

GLOBAL NATO: A Geostrategic Instrument of Worldwide Military Conquest

A Historical Review and Analysis (1949-2012)

By [Ludo De Brabander](#) and [Georges Spriet](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Global Research, May 18, 2012

[vrede.be](#) 17 May 2012

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was founded in 1949. Its supporters claim that this military alliance succeeded in building a dam against the aggressive expansionist communist system that threatened to wage war over Europe. This discourse of a threatening war was highly polarised by the media. They were keen on pointing at the Berlin blockade, the Korean war, the repression of the Hungarian uprising, the Prague spring, etc. Historical phrases such as the famous “Nous avons peur” in Paul-Henri Spaak’s speech – the then Belgian minister of foreign affairs – before the UN general assembly of September 1948 were to highlight the perception of a real threat. This context urged the West to arm itself and create NATO to deter the enemy and to respond militarily if necessary.

A more thorough reading and analysis of the facts, however, give a strongly nuanced and even different story. NATO’s founding had less to do with the external military threat of the Soviet Union than with ideological, economical and geopolitical interests. Even hardliner John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State (1953-1959) said back in 1949 that “I do not know of any responsible high official, military or civilian in this government or any other government, who believes that the Soviet now plans conquest by open military aggression.”

Moreover, Paul-Henri Spaak was guided by political opportunism when he pronounced his famous speech. It has become clear in the meantime that neither he, nor any of his colleagues, really believed that the Soviet Union represented a concrete military threat. Originally Spaak was opposed to the establishment of an Atlantic Pact because this would confirm the European division. He essentially thought that Belgian interest lay in a rapid German recovery and therefore American assistance was crucial.(1)

The Marshall Plan

This assistance came with the Marshall plan, which wasn’t built on American altruism but was to serve American economical and political purposes. A first reason is to be found in the then worrisome situation of the American economy. After World War II the US risked an economic crisis due to the lack of European purchasing power. William Clayton, under-secretary of state for economic affairs in 1947, wrote the following to his chief George Marshall. “Let us admit right off,” he said in defence of the idea of foreign aid, “We need markets–big markets–in which to buy and sell.” (2) The intent was not to help foreign countries; it was to reward US-based multinationals who actually got the cash as the government purchased political influence abroad. The Marshall plan was also to the benefit of the US companies in Germany which had continued to produce during the years of war,

and were now in need of markets. A huge West European recovery plan was to repair the production and consumption capacity. Another reason was the fear that European economic problems would increase the influence of the communist parties and thus of the Soviet Union in various countries which in turn would form an obstacle for American capitalist ambitions.

Germany played a crucial role. Washington was persuaded that a European recovery was only possible if the German economic recovery was part of the plan. In other European capitals the fear was still omnipresent that an economically strong Germany would entail a militarily strong Germany. At the Yalta conference the allied leaders – Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin – had agreed that the big German industrial companies of the Nazis, mainly in the Ruhr, had to be dismantled. This however would have been a tremendous setback for US capital and its German investments. President Truman – who succeeded the deceased Roosevelt – did all he could to gain the control over the Ruhr region which belonged to the British occupation zone. January 1, 1947, the American and British occupation zones were unified. In fact this was a first step for the split up of post war Germany. At the same time the Soviet Union was given a serious blow because Moscow had real interest in a unified, neutral and demilitarised Germany that should be capable of paying the war reparations to Moscow. The Ruhr was thus essential for Moscow. The one-sided separation of West-Germany, joined later on by the French zone, was accompanied by the installation of a German government and the introduction of a new currency in these zones. This caused a furious Soviet reaction with the Berlin blockade. The cold war turned into a very concrete reality in Europe.

Washington succeeded in taking away the distrust of the European nations in a new strong Germany by a double policy. Firstly, the mutual European cooperation was stimulated and the Marshall plan executed by a newly founded multilateral organisation of 16 countries, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). Secondly, a military alliance between Europe and the US was initiated which in the eyes of the European countries was to guarantee the impossibility of a German military rebirth.

NATO and the military build up also served economical and geopolitical purposes as president Eisenhower explained: “We know that we are linked to all free peoples not merely by a noble idea but by a simple need. No free people can for long cling to any privilege or enjoy any safety in economic solitude. For all our own material might, even we need markets in the world for the surpluses of our farms and our factories. Equally, we need for these same farms and factories vital materials and products of distant lands. This basic law of interdependence, so manifest in the commerce of peace, applies with thousand-fold intensity in the event of war.”(3) Behind the NATO shield Western European countries could thus with the help of the Marshall plan rebuild and modernise their economies. In this way US capitalism could further develop as it gained access and control over Western Europe.

Economic Interests and Armament

US business was well aware of the advantages of overestimating the threat of the Soviet Union. The president of General Electric was really happy about the economic results a war could offer and made the proposal of a “permanent war economy” via a lasting alliance between business and army.(4) President Truman and his administration did their utmost to create a cold war atmosphere. The propaganda in the first post war years and during the Korean war (1950-1953) pushed towards a climate of fear and even hysteria about communism, and resulted in giant military orders giving the US economy a terrible boost.

The US government did not have to face much of a resistance against its policy of rearmament. The high military expenditures lead to big military orders for the arms industry. In the year 1955 US military budget reached 40 billion dollar on a total budget of 62 billion.

The companies working for defence gained fortunes. Two thirds of all military orders were placed with only twelve giant corporations which exclusively produced for the government's military needs. The situation grew to the kind that forced president Eisenhower to warn the nation in his farewell address, January 1961, of what he called the military industrial complex. Although he thought the US was to develop a permanent war industry he stated that we should be vigilant for unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.(5) When Germany became a member of NATO in 1955 the Cold War got really institutionalised. Nine days later the Soviet Union reacted with the establishment of the Warsaw Pact together with the Eastern European communist states.

A year later the North Atlantic Council, NATO's highest decision-making body, would adopt a resolution to approve a report of experts with recommendations for political, economical and cultural cooperation. In a clear reference to the communist economies the report states that a policy under the condition of competitive co-existence will show the superiority of free institutions in promoting human prosperity and economic progress.(6) The resolution suggested softly to expand the Treaty's application zone to the whole world, because influence and interests of its members could be jeopardised outside the NATO area. NATO was thus formally given an economic task, i.e. to support free market.

In 1973, at the initiative of David Rockefeller, the Trilateral Commission was established which would give anti-sovietism a push and was to lead to a closer cooperation between the United States, Europe and Japan. The Commission wanted to stop the ideological, political and economical threat of communism and the revolutionary movements in the third world through a tricontinental capitalism, internationalisation and expansion of the system. The members of this elite group were situated in the up high political and economical circles of the three continents. It reached a plain sailing level when one of the founders, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was appointed security advisor by president Jimmy Carter (1977-1981). He had been chosen by Rockefeller to help establish the Commission. Brzezinski focused particularly on the normalisation of relations with the Popular Republic of China. At the same time he challenged the Soviet Union by arming the mujahedin in Afghanistan in their fight against a Moscow leaning government that had asked for the military assistance of the Soviet Union.

US policy inside and outside NATO would generally take form via the policy lines as Brzezinski had drawn them. He would develop his strategy later in more detail in his book *The Grand Chessboard* (see further). In Europe the US presence was to be consolidated as bridgehead for American geo-strategic and economical interests. The Soviet Union was to be isolated and pushed back, which seemed to be plausible through the support of the Afghan resistance which caused the Red Army a lot of problems. The breaking up of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the nineties would liberate the way for the Great Game over the oil and gas rich Central Asian region. Afghanistan was to play a key role for the opening up of that region.

End of the Cold War

At a historic summit between US president George Bush and Soviet leader Michail

Gorbachev in Malta on December 3 1989, both world leaders made cold war era history. In media and political circles the idea emerged that the end of the cold war would also mean the end of the military pacts. With the breaking up of the Warsaw Pact (mid 1991), the Soviet Union (end 1991) and also the German unification (October 1990) the official reasons of existence for NATO had disappeared. Before being dissolved the Warsaw Pact launched the proposal of a 'new European security system' including both the former rival alliances.

Others dreamed of a prominent place for the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) of which all countries concerned were member. It has the advantage of a political forum instead of a military organisation and moreover OSCE has regional security organisation status as described in the United Nations' Charter. The US, however, were very concerned that with the end of NATO they would lose the politico-military and consequently economic control over Europe. So they opted to reform NATO through the establishment of cooperation structures (partnership for peace) with the former East-block countries or simply through admitting former Warsaw pact countries as new NATO members.

Although the heads of state confirmed the end of the cold war during the London NATO summit July 1991 there was no question of dissolving NATO, rather to reform it. They put it quite clear that the danger that could come from the Soviet Union was not completely over yet. It didn't sound very convincing. In Atlantic circles the argument was therefore used that new threats forced NATO to get prepared: 'When oppressing regimes disappear, the possibility emerges that long pent up political, economical and ethnical grievances could burst out' according to the then British permanent representative to NATO, sir Michael Alexander.(7) He pleaded for a new out-of-area strategy to deal with NATO's southern flank, North Africa and the Middle East, which was believed to provide the main sources of threat for the European security.

It was presumably not a fantasy that new threats could emerge from the breaking up of the political system in Eastern Europe, but quite other reasons did also push to maintain NATO. Some years after the fall of the Berlin wall a Pentagon security strategy paper for Europe and NATO (June 1995) mentioned political, economical and cultural arguments why Europe continues to be of great importance to the US. 'It is in the interest of the US to have a democratic, undivided, stable and prosperous Europe, which is open to trade and investment opportunities and gives support to political, economical and military cooperation with the USA, in Europe and in other important parts of the world"(8). In this security strategy the Pentagon emphasised the many economical advantages for the US, thanks to cooperation with Europe. 'These ties generate jobs for American workers, quality goods for American consumers, and benefits for American entrepreneurs.'(9) This document also explains why the US can accept an own European security policy: it not only reduces the American defence costs, but increases the security of the vital economic interests.

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 gave an additional dimension to the old geostrategic incentives. An important part of Central and Eastern Europe was soaked off from the Soviet-Russian zone of influence. The Soviet Union ceased to exist on December 25 1991. The field lay open for new players. NATO didn't miss the opportunity. Economic considerations certainly played a role. NATO ministers declared in Copenhagen (June 1991): 'We continue to support with all possible means the reform of the East and West European states... just like the efforts aimed at a modern and competitive market economy.'(10) In Rome, November 1991, the declaration was still clearer about the developments in the Soviet Union: 'The allies are absolutely convinced that political change has to be accompanied by economic freedom and the development of market economies. We support the development

of an economic policy that promotes trade and economical cooperation between the republics in the interest of growth and stability.'(11) Of course, the US saw here an important role for NATO, for the alliance gives Washington the necessary presence in Europe and at the same time makes it possible for Washington to take the lead. European member states do not necessarily feel the same way. Germany – which later on would emerge as the strong engine for NATO's first expansion round with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – seems to act in a very opportunistic way. Berlin was indeed concerned over a possible instability at its eastern borders, but its economical 'Ostpolitik' that was to give new oxygen to the "Deutsche Wirtschaft" had at least the same importance. This latter objective could also be realised through the European Union. Germany was betting on two horses and so was an actor of changing coalitions.

Out of Area

The 1949 NATO treaty made quite some restrictions in the alliance's territorial action radius. Article 6, that regulates the application of common reaction on an attack against a member state (art 5), was during the cold war commonly interpreted very restrictively so that out of area missions were excluded. The underlying objective was to avoid NATO getting involved in the decolonisation struggles of some member countries and to safeguard that the attention would stick paramount to Europe. Moreover, Germany's war past made its political class extra sensitive to out of area operations. In 1983 the then German Minister of Defence, Manfred Wörner, wrote that for his country 'troops deployment outside the NATO area was unmentionable.' (12) The fall of the Berlin wall and particularly the Yugoslavia crisis would change this attitude.

The end of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union made the whole strategic environment change. The trans-Atlantic alliance was presented with an existential dilemma which was often summarised as "out of area or out of business".(13) NATO answered its fundamental threat for the first time with the extension of its powers in its new strategic concept (NSC), which was adopted at the Rome summit of November 7 and 8 1991.(14) Justification was found in Central and East European transformation that lead to economical, social and political difficulties, ethnical tensions and territorial disputes with possible consequences for security in the European NATO zone. Yugoslavia's disintegration – in which some western countries hadn't played an innocent role at all – was a suitable example to underline this argument, but NATO leaders certainly also had the Mediterranean and the Middle East in their mind. This first new strategic concept was to be the go ahead for a gradual transformation of the alliance from a collective defence force towards an intervention force. Initially emphasis lay on the security threats that had to be responded to. NATO member states would however claim the role of operating outside the treaty zone in order to control crises which could jeopardise the stability of the NATO zone.

On the eve of the 1999, Washington Summit NATO secretary general Javier Solana described the stake of the meeting as follows: 'Kosovo shows us clearly the necessity that diplomacy is backed by military force'.(15) The principle that NATO should take up other than purely defensive tasks had been accepted at the beginning of the nineties and was amply tested in Bosnia. NATO bombing of Serb positions around Sarajevo presumably brought the fighting parties to the negotiation table at Dayton, USA. The point is on which legal base this is to happen. January 1994 NATO government leaders still stated that peacekeeping and other operations should be realised under the 'authority of the UN Security Council'.(16) Washington, however, didn't see the necessity to act any longer under

explicit UN rule. Already in summer 1993 the US ambassador presented a memorandum to the allies at NATO headquarters in Brussels under the title: With the UN, whenever possible, without it when necessary. The document was produced some months after the disastrous ending of the Somalia operation which pushed Washington to a critical approach of military operations under the UN flag. It was to become the basic reasoning for the Kosovo war: NATO should not be limited to military actions under UN mandate, but should, if necessary, be ready to act without permission of UN Security Council.(17)

What effectively occurred with the bombing of Belgrade, March 1999. Washington wanted in the first place to get rid of Russian and Chinese consent – both veto countries in UN – for NATO's out of area operations. Britain followed the US point of view, as usual. A spokesman for the British government said before his parliament: '...all NATO operations must have an adequate base in international right... which should not always mean a resolution of the UN Security Council'.(18) In their declaration of the Washington summit for the 50th anniversary, April 1999, the heads of the NATO member states cryptically said there was to be respect paid to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, instead of the proposal from France 'under the authority of the Security Council'. What this could mean was already clear in the nineties. NATO as well as leading member states began to operate beyond the Security Council. After Bosnia (1995) and Kosovo (1999) the war in Afghanistan was presented as a 'defence' against an attack (and so no UN permission was necessary) and also the British-American war against Iraq (2003) bypassed UN. The invasion of Afghanistan was followed by the biggest military operations ever in NATO's history.

Towards a Global NATO

The formal inclusion of non-article 5 operations (i.e. out of area) in NATO's core business at the Washington summit 1999 was on the one hand a logic next step in the gradual transformation of NATO towards a global military organisation. On the other hand it was still limited to contributions to 'peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region'. (19) One could deduct from this second 'new strategic concept' that NATO's operational zone had a limited geographical size. But this implicitness of the wording gave NATO leaders enough space for interpretation; for there was quite a lack of consensus between the US and most European countries. In the eyes of Washington NATO remains the instrument to help better defend its global strategic interests. The US National Military Strategy of 1997 speaks about a global commitment: 'Because America is engaged worldwide, even in peacetime, significant portions of our Armed Forces are present overseas or readily available to deploy overseas, where many of our interests are found. US troops also preserve our access to important infrastructure'.(20) 'Our troops abroad serve as role models for militaries in emerging democracies; contribute uniquely to the stability, continuity, and flexibility that protects US interests; and are crucial to sustained democratic and economic development'. US interests divide into three categories: vital, important and humanitarian. The important interests have an „influence on our well-being and the quality of the world we live in. Applying military power can be fruitful to protect our interest'. The same reasoning can be found in the reference book *The Grand Chessboard* by the former influential national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski. This book is about the basic objective of the United States, i.e. the will to be the sole but also the last world power. In this perspective Eurasia is the most important battleground in the power struggle for world-wide dominance. Eurasia goes according to Brzezinski from Lisbon to Vladivostok where three quarters of mankind live and which contains the same proportion of global energy resources.

In recent years NATO has constructed strengthened alliances at the southern and eastern

flanks of this Eurasiatic region with Japan and Australia, that are essential partners to control the Pacific, and with Israel which continues to be the most important western ally in the Middle East.

Afghanistan

Gradually, a debate on article 5 was started, in which the original central mission of the military alliance is formulated: an armed attack on one of the NATO-members shall be considered to be an attack on all members, whereby the allies assist the attacked party with, if necessary, armed violence. This principle risks making the boundaries between the defense of the territory on the one hand and the military tasks outside the zone on the other hand increasingly vague. The response to the terrorist September 11 attacks of 2001 would make this clear. Even though the US attacked Afghanistan in practice at first outside the military alliance, they contributed to the fact that NATO responded with the creative application of article 5. In that manner, the US and the allies could start an external war one month later without asking the UN Security Council for permission, because the Charter of the United Nations allows violence in case of defense against an armed attack. It was not important that the attacks were conducted by an organization (Al-Qaeda) and not by the Afghan Taliban regime. Further, in the background, the opening of natural gas resources from Turkmenistan played an important role and therefore the control over Afghanistan was a necessity. The energy project would finally take shape in the form of the TAPI-pipeline (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India). An arrangement on this gas pipeline had been come to in April 2008. (21) Up to the present, the concrete realization of this TAPI-pipeline is hindered by the situation of war in Afghanistan.

After the regime was changed and replaced by a pro-western government, the “defense against an attack” became a long-drawn occupation war. The first time that one could talk about a real out-of-area operation far away from the Euro-Atlantic zone happened with the NATO taking command of the ISAF-troops from the end of 2003 onwards. This was a clear move in the direction of a global NATO.

The conduct of operations in Afghanistan and the experiences gained there would be determining for the further remodeling of the NATO towards a global alliance in the run-up to the major NATO-top in Lisbon in November 2010, where a third NSC would be agreed on. In one of the preparatory seminars Secretary General of NATO Rasmussen declared that it was no longer satisfactory to draw up soldiers, tanks and military materials at the borderlines. Instead of doing that, NATO-members should address the threat and pull it up by the roots.(22) In another seminar, in Warsaw, Rasmussen said that the significance of territorial defense is changing. He argued that if we want to defeat terrorism, we should defeat it at its source and that this is what is happening in Afghanistan.(23)

This striking at the roots of the evil was considered on a gathering organized by NATO and Lloyd's of London, for a select audience out of the security and trade community on October 1 2009.(24) Organizer Lord Levene introduced the meeting as follows: “Our sophisticated, industrialized and complex world is under attack from a myriad of determined and deadly threats.” Furthermore Rasmussen enumerated a series of threats – going from climate change, droughts and food production drop to cyber security and energy supply problems – which have the non-military aspect in common. The tendency to include social and environmental problems in the military sphere is complementary to the globalization of the NATO and it engages the Treaty Organization ever more emphatically on the field of the UN.

After 10 years of war in Afghanistan, the officials in most NATO countries claim that the NATO mission is succeeding in stabilizing the country. It is asserted that the Afghan authorities are well on their way to take the helm and guarantee the country's security. With regard to human rights, NATO would also be doing well. However, reality is different. A leaked internal NATO document which states that the influence of the Taliban is growing amongst citizens and that the collaboration between rebels and Afghan security troops is getting closer, proves this.⁽²⁵⁾ According to the report, Afghan civilians would prefer Taliban governance to the corrupt Afghan Karzai government. Pakistan's intelligence service (ISI) is said to be still in touch with the Taliban.

After 10 years the situation in this country as a consequence of large-scale military intervention can be described as dramatic: insecurity and violence, poverty, hopelessness, corruption. An 'International Crisis Group' report entitled 'Aid and Conflict in Afghanistan' confirms this.⁽²⁶⁾ After a decade of massive security support, development aid and humanitarian assistance the international community has not succeeded in making Afghanistan a politically stable and economically livable country. As an international organization, Al-Qaeda is not at all tied to one country. By the time the US-invasion took place, the most important leaders had already fled. Meanwhile, they installed cells in other countries. The Taliban was initially quickly chased away from power but almost immediately responded with a strong defense. Especially since 2005 the influence of the Taliban grew considerably again and due to the permanent presence of foreign troops it even gained an image of nationalistic resistance. Already at that time a Spanish general did not question whether the foreign troops should leave rapidly, but rather how this could be sold not to make it look like a defeat, because such a perception could cause damage to the future of the NATO.

Presently, many areas are de facto under control of the Taliban or individual warlords not connected with the central regime. This central government, with president Karzai as their signboard, is extremely unpopular with ordinary citizens. It is seen as a puppet government of the US and is known for its obstinate corruption. The training of the national army seems to get nowhere but is nevertheless the straw at which foreign leaders grasp. France, the US and also NATO now propose 2013 as the end of the combat operations, a year earlier than their former intentions. The US are looking for a way that would still ensure a 'non-combatant' military presence after the official retreat. Afghanistan indeed does have a strong geo-strategic importance.

Foreign Military Expeditions becoming Defense

In Lisbon the principle was accepted that there no longer is a difference for the future NATO between standard defense-missions and intervention actions far away from the own territory. In the NSC is written: "The Alliance can be hit by political and safety developments outside the borders or can influence these latter. The Alliance will engage actively in reinforcing international security, by way of partnerships with relevant countries and other international organizations." NATO must therefore "develop and support stalwart, mobile and deployable troops in order to be able to execute both responsibilities mentioned in article 5 and the expeditionary operations of the Alliance, including the NATO Response Force". In other words, in this new strategy every military action on or outside NATO-territory will be defined as an action in the interest of its members' security. Nevertheless the NSC states frankly that it can be necessary to take actions if the energy supplies are menaced. The capacity has to be expanded to "contribute to energy safety including critical

energy infrastructure as well as regions and lines of transits...”

Further Militarization

The consequence of this principle is that NATO needs to have very mobile, well-equipped armies at its disposal, which costs a lot of money. This is the reason why former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates criticized the unwillingness of the European allies to follow the Americans’ example and invest more in their military devices. In the year 2011, the US provided a record investment of 708 billion for military spending. As Robert Gates says: “The demilitarization of Europe has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st”.⁽²⁷⁾ In the NSC, member states of NATO make the commitment to “maintain the necessary levels of defense-spending...”. It also states that countries commit themselves not to take any decisions regarding arms control and disarmament without thorough consultation with NATO.

Furthermore member states engage in getting a maximal deployment of the troops and their capacity in order to keep operations going in the field. This means a de facto hollowing-out of the parliamentary sovereignty to take their own decisions on this matter, for example as a consequence of budgetary or political choices.

Nuclear NATO

NATO started its nuclearization in the 1950s. Under US president Eisenhower (1953-1961), the US developed as a global nuclear power and opted plainly for a reinforcement of the nuclear capabilities. Investing in nuclear striking power seemed cheaper and more effective than maintaining large, conventional military forces. The technological advances themselves pushed towards new nuclear doctrines. During the 1970s and 1980s the number of nuclear weapons placed in the US and the European allies as well as in the Cold-War enemy Soviet Union reached absolute peaks.

The official nuclear strategy remained nearly unchanged, despite the fact that in the preparatory process for the NATO summit meeting in Lisbon in November 2010 several member states signed with reservations about the American atomic weapons on European territory, that are of no strategic use anymore because their range of action is limited to the former Eastern bloc. In addition, Obama’s dramatic speech in Prague on April 5 2009 in which he advocated a nuclear weapon-free world, is now downsized to nothing more than a general agreement without commitment to make further disarmament efforts in the final text of the third NATO Strategic Concept (NSC) as approved in Lisbon.

In the NSC it is written that the warning intimidation based on an adapted mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities remains a central element in the entire strategy. Article 17 states firmly that NATO continues to be a nuclear alliance, as long as nuclear weapons will exist. On the subject of the European nuclear weapons stored by the US on the territories of certain NATO members it is said that “the safety of our allies is chiefly ensured by the strategic nuclear powers of the Alliance, more specifically those of the US; the independent strategic nuclear powers of the United Kingdom and France, which function as nuclear deterrents and contribute to the deterrence in general and the safety of our allies”.

Political circles agree upon the fact that the tactical nuclear weapons are militarily not very useful anymore, but would still constitute a necessary political unity for the allied countries,

in particular for a number of Eastern European countries. The NATO missile defense system needs to provide these countries with an alternative proof of the US solidarity with European defense, but apparently does not offer sufficient assurance to the Baltic States and countries such as Poland and Czech Republic. In other words, both nuclear weapons and a missile defense system are presently the political cement among NATO members.

The Missile Defense System becomes a NATO-mission

The 2010 Lisbon summit has indeed decided to include a territorial missile defense system in the NATO strategy. The US have lobbied actively for this change. In the International Herald Tribune (November 15) the American NATO ambassador Ivo Daalder emphasized the importance of the inclusion of the missile defense system as a NATO capability. And according to Daalder, only a small extra cost of 200 million dollars is involved, spread over the next 10 years. Although there is not much enthusiasm in Europe to invest in this useless project and although the majority of the European population probably absolutely does not support this, as was proved in the Czech Republic when former plans wanted to install a missile defense radar there, all governments, including the Belgian government, followed Washington at the Lisbon Summit. The NATO will now “develop the capability to defend our population and territories against ballistic missiles as a central element of our collective defense plan, which contributes to the invisible safety of the Alliance”.

President Obama had already changed the project of the missile defense system in Europe of his predecessor G.W.Bush in September 2009 by adapting the fundamental goal. Whereas G.W. Bush regarded this plan as a part of the US continental defense, Obama declared the defense of the European territory and the Middle East as an objective that needs to be dealt with immediately. This had to comfort Russia but also the allies who wanted to avoid building up tension with Moscow. When he emphasized the use of functioning technology, Obama responded to the criticism over the technical readiness of the large-scale defense missile system.

To realize this thorough reorientation, the Pentagon had elaborated a Phased adaptive approach to the missile defense system in Europe. Firstly, from 2011 onwards, the US develops functioning anti-missile systems in Europe: inter alia the cruiser Aegis at sea (US base Rota in Spain), Patriot-rackets (Poland), SM-3 missile interceptors (Romania, Bulgaria) and sensors such as the „forward based“ Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance System (AN/TPY-2 in Turkey). In latter phases both components – interceptors and sensors – are developed further and made more powerful.

Europe

The past debate whether our armies should be either European or trans-Atlantic, seems to be slid into the background definitively. During last years, the consensus that NATO too will benefit from the reinforcement of a European Common Safety and Defense Policy is growing. NATO Secretary General Rasmussen stated in November 2009 that he does not see the development of a European Security and Defense Policy in competition with NATO, but rather complementary to NATO. The European Lisbon Treaty (article 42 subsection 2) legitimized NATO as an important institution in terms of the common defense in Europe. In an attached protocol it is said that a more explicit role of the Union in the field of security and defense will enhance the vitality of a renewed Atlantic Alliance. EU countries who traditionally adopt a neutral standpoint and who are not members of NATO are nevertheless connected to the trans-Atlantic Alliance and thus to US politics via this Treaty.

Moreover, in the third NATO Strategic Concept (NSC) the relation between EU and NATO is highlighted and the partnership between the two is even reinforced, with the improvement of the practical cooperation during crisis operations, the broadening of the mutual consultation and more participation in developing military capabilities. "The EU is a unique and essential NATO partner", as reported by the NSC. "NATO acknowledges the importance of a stronger and more competent European defense".

Recently, nervousness in the Pentagon has seemed to increase about the limited European enthusiasm to raise the military budgets. The departing US minister of defense Robert Gates argued in mid-2011 in favor of more military expenses by the European NATO members. Otherwise, it is said that the danger of Americans no longer willing to pay a lot of money to finance the defense of others is growing. Robert Gates also repeated his concern with a stratified alliance: "In the past, I've worried openly about NATO turning into a two-tiered alliance: between members who specialize in "soft" humanitarian, development, peacekeeping, and talking tasks, and those conducting the "hard" combat missions. Between those willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, and those who enjoy the benefits of NATO membership but don't want to share the risks and the costs. This is no longer a hypothetical worry. We are there today. And it is unacceptable." (28)

His second point concerned the NATO operations in Libya in 2011. Because of the lack of will and resources NATO may risk not continuing to realize an integrated, effective and persistent military campaign both in the air and at sea. He gives attention to the consensus decision on the operation in Libya taken by NATO, but points out that less than half of the members participate and that less than a third of the allies effectively take part in the air attacks. "For many of them it is not because they do not want to, but because they cannot participate. They simply do not possess the military resources". He argues that certain missions can only be realized by virtue of an extra effort made by the US. "The most powerful alliance of history started an operation against an opponent that is not heavily armed in a sparsely populated country only 11 weeks ago, yet several allies are starting to run out of ammunition and once again the US have to come to their rescue".

The military campaign against Libya shows clearly that NATO focuses on the oil-rich states, in which Europe and the US see a common interest. In order to protect civilians the NATO started bombing Libyan cities and places where Gaddafi-supporters resided during months in 2011.

Several issues are involved in the operation in Libya. European as well as American enterprises profited from the plunder of African raw materials. From a western point of view a new competitor has shown up as China is seeking to expand its presence in Africa. This is why the old European colonial countries feel constrained to give their partnership with Washington a new dimension: a cooperation to secure their interests on the African continent. A strong warning is to be given to China and other rivals that they are setting foot on private hunting ground. That is the *raison d'être* of the Pentagon-department Africom and the current structural connection with Eucom and NATO.

The political and moral justification for an intervention in Libya – in which the Libyan leader Gaddafi was accused of attacks against his own civilians – primarily originated from Paris and London. NATO took over the military charge and coordination from France and Great Britain. On the official pretext of citizens' protection (with a UN resolution based on the „Responsibility to Protect" principle) a change of regime was compassed. Today, there is no

question of a safe and stable Libya, among other reasons because the armed militias, supported by the NATO, refuse to disarm. During the Libyan war 30 to 50,000 people died, racist violence against black Libyans and African immigrants was organized and the insurgents are guilty of large-scale executions of opponents in Sirte. The „Responsibility to Protect“ does not seem to have any value anymore for post-Gaddafi Libya in the western capitals, be it in the US, in Canada or in the EU. Full attention has turned to Syria and Iran.

Conclusion

In the whole course of its history NATO has tried to justify its existence with all kinds of arguments. During the Cold War emphasis lay on the military threat of Central and East European communism. When the Warsaw Pact had been dissolved new arguments were to be put forward. First it was about the consequences for our security caused by the unstable ex-communist states. When the latter were at the point to join NATO or the European Union, NATO saw itself play the role of humanitarian intervention force. After nine-eleven the war on terror, the danger of rogue states and cyberterrorism became the headlines of all speeches and analysis papers in western strategic and political circles.

NATO has little to do with the ‘defense of values, democracy, human rights, freedom and a law based state’ as then NATO secretary general Javier Solana claimed on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of NATO. NATO is about defense of economic and geostrategic interests, as its history shows abundantly. A number of memberstates were all but examples of good practice. Just to mention in this field Portugal under Salazar, the military regime of the colonels in Greece, the serial military coups in Turkey and the atrocities committed by the colonial NATO members. After the Cold war NATO continued to manifest itself as the military shield for the economic interests of its member states. Every now and then this is overtly admitted by the NATO protagonists themselves as in the following quote of the former secretary general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in his Brussels New Year’s speech of January 8, 2008. “This century will be, to a large extent, about energy. Energy security is a theme where NATO is in the process of defining its added value. Protection of critical energy infrastructure. You’ve heard me before. It has been discussed already previously. NATO certainly doesn’t carry the primary responsibility in the framework of energy security. NATO’s not an economic organization. But there is certainly added value to be defined and you can be sure and certain that energy security will also figure on the agenda of the Bucharest Summit”

The Libya operation seems now to show something like the beginning of a new strategy. This is how president Barack Obama expressed it in his speech on defence January 5, 2012. “As a global force, our military will never be doing only one thing. It will be responsible for a range of missions and activities across the globe of varying scope, duration, and strategic priority. This will place a premium on flexible and adaptable forces that can respond quickly and effectively to a variety of contingencies and potential adversaries.

Again, that’s the nature of the world that we are dealing with. In addition to these forces, the United States will emphasize building the capacity of our partners and allies to more effectively defend their own territory, their own interests, through a better use of diplomacy, development, and security force assistance.” Although conservative America reacted as if the end of the US as world power was announced, Obama’s speech doesn’t diminish at all his will to maintain both US hegemonical position and US war capacity. “As we shift the size and composition of our ground, air and naval forces, we must be capable of successfully confronting and defeating any aggressor and respond to the changing nature of warfare.

Our strategy review concluded that the United States must have the capability to fight several conflicts at the same time.” 28

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta described this new strategy as building more on the air force and on indirect operations through mandated partners, in view of the lowest possible commitment of own American forces.

NATO as executor of US strategy, history repeats itself.

Notes

- (1) Coolsaet, R., België en zijn buitenlandse politiek 1830 – 2000. Uitgeverij van Halewijnck, Leuven, 2001
- (2) Zinn, H., Geschiedenis van het Amerikaanse volk. EPO, Berchem, 2007, p. 504
- (3) Julien, C., L'empire Américain. Editions Bernard Grasset, Paris, 1968, p. 218
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/dwighteisenhowerfirstinaugural.htm>
- (4) Zinn, H., Geschiedenis van het Amerikaanse volk. EPO, Berchem, 2007, p.519 – 520
- (5) Sloan S., NATO, the EU and the Atlantic Community, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, 2003, p. 29 – 35
- (6) NATO, Report of the Committee of Three on Non-Military Cooperation in NATO approved by the North Atlantic Council, 13 december 1956
- (7) Alexander, M., De rol van de NAVO in een veranderde wereld. In: NAVO Kroniek, nr. 2, april 1990
- (8) Department of Defence. Office of International Security Affairs, United States Security Strategy for Europe and Nato, Washington DC, 1995, p. 3
- (9) Department of Defence. Office of International Security Affairs, United States Security Strategy for Europe and Nato, Washington DC, 1995, p. 4
- (10) NATO, Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Statement issued by the North Atlantic Council Meeting in Ministerial Session in Copenhagen, 6-7 of June 1991, punt 6
- (11) NATO, Developments in the Soviet Union. Statement issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Rome 8 November 1991, punt 4
- (12) Quoted in Yost David S. NATO transformed. The Alliance's New Roles in International Security, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 1998, p. 189
- (13) Achcar, G., La nouvelle guerre froide. Le monde après le Kosovo, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1999, p. 67
- (14) NATO, The Alliance's New Strategic Concept, Rome, 7-8 of November 1991
- (15) The Guardian, 22 of April 1999
- (16) NATO, Declaration of the Heads of State and Government, Brussels, January 11 1994, punt 7
- (17) Portela, C., Humanitarian Intervention, NATO and the International Law. Can the institution of Humanitarian Intervention Justify unauthorised Action?, Berlin Information Center for Transatlantic Security, Berlin, 2000, p. ii
- (18) Geciteerd in Butler, Nicola, „NATO in 1999: A Concept in Search of a Strategy“. in Disarmament Diplomacy, nr 35, maart 1999
- (19) NATO, The Alliance's Strategic Concept, NAC-S(99)65. Washington DC, 23 – 24 april 1999, punt 29, 31, 41, 43, 47, 49, 53, 54 en 61
- (20) Shalikashvili, John M., Shape, Respond, Prepare Now. A Military Strategy for a New Era. National Military Strategy, 1997
- (21) Foster, J., Afghanistan, The TAPI Pipeline, and Energy Politics. In: Journal of Energy

Security, 23 maart 2010 (zie: <http://www.ensec.org>)

(22) Persbericht AFP, 4 maart 2010

(23) Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at NATO's New Strategic Concept – Global, Transatlantic and Regional Challenges and Tasks Ahead – Warschau, Polen, 12 maart 2010 (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_62143.htm)

(24) Rozoff, R., Thousand Deadly Threats: Third Millennium NATO, Western Businesses Collude On New Global Doctrine, 2 oktober 2009 (<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/10/02/thousand-deadly-threats-third-millennium-nato-western-businesses-collude-on-new-global-doctrine/>)

(25) Pakistan helping Afghan Taliban – Nato, BBC, 1 februari 2012 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16821218>)

(26) International Crisis Group. Aid and Conflict in Afghanistan, 4 augustus 2011
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/210-%20Aid%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>

(27) Gates Robert M., NATO Strategic Concept Seminar. Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., 23 februari 2010 (<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1423>)

(28) Gates Robert M., The Security and Defense Agenda (Future of NATO), 10 juni 2011
<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1581>



The original source of this article is vrede.be

Copyright © [Ludo De Brabander](http://vrede.be) and [Georges Spriet](http://vrede.be), vrede.be, 2012

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Ludo De Brabander](#) and [Georges Spriet](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will

not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca