, the main objective of NATO was to secure the entire area of responsibility as defined by the North-Atlantic Treaty. This was to be achieved, mainly, through a credible deterrence capacity, sustained by forces and capabilities able to repel any aggression and threat. The main features of the mentioned approach were a more flexible definition of the allied response and a clearer delineation between deterrence and defence components. In defining the deterrence principles were resumed several elements of the previous strategic concepts such as: commitment to act jointly and to defend the Euro-Atlantic area against any aggression; capacity to respond efficiently irrespective of the aggression level; flexibility in structuring the response by avoiding the possibility of enemy anticipation of NATO reaction.

In case deterrence would not work, the new concept indicated three main directions to structure the response: direct defence – aiming at defeating the aggression irrespective of its level; deliberate escalation – focused on taking over the initiative in conducting military operations including the transition measures to the employment of nuclear capacities; general nuclear response. The main premise was to maintain the general defensive posture. Moreover, in generating the defence system, the implementation of the forward defence concept was better structured. Without excluding nuclear capabilities, it was based primarily on conventional capabilities made available by the member states against demanding criteria on rapid reaction, logistic support and tactical mobility. At the same time, were advanced the parameters of augmentation process for the forward

posture with a special focus on reinforcement, deployment and reserve elements. The augmentation component included the conventional and nuclear prepositioned facilities anticipated to be used even for out of area operations.

The *Strategic Concept* implementation was maintained in the same procedural patterns by adopting additional guidance (MC48/3) approved by NATO planning bodies on 4 December 1999 (Pedlow, pp. 372-399). It thus provided the guidance for the defence planning process, for the development of the long-term defence plans (1978), and for setting-up the defence planning disciplines. They initially incorporated nine domains (deployments, enhancement, reserve employment, maritime posture, air defence, communications, electronic warfare, rationalisation, logistic) representing the backbone of NATO planning system that has been used, with several adjustments, until now.

FUTURE TASKS OF THE ALLIANCE – BETWEEN DEFENCE AND DIALOGUE

The inclusion on the NATO agenda of the topic of implementing the flexible approach in responding to threats and aggressions overlapped with a context marked by significant challenges that emphasised the need to deepen the reflection on how the North Atlantic Alliance could face them. Whether we talk about the East-West relations in the overall Cold War context or about the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East (Arab-Israeli War in June 1967), all such issues had certain implications on member states security, which generated the need for a proper management. Furthermore, such an analytical undertaking was needed from the perspective of the general interaction and harmonisation between national policies and NATO strategy. It is worth mentioning that as the economic and political recovery progressed in Europe, the member states perceptions on the international environment became more mature, being reflected in substantial debates and even in conceptual differences. Relevant are several cases such as: the Suez Crisis (October 1956); the development of nuclear capabilities and, subsequently, the coordination of national policies in NATO context; the creation of a German army; and different opinions regarding the relations with Eastern European countries. The implications of Vietnam War should be also taken into account, in terms of the general approach of member states as well as of the overall US potential to sustain an extended military presence. Nevertheless, the climax was reached by the decision of France to withdraw from NATO integrated military structure, posing additional pressure on conducting a thorough evaluation.

Based on the mentioned aspects, in December 1966, it was agreed the proposal of Belgian foreign minister, Pierre Harmel (1966-1968), regarding the initiation of a reflection process on the way in which NATO will evolve taking into account the trends of international security. The main objective was to analyse the way in which such trends could affect NATO capacity to fulfil its tasks and, consequently, to identify the necessary measures and objectives to overcome the challenges. It is worth mentioning that the analysis was conducted in parallel with the process of drafting the new *Strategic Concept*. It was agreed that both undertakings should be developed separately, while reinforcing each other in order to avoid potential dysfunctions in setting up the Allied priorities through the *Strategic Concept*. It can be seen as a complementary undertaking, in addition to the formal one, coordinated by the military component of NATO, which was meant to contribute to the *Strategic Concept*, although it was generated after an informal debate. The main objective was to stimulate the discussions on the possible development of NATO political component matching with the de-escalation tendency that started to manifest in that period.

Within this logic, for almost one year, there were conducted several debates, structured along four working groups coordinated by the Belgian diplomat (East-West relations, defence policy, relations between member states, and relations with other states). The heads of state and government of allied countries approved the *Harmel Report*, as it was to be known from that moment on. The main conclusions were that significant changes occurred in the international security environment, both globally and in the East-West relations, since the establishment of NATO. From this perspective, there were identified two strategic functions of the North Atlantic Alliance.

The first was maintaining an adequate military capacity and political solidarity between member states in ensuring deterrence and defence of the Allied territory. In this context, territorial defence was managed from an extended geographical perspective, taking into account the effects of crises worldwide on the security of NATO area. A special focus was placed on managing the implications generated by the security evolutions in the Middle East on the south-eastern flank defence. Furthermore, taking into account the central role of the defence system provided by NATO, the second functional dimension was the political one. It was centred on consolidating the political dialogue in order to overcome the divergent opinions and to avoid crises (Hill, 2000, p. 69).

The main features of this approach focused on identifying the institutional and normative formulas for arms control and balanced reduction of military forces, which would contribute to the overall consolidation of de-escalation policy. In this regard, the *Harmel Report* induced new perception on the nature and character of NATO in its relations with member states. Trying to meet the general expectations after France withdrawal, it was underlined the fact that member states were not obliged to subordinate national policies to the collective decisions in NATO. From this perspective, it was highlighted the relevance of the organisation for sustaining the dialogue and consultation between allies, taking into account their contributions and without generating rifts between them as a result of implementing de-escalation policy. Without being a formal *Strategic Concept*, the *Harmel Report* brought new strategic meanings as regards the role of NATO in the international security paradigm. For the first time since its establishment, the external dimension was managed in relation to NATO potential as a relevant actor in the management of international dossiers. Consequently, the consolidation of the political dimension was to be highlighted in the next decades by NATO participation in the dialogue on reducing the ballistic and conventional armaments.

NEW APPROACHES IN THE SUBSTANTIATION OF NATO ROLE – THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT IN POST-COLD WAR PERIOD

There is no doubt that the *Harmel Report* had a significant contribution to adapting NATO to the security evolutions, especially by consolidating the cooperation potential and its civil-military profile. The approach was to be consolidated constantly in connection with the evolution of East-West de-escalation process and stabilisation in Europe. The end of the Cold War illustrated by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation generated new security and defence realities that were reflected comprehensively in the *Strategic Concept* adopted by NATO in November 1991. Taking into account the profound transformation occurred in Europe and the disappearance of the aggressive potential represented by the USSR, the new concept validated a multidisciplinary perspective on defence management. The pillars of NATO strategic approach in the aftermath of the Cold War included: protecting peace in Europe; dialogue; cooperation; collective defence, crisis management and conflict prevention.

The confrontational logic was relinquished by taking into account the new types of risks and challenges, which had a different profile in comparison with the previous typology more focused on the risk of a large-scale war in Europe.

Based on the mentioned realities, the fulfilment of the North-Atlantic Treaty objectives concentrated on protecting the liberty and security of member states by a proper interaction between the political instruments and the military capabilities of NATO. From this perspective, the main missions of the organisation were defined in a matrix combining the collective defence imperatives and the specific functions of NATO as a consultation platform for the peaceful resolution of disputes and the development of democratic institutions. NATO role was seen in the context of the new security system with an adequate focus on cooperation between main international actors (EU, WEU, CSCE, and UN). Moreover, the new concept moved the strategic focus from the military security to a highly multidisciplinary approach. This approach was generated, obviously, by the need to consolidate the allied cooperation relevance in crisis management and reconstruction. The practical implications related to NATO posture indicated a new paradigm in which the concept of forward defence was no longer present, simultaneously with the significant reduction of forces in the defence planning (NATO, 1991). In this regard, it was promoted a balanced perspective on the role of nuclear deterrence, simultaneously with maintaining a rapid reaction capacity for augmenting the conventional forces in case of an aggression.

The above-mentioned coordinates were further elaborated on in the *Strategic Concept*, adopted on the occasion of anniversary summit that took place in Washington, on 23-25 April 1999. The multidisciplinary perspective on the security and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area became the norm. The new NATO platform integrated several elements in the framework of strategic directions focused on: security, consultation, deterrence and defence, crisis management and partnerships (NATO, 1999). The options indicated the substantial transformation implemented, in terms of consolidating NATO's role in international context, by developing cooperation policies with states and organisations. The comprehensive approach was also visible in the way in which new types of challenges and risks were perceived with a special focus on consolidating the capacity of managing the asymmetric character.

To an equal extent, the *Strategic Concept* adopted in Washington validated the utility of cooperation instruments that were developed previously such is the case of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (1991), the Partnership for Peace (1994) and the Mediterranean Dialogue (1994) highlighting the role of the North-Atlantic Alliance as a platform for interaction with countries from various geographic areas. In a similar note, NATO enlargement policy was approached from the perspective

of a more granular membership process for candidate countries (especially by adopting a new instrument – Membership Action Plan).

At the same time, the specific conditions in which the *Strategic Concept* was adopted in 1999 were reflected mainly on NATO role in crisis management. The operational experience acquired by NATO in the context of stabilisation and reconstruction operations conducted in the Western Balkans was reflected in the new concept indicating, thus, the priority of the North-Atlantic Alliance contribution in this domain. The same patterns could be depicted in the focus placed on the capability development, in connection with the generation of operational commitment.

The next period saw significant developments in the security environment influencing NATO's strategic approach. The new *Strategic Concept* adopted at the Lisbon Summit on 19-20 November 2010 would bring to the fore additional accents on NATO's adaptation to new security realities. The main tasks assumed by the new strategic approach were aimed at collective defence; crisis management and cooperative security. Although NATO's military posture continued to be at a lower level and not necessarily connected to the territorial dimension, a special focus was maintained on collective defence in the new context of security risks and threats. The impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks was reflected in the new *Strategic Concept* by bringing forward the stringent need for adopting measures against terrorism and asymmetric threats. The activation, for the first time in NATO history, of the Article 5 provisions resulted in the strategic approach orientation towards the optimisation of the Alliance capacity to act in the event of aggression against its members. The extensive approach in cooperation continued to be a priority, with particular touch on the way in which the developments in NATO neighbourhood could affect the security of member states.

Moreover, the focus on the operational dimension must be also seen in the context of NATO commitment in Afghanistan (ISAF). In developing the capacity to project the operational response in the field of crisis management, the main option was to instil more granularity over the guidance provided by *Strategic Concept* on the ability to conduct simultaneous operations, rapid reaction, training standards for forces participating in operations (NATO, 2010). The need for the continuous modernisation and adaptation of NATO is the main vector of the *Strategic Concept*, underpinned by cooperation & partnership (countries, organisations) and by capabilities development. The specific relevance of these pillars in the context of NATO operational commitments was enhanced in the specific context

of ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Additional to the classical aspects of capabilities development, special emphasis was placed on adaptation to the new threats and challenges, especially cyber and ballistic. This approach was meant to sustain NATO deterrence and defence posture structured in a classic typology, which integrated nuclear and conventional capabilities. Taking into account the complexity of the security environment, this was consolidated by a multidisciplinary approach in defining the requirements for capability development to match the asymmetric threats, especially terrorism, cyber, and proliferation of different types of armament.

CONCLUSIONS

From a functional perspective, the *Strategic Concept* has represented, from the very first stages, the NATO backbone. The role of this instrument in the overall conceptual and institutional equation has been a fundamental one by providing the strategic framework for implementing the objectives derived from the North-Atlantic Treaty. The relevance of this document should be also seen from the perspective of the guiding role for the continuous adaptation process of this organisation to the security and defence needs of its member states in accordance with the evolution of the international environment. It thus ensures the translation of political objectives into concrete capability targets in the overall context of NATO defence planning.

The evolution of strategic concepts adopted throughout NATO's existence reveals the persistence of two norms that have governed the development process. First, it is the conceptual flexibility that even in the moments of maximum tension during the Cold War were sufficiently permissive to achieve a balanced approach between the policy of deterrence and the definition of the necessary ways to respond to different crises. In addition, the parameters of the reflection processes that formed the basis of NATO concepts were designed to allow the efficient adaptation of the organisation's strategy to the security realities, thus emphasising the relevance of these documents. The conceptual flexibility in the development of strategic concepts must be seen, however, from the perspective of a rigorous process and with a sufficiently inclusive character to allow the consistency of the approach. Secondly, the politico-military approach implemented in drafting this type of document, especially after the adoption of the doctrine of flexible response, was meant to lead to the consolidation of the basis for supporting the strategic guidance. This trend was constantly consolidated during the Cold War, culminating

with the emergence, in 1991, of the unclassified strategic concepts, which were supported by the military implementation measures of NATO strategy. Maintaining an adequate level of politico-military interaction within a paradigm in perpetual dynamics has significantly contributed to the predictability and general credibility of the process of implementing strategic concepts.

As a matter of fact, the analysis of the strategic concepts adopted by NATO reveals the obvious continuity of the strategic orientations, visible especially in terms of the central role of collective defence in all the tasks and missions of the organisation. We cannot talk about abandoning some benchmarks, policies or directions as new concepts were adopted, but rather about the continuous improvement of the doctrinal and procedural inventory that NATO can use pending on the evolutions of the security situation. Also, the structure of the priority areas has gradually evolved towards a comprehensive matrix adding the aspects related to the operational dimension and the partnership policy promoted by NATO. These elements have undergone a substantial transformation in the way in which they have been promoted in the strategic concepts, being influenced by the end of the Cold War and the de-escalation in Europe. However, the conventional threats and risks have not disappeared having visible manifestations at NATO borders. These circumstances pose, evidently, certain challenges on the way in which the strategic approach can balance the classical component of deterrence and defence and the external action of NATO in the field of crisis management.

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