

ASPECTS OF NATO

Series 1

Nº 4

Force Planning

NATO's force planning, which must continuously be adapted to keep pace with changing circumstances and technological developments, is based on an evaluation of the relative force capabilities of NATO and Warsaw Pact countries. This is constantly extended and updated by an effort of close co-ordination between the International Staff, in conjunction with nations, and the NATO Military Authorities.

In determining the size and nature of their contribution to the common defence, member countries have full independence of action. Nevertheless, the collective nature of NATO's defences demands that, in reaching their decisions, governments take account of the force structure recommended by the NATO Military Authorities and of the long-term military plans of their partners. NATO's procedures for common force planning must take into account such factors as the military requirements which have to be met, the best use of the available resources, advances in science and technology, a rational division of effort among member countries and the need for force plans to be within the countries' economic and financial capabilities.

Resources for defence

The provision of adequate forces for implementing the agreed strategic concept involves inter-related questions of strategy, force requirements and the resources available to meet them. The achievement of the appropriate balance between these three elements demands that full weight be given in defence planning to economic considerations. Economic and financial studies undertaken in this context have three main objectives: to ensure that adequate resources are applied to the fulfilment of agreed defence programmes; to contribute to the most rational use of available resources, in particular through long-term planning and through encouraging such concepts as cost-effectiveness; and to progress, as far as possible, towards an equitable distribution of the economic and financial burden of the common defence.

These objectives are not easy to reach in an Alliance whose members differ widely from the economic viewpoint, and particularly in their population and stage of economic development. Those countries whose per capita income is still low must ensure that their defence effort does not hamper economic progress. At the same time, members of the Alliance must take account of developments in Warsaw Pact countries and, not least, of Warsaw Pact defence expenditures.¹

Because of the wide disparity in economic resources between members of the Alliance, concerted action has been taken on programmes of military assistance to those members who have difficulty in financing from their own resources the full range of their contributions to the common defence.

Annual Review

The first attempt at reconciling NATO's military requirements with the economic and financial resources of member countries dates back to 1951. The report, prepared by "Three Wise Men" – Mr. Averell Harriman, Sir Edwin Plowden and M. Jean Monnet – for the Ministerial Meeting at Lisbon in 1952, was founded on the principle that defence must be built on a sound economic and social basis and that no country should be called on to shoulder a defence burden beyond its means. This was the basic premise of the "Annual Review" examinations of countries' defence efforts carried out between 1952 and 1961. A "Triennial Review" procedure was adopted in 1961 in a step designed to improve and simplify the process. A new procedure was introduced in 1966 and revised in 1971. This is described in the following paragraphs.

Current planning procedures

Meeting in Ottawa in May 1963, Ministers instructed the Council, with the help of the NATO Military Authorities, to study the inter-related questions of strategy, force requirements and available resources. This exercise was completed in 1966, when a NATO force plan for the period 1966–1970 was adopted. It was recognised that there was a continuing need for such studies, and procedures for NATO defence planning reviews were approved in the same year. The procedures reflect, to a considerable extent, those introduced in the United States by Mr. Robert McNamara during his term as Secretary of Defence, which, with suitable modifications, have been adopted by a number of other member countries. These procedures, by which NATO's force plans are reviewed and projected each year for a period of five years ahead, make it possible to modify future force plans to meet changing circumstances, and also provide a firm basis on which countries can plan their force contributions. As part of these procedures, new NATO Force Goals are developed every second year. These represent the target which the Alliance sets itself for the six years ahead – that is the period covered by the next two annual force plans.

Military appreciation

One of the basic documents used in the process of drawing up NATO Force Goals is the Military Committee appreciation of the situation the Alliance may face for the period of the five-year planning review and a little beyond it. This appreciation attempts to identify all military factors and considerations likely to affect force structures, deployments, and equipment, both in NATO and in the Soviet bloc, during the period under review. It also deals with the implications of technological and demographic developments.

Ministerial Guidance

Ministers take full account of the Military Committee's appreciation and also the economic appreciation in the Guidance they issue to the NATO Military Authorities for the preparation of Force Proposals for the relevant planning period; the Guidance also includes the political factors affecting the development of NATO forces over the period and assesses the likely impact of all these factors on the current strategic concept of the Alliance generally, and on the preparation of the next set of Force Proposals in particular.

Force proposals

The Force Proposals are prepared by the major NATO Commanders, setting out country by country what the Commanders propose should be the contribution of each one in the planning period. These proposals are considered by the Military Committee before being forwarded to the Defence Planning Committee with a statement of the reasons underlying the Force Proposals and any risks which might be associated with them. The Defence Review Committee then conducts a searching examination of the Force Proposals on behalf of the Defence Planning Committee, in particular as regards their financial, economic and political implications. The Defence Review Committee must satisfy itself as to the compatibility of the Force Proposals with the Guidance given by Ministers. It must seek to ensure that there is an element of challenge in the Force Goals which each country is being asked to accept; a reasonable and realistic challenge, but nevertheless in the interests of the collective defence planning of the Alliance, one which goes somewhat beyond the country's supposed intentions. The Defence Review Committee then reports to the Defence Planning Committee on its examination of the Force Proposals, on any adjustments which it believes necessary for economic or any other reasons, and on the associated risks as assessed by the Military Committee.

Adoption of force goals

In the light of the reports by the Military Committee and the Defence Review Committee, the Defence Planning Committee approves a set of proposals for adoption as NATO Force Goals, which countries are to use as the basis of their Force Plans for the five-year period under consideration. These Country Force and Financial Plans are duly formulated and forwarded to NATO, where they are analysed by both the NATO Military Authorities and the International Staff. When differences occur between the Plans and the Goals, a first joint attempt is made to reconcile them by the International Staff, the International Military Staff and the major NATO Commanders' representatives; these trilateral discussions are reported to the Defence Review Committee, which conducts a further critical examination of Country Plans, particularly directed at eliminating as far as possible, any remaining differences between Country Force Plans and NATO Force Goals. On the basis of these multilateral examinations, the Defence Review Committee reports to the Defence Planning Committee how far

countries have been able to meet the Force Goals, and if and why they have fallen short. At the same time, the Military Committee reports on the military suitability of the emerging Alliance-wide, five-year Force Plan, and on the degree of risk associated with it. In the light of these reports, the Defence Planning Committee is in a position to recommend a five-year Force Plan to Ministers.

Adoption of a five-year NATO Force Plan

Ministers consider the Defence Planning Committee's report and recommendations for the NATO Force Plan from the viewpoint of its overall balance, feasibility and acceptability, taking into account the Military Committee's advice regarding the military suitability of the Plan and the associated degree of risk. This NATO five-year Force Plan is then adopted as a basis for national defence planning over the whole period and as a firm commitment of forces by each country for the first year.

Significance of the NATO force planning procedures

NATO's force planning procedures are thus the machinery for determining the forces required for the defence of the Alliance, coordinating national defence plans, and drawing them towards the agreed Force Goals in the best interests of the Alliance as a whole, while also monitoring countries' actions in respect of the recommendations of studies – some of which may be undertaken independently of the procedures but can be introduced into the process at an appropriate stage when ready for implementation. The collective consideration of countries' defence efforts, and the attempt to harmonise them from an Alliance-wide point of view, have contributed considerably to mutual understanding; they have provided the means for reaching agreement on steps which are both desirable and practicable, and in many cases have led to cooperative efforts for solving problems. It is significant that, to enable this to be done, for over thirty years the countries of the Alliance have agreed to the systematic exchange of detailed and precise information on their military, economic and financial programmes on a scale unprecedented in peace or even in war, and have submitted these programmes to the examination and criticism of their partners.

Long-Term Defence Programme

The Long-Term Defence Programme (LTDP) was developed in response to directives given at the Summit Meeting held in London in May 1977, as a means of strengthening NATO force planning and national programmes in the face of the challenge to Alliance security posed by the continuing momentum of the Warsaw Pact military build-up. At the following Summit Meeting, held in Washington on May 30 and 31, 1978, the leaders of countries participating in the integrated defence structure of the Alliance gave their endorsement to the LTDP, an action programme consisting of a wide range of measures designed

to help to adapt the defence posture of the Alliance to the challenges of the 1980s. The programme marked a significant milestone for NATO through its projection of Alliance defence planning into a longer term framework and its emphasis on cooperative efforts to strengthen the defence of the Alliance.

The LTDP provided for force improvements in certain selected areas, and for a far greater degree of Alliance cooperation leading to an increase in overall defensive capability by making better use of the national resources already made available or planned for the Alliance. Improvements were also called for in the readiness and combat capabilities of NATO's military forces and in the ability to reinforce those forces. The programme consisted of a series of detailed actions to improve NATO capabilities in certain priority areas: readiness, reinforcement; reserve mobilisation; maritime posture; air defence; communications, command and control; electronic warfare; rationalisation; consumer logistics; and theatre nuclear forces. In all these areas, particular emphasis is placed on cooperation between member countries.

In order to ensure that implementation of measures agreed under the LTDP is both vigorous and sustained, arrangements have been made for regular monitoring. For each of the programme areas, a senior civil or military official has been appointed to keep under review the rate of progress of all the measures in that area, and to provide periodic reports to the Executive Working Group, which is responsible, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary General, for the general supervision of the LTDP. The monitors' reports serve as the basis for regular reports, prepared under the aegis of the Defence Planning Committee in permanent session, for Ministerial attention.

The individual measures of the LTDP cover a wide range, from those aimed at procedural improvements to those which call for the investment of substantial resources in equipment, training and materiel. Some call for action by nations, while others are addressed to NATO civil or military bodies, or to all three. Where appropriate, action has been and is being taken to incorporate LTDP measures within NATO's existing defence planning procedures. For example, measures addressed to nations which are suitable for inclusion in the normal Annual Review process described above are being taken up as NATO Force Goals. This gradual process of incorporating individual LTDP measures within the normal NATO machinery is not, however, intended to diminish the integrity of the LTDP, whose momentum and functional approach is being maintained by means of the regular reports on implementation of the programme as a whole.

Longer-term defence planning

In May 1980 Ministers endorsed new procedures, for implementation on a trial basis, which are designed to extend progressively the coverage and the timescale of NATO defence planning. The procedures should allow nations who project their own defence planning increasingly into the longer-term to look to NATO to provide early guidance on Alliance defence needs against a common military, economic and political background. This background would be based on longer-term assessments of the threat, of technology, of economic trends

and of developments in East-West relations. This process should serve to promote earlier and better coordinated defence planning among member countries. The outcome should assist in establishing more firmly-based Alliance goals, so that quantitative and qualitative force requirements for individual nations, and the Alliance as a whole, can be met in the most cost-effective way, including greater cooperation in research, development and production of armaments. Another objective is to provide for a more coherent approach to all related defence planning activities, with a view to presenting nations with coordinated, rather than separate, claims on the resources expected to become available for defence.

