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## **NATO CHALLENGES DURING A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC CRISIS**

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**Abstract:**

**NATO, as a military and political organization is facing a period of great turmoil, especially in terms of finding and developing a credible purpose for its existence, considering the end of the Cold war and the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty. As an evolving alliance of nations, NATO should address new perspectives on warfare and military operations effectiveness in terms of money expenditures, focusing on mitigating national and Alliance’s interests and goals.**

*Key words: NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization; EU – European Union; Smart Defense, Connected forces – programs initiated by NATO to meet the future requirements and also save effort and financial resources; Pooling and Sharing – concept developed at the EU level in order to offer a solution to problems related to military expenditures; PfP – Partnership for Peace.*

### **1. Introduction**

Starting with 2008 the world economy has been facing one of the largest crises since the end of the Second World War. All countries are considering and making budgetary restrictions to surpass this difficult time, and one of the most affected domains is defense expenditures. Even though previous assumptions of responsibilities were made from the governments’ part, the reality of today’s happenstance is that everybody has to prioritize their programs and plans - short, medium or long term.

Also, having in mind the announced shift of US interest in its’ defense policy and strategy from Europe to the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region, it is going to be very hard, some say insurmountable, to reduce the technological gap between the European nations and the United States capabilities, not forgetting that US is the nation with the biggest contribution to NATO’s budget (around 75%).

### **2. Programs and policies**

The current political and military environment is completely different from the one when NATO was born. The founding nations were having a very clear goal, their actions were somewhat determined by moves made by the former Soviet Union. Today the Cold War is over with; the huge expenditures on nuclear and conventional capabilities are a past and historical approach. Today’s world is much more complex, with new risks and threats, but also with new opportunities, where NATO, in order to survive, should transform and adapt. At the NATO Summit from Lisbon, 2010, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, adopted a chart considering NATO’s

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future course and a new Strategic Concept, with the main ideas of maintaining the ideals from the Washington Treaty, to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means, accomplishing three main tasks: – collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security.

Of course, in order to achieve and accomplish these tasks in a successful manner, a heavy duty rests solely on developing and utilizing the right forces and the right capabilities, during a timeframe categorized by many member countries as being very challenging in terms of finding the financial resources needed.

As a result, two years later, at the NATO Summit in Chicago the member states are clearly emphasizing on the cooperation between NATO and the European Union, as two organizations sharing common values and strategic interests, even though this idea is mostly implicit, because 21 of the member states from EU are also NATO members. Enhancing and developing the role of cooperation in times of austerity, it is strongly recommended that these organizations are to “continue to work to enhance practical cooperation in operations, broaden political consultations, and cooperate more fully in capability development. ... NATO will work closely with the EU, as agreed, to ensure that our Smart Defense and the EU’s Pooling and Sharing initiatives are complementary and mutually reinforcing; we welcome the efforts of the EU, in particular in the areas of air-to-air refueling, medical support, maritime surveillance and training. “(Chicago Summit Declaration-20 may 2012).

At this meeting it was defined and established the Alliance’s will to pursue two initiatives: Connected Forces and Smart Defense, in order to reduce the impact of military spending on national budgets of member countries, and to make sure that the Alliance will be able to pose as a powerful actor in all activities related to military operations.

### **3. Connected Forces**

Beginning with 2014, after the end of operations in Afghanistan, NATO is supposed to change from an operational engagement to operational preparedness, meaning NATO will focus on remaining able to perform its core tasks and keep its forces at a high level of readiness without getting involved in major operations, considering the actual political status-quo. In order to achieve this desired outcome, Allied nations have set out the goal of “NATO Forces 2020”: as a concept of modern, very closely tied and interconnected forces that are properly equipped, trained, exercised and led. The Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) will ensure NATO’s readiness and combat effectiveness by pursuing three main avenues: expanded education and training, increased exercises and a better use of technology. One of the best assets available to allied forces are troops with combat experience gained in theaters of operations like Iraq and Afghanistan, this being the main reason of the concept of force rotation, implemented also in the Romanian Armed Forces, (even if a little bit late, because in the early years of this conflicts, the trend was to use 3 to 4 top units, with a high level of readiness) with the purpose of having available as many military personnel as possible that have been in touch with the realities of war, in an integrated approach towards building relations with forces from different nations, with similar but not quite the same procedures, with similar but not quite the same systems of communications, with different ways to approach an objective. The CFI concept is based on the need to have allied forces that can communicate effectively, train together, and evaluate their ability to do so.

The principle of expanded education and training is about training individuals/small groups with the focus on key requirements, harmonize current efforts and solve

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discrepancies existing between allied forces. The Alliance will profit on the individual training efforts of members, and identify areas for collaboration, because one of the most effective ways to make sure that people from different countries will perform in the same way in a certain situation is to make them part of the same educational program, in a common location.

Increased exercises will be established for forces to practice tactics, techniques and procedures, achieve interoperability, validate training and, when required, certify headquarters, units and formations. This particular aspect of CFI is already functional, and all actors involved have great experience verified during PfP actions, training exercises, etc., and it should approach all possible mission types, as defined by NATO level of ambition and commitments, promote interoperability, and also compensate for the possible frictions that may appear when working together. On 21 February 2013, defense ministers agreed that the Alliance should hold a major live exercise in 2015, and draw up a comprehensive program of training and exercises for the period 2015-2020.

Better use of technology supports connectivity and interoperability of equipment and systems, by working with modern technologies and capabilities in order to assist in training, exercising, deploying and sustaining the forces. The plan is to install and make use of modern simulators, ensuring a training together environment, with direct impact on money spent on training and the achieved level of interoperability.

The NATO Response Force (NRF) is an example of existing forces available to NATO planners, consisting in a high-readiness multinational force made up of all services - land, air, maritime, Special Forces components - that the Alliance can deploy rapidly. Under the Connected Forces Initiative, defense ministers agreed at their meeting on 21 February 2013 that the NRF will become more important after the end of operations in Afghanistan, because, not taking into consideration its main role, NRF will also be used as an experimental environment, a place to test and verify the concept of CFI.

Special Operations Forces will also support this initiative through its new Special Operations Forces Headquarters, which will have an important role in processes like planning and executing missions and improving the cooperation and interoperability between Special Operations Forces from different nations.

### **4. Smart Defense**

Smart Defense initiative is supposed to be the light at the end of the tunnel for military capabilities development, with a declared purpose of supporting and encouraging nations to adopt common solutions to common problems using a common financing program, nations working together to deliver capabilities that they cannot afford by themselves. The domains approached by Smart Defense are the ones critical for NATO, like ballistic missile defense, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, maintenance of readiness, training and force protection. NATO's role in this endeavor will be to mediate and mitigate desires from member nations with the main goals, also considering efficiency and effectiveness in terms of risks, overlapping responsibilities, and moneys spent.

This concept is based on prioritization, through a transparent and cooperative approach, specialization and cooperation.

Prioritization was and still is a challenge for the alliance, because of the impasse of making NATO objectives coincide with the ones belonging to member nations.

Specialization is revolving around the idea of nations abandoning certain capabilities because of financial constraints, thus increasing the pressure on other nations to maintain those capabilities, their task becoming mandatory, for maintaining the Alliance's

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credibility. NATO's role in this will be to plan on national strengths and discuss on the problem of defense budget cuts occurring in members states economics.

Cooperation represents, in the most basic sense, ensuring access to technologies unaffordable in case of individual approaches. It can happen within a group of states led by a framework nation, or it can be an initiative based on geographical, cultural, common equipment or other bases. A good example on approaching this principle is the proposal made by former eastern bloc states concerning keeping in service the 152 mm howitzers, a cheaper project if comparing switching to 155 mm howitzers, the actual standard of NATO Forces.

The mechanisms of Smart Defense include measures taken by NATO leading authorities like establishing special representatives for smart defense, and coordination with different partners, such as European Defense Agency, in order to develop capabilities in fields that are not overlapping and considered critical for all actors involved. The European Union has a similar program designated pooling and sharing (P&S) that will allow member states to have access to modern technologies with a net benefit in savings. Still, the concept is a long way from completion, because it still remains uncertain how the capabilities will be deployed, how different member states will access this assets in case of need, and of course that the initiatives started so far were not very successful.

Smart Defense should not be considered a short time endeavor, but something that will perpetuate through the foreseeable future, being a process that will transform NATO's approach on developing capabilities and on the procurement process.

From a different perspective it is obvious that the United States, also very much affected by the economic crisis, cannot sustain forever with different military assets the vast majority of NATO members states, so it is mandatory to address at least the shortcomings identified between the United States and other allies during NATO's Operation Unified Protector in Libya(2011) like the intelligence-driven air operations, even though these discrepancies were noticed starting with NATO's Allied Force air campaign over Kosovo in 1999, and no evident measures were taken to address them.

### **5. Conclusion**

Defense expenditures during economic upheaval times will almost always suffer. Investments in new and modern technologies and military operations as a whole will decrease substantially. In order to address this problems through a constructive approach, all Alliance members should consider a stronger involvement in programs such as Connected Forces and Smart Defense/or Pooling and Sharing, trying to find solutions to the inevitable questions of who's going to get what and when, because history teaches us that you cannot predict with certainty when the future military crisis is going to happen, but you can predict with 100% certainty that it will occur. Also, the other Allies have to try to develop capabilities that ensure a smaller dependability on United States assets, by funding projects that are considered critical for the Alliance, for the accomplishment of its goals.

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