

PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATIONAL MILITARY STRUCTURES SO AS TO ADAPT TO THE ALLIED CONTEXT

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Abstract: The complexity of the security situation at international and especially regional level, generated by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, accentuates the need to develop and strengthen the North Atlantic Alliance's collective deterrence and defence posture. The collective defence system is and will remain an effective element in geopolitical equations, especially in the current context, when the threat spectrum is unprecedentedly diverse, and the system is NATO's main objective. Against the backdrop of these challenges, following the financial crisis and in particular since 2014, with the NATO Summit in the UK (4-5 September 2014), there has been a demand at Allied level for a robust set of defence capabilities capable of responding effectively to the full spectrum of threats and supporting NATO's political and strategic objectives in the coming phases. Initiatives such as the 'Defence Capability Building', the 'Interoperability Platform' or the 'Connected Forces Initiative', together with the gradual increase of defence budgets to reach the 2% of GDP target, have been aspirations adopted by Member States and largely imposed at national level. Subsequent Summits since 2014 have made significant progress in strengthening NATO capabilities and adapting the Alliance to the current geopolitical reality. Therefore, as the types of threats confronted seem to evolve and acquire increasingly diverse features, states and their instruments, in turn, must undergo a process of transformation and adaptation, both individually, at state level, and in the allied context. Transformation is a constant challenge and requirement for the Alliance and its members, which will have to be faced continuously.

Keywords: *threat; defence; military structures; transformation; adaptation; capabilities.*

Introduction

Clearly, approaching the security of nations from the strict perspective of the individual military dimension is no longer sufficient. Even if the military factor is the ultimate and most important guarantee of security, especially in an allied context, its importance is truly appreciated in situations where non-military instruments seem no longer sufficient to counter contemporary risks and threats.

War has been and will remain the harshest and most violent manifestation of conflict. Whether triggered for religious, economic, political or any other reason, the military capabilities deployed can have a devastating effect on society with all its components, from individuals and organisations to infrastructure. Global and regional developments continue to influence how states, non-state actors and the public view security and defence, the use of military assets and warfare, and ultimately the role of armed forces (Holmberg și Jan 2017). The military factor has always been one of the main points found in the backbone of every state, materialised both through the individual state's military capability and through the military alliances to which it is party. The allied context also gives the state the possibility to use the military entity as a tool in foreign policy. Under these circumstances, the military factor is one of the main generators of national, regional and international security. This particularly important role means that it must be adapted in order to meet the commitments of states in the global geostrategic context.

In terms of research methodology, the main objective was to carry out a study on the prospect of adapting national military capabilities to an allied or unified context, a particularly eloquent objective, mainly in terms of establishing those elements that determine the need for

change in the military field. Starting from the study and analysis of the foreign policies of the various states that are active in foreign policy and determining how they are influenced or adopted, we can identify different requirements for the military capabilities of individual states or international organisations in the situation of the allied context. In this respect, the use of qualitative research elements, based on genetic, historical and comparative analysis tools, allowed me to achieve the research objective set for this study.

The hypothesis from which we start revolves around the question: *if the diversity and complexity of contemporary military operations require a united and allied intervention, then the national military body must metamorphose and adapt organizationally and operationally to ensure an appropriate response in terms of cooperation, force generation and regeneration?*

Starting from the obvious difficulty of the current geopolitical equation, this research revolves around Romania's membership of the North Atlantic Alliance. NATO, perhaps the most important alliance of recent history, seen as an inter-state and inter-state political-military security alliance, provides member states with security rights, but also entails obligations and responsibilities. Since its inception, it has been a living body, constantly changing and adapting to threats, based on a firm commitment between partners, which states can use for mutually agreed purposes, but which is constrained by certain limitations on objectives, resources and capacity to act, imposed by the members themselves. Throughout history, the Alliance has provided a forum for each member to determine its national interest within the broader context of consensus among members of the Alliance as a whole.

The analysis of the evolution of contemporary risks, generated by the competition for resources and the possibility of mankind being drawn into a new global war as a result of Russia's latest actions in Ukraine, gives us the opportunity to appreciate that there are still multiple threats to global security and that the role of the North Atlantic Alliance in managing and resolving major global crises is both topical and crucial. However, NATO has no armed forces of its own, relying on the assumption and contribution of member states. While NATO's political and military structures provide the necessary mechanisms for national forces to assume responsibility for missions, as well as the organisational arrangements under which joint force command, control, training and exercises operate, in most situations the forces made available to the Alliance remain under full national command. Here, then, is a first challenge to the synergy of a force package, often governed by heterogeneity in terms of equipment, doctrine, training and even culture.

Over the last decade, especially after Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and the aggression unleashed at that time in eastern Ukraine, coupled with the actions in Ukraine these days, the Alliance is undergoing substantial reform, both structurally and conceptually. Operations have often been the driving force behind most defence investment and modernisation (Shea 2014). As stated in the NATO Secretary General's annual report of 26 January 2016, "the effects of the global financial crisis have accelerated a wide-ranging Alliance-wide reform process, which is reflected in the austerity measures taken by member countries and seeks to modernise the Alliance by making it more efficient and effective. Major institutional reforms have been undertaken, covering NATO's military command structure, agencies and commands, while the concept of 'smart defence' has been introduced to prioritise the Alliance's most pressing capability needs, to set force goals and to assess how allies will use their resources to help them get the most value for money." (The Secretary General's Annual Report 2016 n.d.).

NATO's relevance today is measured in terms of its ability to conduct crisis response operations and participate in managing the security environment both in areas of responsibility and in areas outside member states' territory. As a result, the Alliance is continuously seeking to improve its structural and operational effectiveness, and NATO's transformation is also an expression of the need to match the political commitments made to launch operations with the delivery of the capabilities needed to conduct those operations. NATO's planning and force generation mechanism is more developed than that of any other organisation (Shea, NATO's

Future Strategy: Ready for the Threats of the Future or Refighting the Battles of the Past? 2014). Efforts are currently underway to improve NATO's force generation process, increase the usability of allied forces, develop its future capabilities, the planning process and intelligence work within NATO.

Romania's position on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance as well as at the interface of high-level security risk areas underlines that defence and security go beyond the responsibility of a single state. At the national level, too, in order to respond to partners' requirements, it is necessary to redefine concepts and establish measures to ensure predictability and consensus in the use of national instruments both independently and in an allied framework. The main guarantor of Romania's security is the North Atlantic Alliance, the transatlantic relationship being the strategic link that gives coherence and consistency to actions. The strength of the transatlantic relationship depends on maintaining US engagement in Europe and on how European allies and partners, including us, allocate resources to develop their own defence capabilities.

1. Organisational changes generated by the allied context

The force structure process is closely linked to the type of mission, or more precisely the specifics of the missions, that these forces have to perform. Force structure planning, as a process, is primarily the shaping of a reference model that will later become a standardised model for future structures, the end result of which must meet the requirements of the allied context.

The transformation and organisational adaptation of the military force for a given type of mission is a fairly complex process, based on structural, technological and doctrinal transformations aimed at achieving a structure that is capable of responding effectively to the needs for which it was created. Thus, from the outset we can define the variables on the basis of which the military body can be transformed from an organisational point of view:

- The dynamic context of the security environment in which this process takes place;
- The cause-effect link between the factors that need to be taken into account when designing the force;
- Fluctuations occurring in the economic development of the country;
- The steady implementation of the reform process in all areas of activity, including national defence;
- Interaction between the stages of the national planning process;
- The multitude and accuracy of policy documents (programmes, actions and measures initiated) on which these transformations are based.

From a theoretical point of view, I believe that the process of organisational transformation can be cyclical, based on four steps (Figure 1), achieving a correlation between the type of mission and the criteria established for the force structure, as follows:

➤ **Step 1, the definition of needs**, which, using scientific mechanisms, determines the weaknesses of the organisation and establishes the type of mission to be participated in while highlighting the specifics of the mission;

➤ **Step 2, setting objectives and allocating needs**, where the needs of the structure within the mission must be clearly defined so that during the resource allocation process the overall objective to be achieved by the organisation is taken into account;

➤ **Step 3, facilitating the implementation of the planning**, the step in which the correlation between resources and the requirements of the mission for which a force has been created is achieved, is the most extensive and complex activity of the process.

➤ **Step 4, the evaluation of results**, which is a continuous activity throughout the process, analysing the effects within the military organisation, but also within society, whether in the political, economic or international relations environment. In the event that the construction does

not fully meet the needs, it will be necessary to modify or adjust the allocation of resources, with the results obtained being re-examined each time in order to make the necessary corrections to the product created.

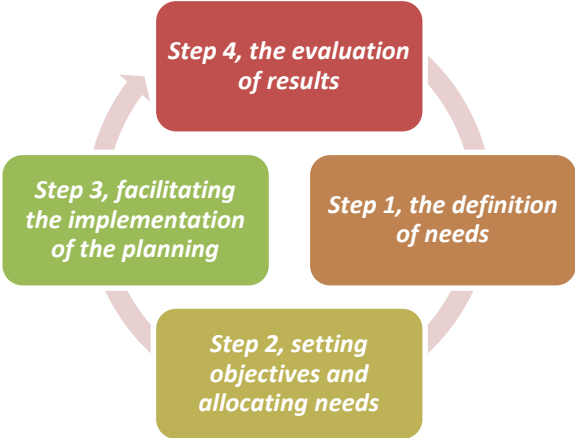


Figure no. 1. Organisational transformation process
 (Source: own through consultation of literature)

Starting from the three main categories of military operations, namely: operations specific to armed combat; stability and support operations and intermediate operations, the four steps of the process will be applied to each type of military operation in order to establish the force structure. At the end of this process, the structure required to meet the needs initially identified is broadly achieved. By applying the specific features of the mission in question, a force structure will be obtained which will be able to respond effectively to the challenges for which it was built.

Force structuring is often approached on the basis of three different criteria, represented graphically in the figure below: threat-based, scenario-based and future capability-based.

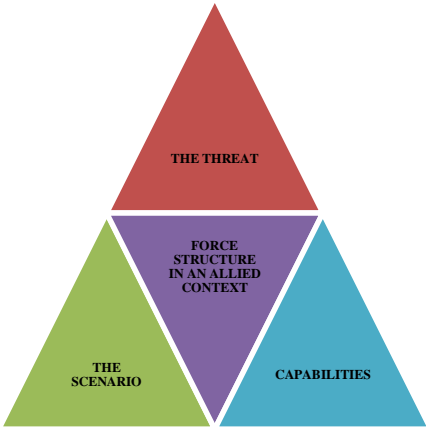


Figure no. 2. Force structuring criteria in an allied context
 (Source: own through consultation of literature)

When *the threat* criterion is applied, the force is structured with the stated purpose of dealing with specific threats. To this end, intelligence services make assessments of likely threats, and defence and security decision-makers determine what structures are needed and allocate them in such a way as to be able to counter those threats. Applying this criterion has a number of advantages in terms of the credibility of scenarios based on valid intelligence assessments. Obviously, structuring according to threats also has its drawbacks, the most

important of which are limited perspective and the risk of making it impossible to adapt to unforeseen changes in the security environment.

The *scenario* approach is not fundamentally different from the previous one, starting from a set of generic scenarios from which defence policies and strategies are derived and with the help of which configuration priorities are set, and capabilities are then designed according to each scenario. As in the previous case, this criterion has its advantages and disadvantages. Its main advantages are: a clear link with the requirements of the strategy and a fairly transparent relationship between each scenario and the forces it requires. Its major drawback, however, is its degree of flexibility in the face of unforeseen events, and a wide range of scenarios would be needed to eliminate this shortcoming.

The *future capabilities* criterion seeks to determine the capabilities and forces that will be developed to meet future threats based largely on future challenges and opportunities. It is a criterion that can ensure the correct evolution of structures, but it is fundamentally based on the accuracy of predictions of the characteristics of the future security environment. The possible missions and operational hypotheses formulated will be closely aligned with the various types of force structures, depending on the required capabilities, structures validated solely through experimentation.

Each criterion has its advantages and disadvantages, so the choice of one or the other will depend on the specific context of the future mission entrusted to the force structure in question.

The implementation of Capability Based Planning (CBP) at NATO level, at this point in time, is based on an algorithm based on 6 steps, graphically materialised in figure no. , which facilitates the identification and understanding of the capabilities needed by the Alliance to fulfil its missions, respectively:

- Phase 1 - Analysis of the strategic environment;
- Phase 2 - Identification of capability needs;
- Phase 3 - Determining requirements;
- Phase 4 - Capability Gap and Achievement Analysis;
- Phase 5 - Identify possible solutions;
- Phase 6 – Implementation.

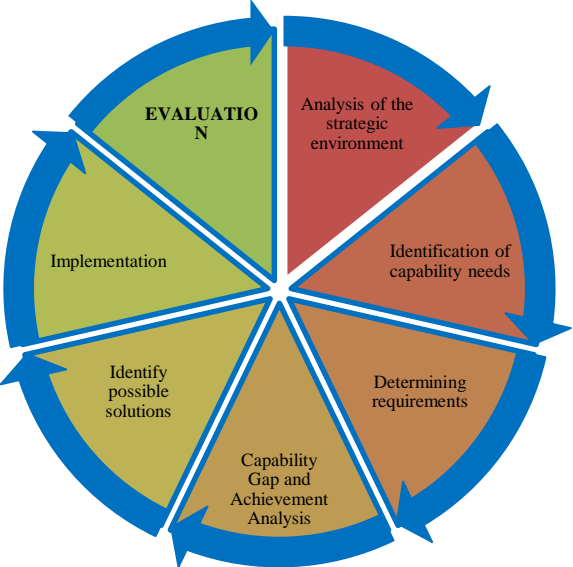


Figure no. 3. Force structuring criteria in an allied context
(Source: own by consulting literature)

However, I consider it necessary, as shown in Figure 3, to include evaluation in this process as a cyclical step, subsequent to the other steps, thus achieving a real-time adjustment of the process and a better correlation between mission and capability. For example, the objective of Phase 2 is to analyse the types of missions determined in Phase 1 to identify the capabilities that the force is required to possess, or this is determined solely through an assessment phase. At the same time, capability requirements are a qualitative and/or quantitative assessment of capability needs, expressed in terms of specific, quantifiable parameters, defining the essential components and associated capability outcomes.

2. Operational changes generated by the allied context

The complexity and fluidity of the post-Cold War security environment, and in particular recent events in Ukraine, has led the Allies to decide on the need for rapidly deployable, integrated and sustainable forces. As stated at national level, since 2007, in the Romanian Army Transformation Strategy, but also in NATO philosophy, military transformation at operational level is a continuous process of development and integration of new concepts, strategies, doctrines and capabilities with the aim of improving the interoperability of forces and increasing their effectiveness in operations (România 2007).

The transformation directions at operational level aim to match the capabilities a structure has at a given time with its collective defence responsibilities and its commitments in managing the international security environment. For example, after the first Gulf War, NATO constantly sought and asked allies to transform their existing military forces so that they could become rapidly deployable, interoperable and sustainable, in line with American principles. Progress has been slow, and today only a fraction of NATO forces are deployable beyond Alliance borders. At times, the emergence of atypical threats after the end of the Cold War and differing threat perceptions has made it more difficult for allies to reach consensus on a common vision of transformation. A common strategy is often difficult in a complex international situation where organisational processes, bureaucratic politics, economics, legal constraints and, not least, public opinion and media control influence decisions (Nissen 2014).

Over time, at the operational level, the alliance has often adopted a dualistic approach to transformation, seeking both to develop rapidly deployable forces and to promote stability and transparency in crisis regions. Since 2010, with the launch of the current strategic concept (active engagement, modern defence), the North Atlantic Alliance has been able to take a significant step forward in energising the transformation process by coupling capability reforms with the Alliance's political reinvigoration, and on this basis giving a much-needed new impetus to the transformation of NATO's operational philosophy.

Strategic objectives can take years to achieve, and some short-term operations can lead to major reactions and fundamental strategic changes. That is why the time factor can have substantially different connotations in contemporary operations. Against this background, the main transformational trends at the operational level are related to the assumption of a greater role by NATO and its member states, using the military instrument also in areas such as political, economic, social, humanitarian, informational, cultural, etc. In this context, developments and approaches such as:

- increased military action in the areas of counter-terrorism, combating cross-border crime, border control, restoring internal order, combating drug trafficking, etc.;
- increasing the share of missions in operations other than war;
- increased responsibilities in the area of countering cyber threats and protecting critical national infrastructure in digital space, such as cyber intelligence and counter-terrorism operations;

- participation in the eradication of pandemics, such as in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic;
- equipping the armed forces to create an integrated technical and equipment model to ensure the capabilities required for new types of missions including countering hybrid threats.

Of course, the new missions listed above are not exhaustive, but we can see that the change in the content of missions leads to fundamental changes at the operational level with implications for the composition, equipment and equipping of forces. Thus, also in the operational philosophy, in order to increase the level of interoperability, strategic mobility and operational efficiency, NATO member countries have developed and continue to develop and refine the NATO Response Force as a modern form of response to the new threats that are manifest these days. Russia's illegal intervention in Ukraine is a turning point in regional and global geopolitics. Suddenly, NATO-Russia relations are undergoing a radical change, throwing the relationship back more than 30 years to the Cold War. Moreover, the onset of this change in the bilateral relationship began after Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, culminating at that time in the suspension of regular meetings within the NATO Russia Council (NRC).

Therefore, given the temporary and limited in space and time nature of the reassurance measures, NATO allies considered it urgent at the time to adopt a package of measures of a permanent nature aimed at adjusting the Alliance to the new security conditions due to Russia's actions. The reassurance measures of the Eastern Allies, including Romania, adopted after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis in 2014, must be reinforced today, through a long-term projection. Starting in 2014, in response to major changes in the security environment and the deteriorating situation in the Alliance's immediate neighbourhood, NATO has begun a broad process of adapting its defensive posture. The Wales Summit marks the endorsement of **The Action Plan for Improved Responsiveness (RAP)**, which outlines the Alliance's strategic and operational adaptation, while at the same time ensuring that Allies are able to defend themselves (Delegația permanentă a României la NATO n.d.). Operationally, it combines a range of assurance and adaptation measures, striking a balance between an increased military presence in the Alliance's east and the ability to send reinforcement forces in the event of crisis or conflict anywhere in Allied territory. Following these decisions, an extensive transformation process was launched that dominated the post-summit agenda and resulted in the tripling of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to division size and its enhanced operability and responsiveness, which we see today when part of the force is present on home soil. The operationalisation of the High Readiness Response Force (VJTF), which can be deployed within days throughout the Alliance, together with the operationalisation of new command and control structures on the territory of the Eastern states, with a role in facilitating the training and reception of reinforcement forces, are also very important conceptual elements for the implementation of the measures contained in the RAP (Delegația permanentă a României la NATO n.d.).

In today's security environment, where risks and threats of war have become a certainty, NATO is forced and obliged to adapt its security thinking and tools to respond to these threats. "The process of transformation of the Alliance is a natural necessity arising both from fundamental changes in the security environment and from the new strategic guidelines adopted at NATO level" (Mavriș 2012).

The voluntary national contributions of all the Allies translate the plan into a vigorous programme of military activities mainly in the strategic eastern dimension. Romania has been and remains a contributor to and beneficiary of the security and defence measures adopted since 2014, which are aimed at strengthening both the Alliance's security and, implicitly, national security.

Military strategy is a phenomenon that involves a sensitive distribution of efforts and a complex interaction between the political level and the higher military level (Edström, Hakan and Westberg, Jacob 2022). Proactive military, politico-military and diplomatic efforts have resulted in the strengthening of the allied presence on Romanian territory and in the Black Sea area. Thus, four multinational commands have been created on the national territory, as part of the NATO Force Structure, namely: Multinational Corps Command Southeast (HQ MNC-SE), Multinational Division Command Southeast (MND SE), Multinational Brigade Command Southeast (MN BDE SE) and NATO Force Integration Unit Romania (NFIU ROU), in Sibiu, Bucharest and Craiova, which have the role of supporting the conduct of missions in the southern area of the allied eastern flank. A tailored Forward Presence (tFP) has also been established, structured on the basis of a set of proposals from our country covering the land, sea and air domains. As part of this presence is the Combined Joint Enhanced Training (CJET) initiative, which creates the framework through which allied states will be able to affiliate or send forces to Romania to train for increased interoperability and operational capability.

Other decisions aim at increasing the allied air and maritime presence in the region and creating a coordinating relationship for NATO maritime activities in the Black Sea, materialised through integrated training activities and exercises involving NATO Standing Naval Groups (SNFs), together with ships from littoral states and other interested allies (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe, n.d.). By coordinating these maritime activities, NATO is ensuring good surveillance of the situation in the region, as well as coherence between NATO's activities in the Black Sea and the Alliance's maritime activities as a whole.

The measures adopted at operational level are defensive in nature, in line with Romania's international commitments and the need to strengthen national defence. At the same time, in order to increase security in the region and to ensure the level of operability and responsiveness of national forces alongside allied forces, the Romanian Army has recently tripled the number of multinational exercises, thus contributing to increased interoperability with allied forces.

Conclusions

As a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, Romania is in the midst of a political-military transformation and is engaged in an unprecedented operational effort. The participation in a large number of missions, mostly non Article 5 missions, since NATO accession, has required a reshaping of the force structure, objectives and, why not, personnel training, starting from the conceptual and doctrinal dimension and ending with the military capabilities developed. Of course, the process could be said to be slow and sometimes delayed, but it is closely linked to the political, economic and social realities of the time. Based on the results of successive assessments of the threats that characterise the dynamics of international security, the vulnerabilities and risks identified, NATO and Romania as a member, a state at the "hottest" border of the alliance, has, in the last three years, restarted a new accelerated process of transformation, aimed at preparing a firm and effective response to the new challenges of the 21st century.

The main strands of transformation relate to:

- modernising capabilities, updating missions and making command and control structures work more efficiently;
- moving to capability-based planning;
- further implementing the provisions of NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept - 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence', which has led to the promotion of the concept of 'Smart Defence';

- active contributions to the development of the new Strategic Concept, which is envisaged for adoption next year;
- increasing the responsiveness of the structures made available to NATO and beyond;
- increasing the level of interoperability of capabilities and structures operating within the Alliance.

The development and modernisation of military capabilities requires the allocation of significant financial and material resources (a minimum of 2% of GDP per year) by the Member States. In this respect, some Member States have and others do not, a situation which results in technological differences in the military instruments they possess. At the same time, the degree of development of military capabilities can also be assessed in terms of the number of military personnel, types of units and large manoeuvre and combat support units. From a technological point of view, the relevance is given by the number and type of essential combat systems (aircraft, helicopters, surface ships, tanks, guns, etc.), which are closely linked to the defence budget and its allocation for modernisation and equipment.

Of course, we can see that at national and allied level we have not fully achieved our objectives, although significant changes have taken place in recent years and a major new review of NATO's command structure is under way. Even though the Alliance's command structure has changed, in the area of capabilities, results are lagging behind in some areas, with states having difficulty in generating the forces needed to bring the response force and those for ongoing operations up to the level originally proposed or required by the mission.

In conclusion, referring to the meaning of the verb "to transform", defined as the process by which an object "changes, alters its appearance, its form", we can state that the process of national adaptation to the permanent modification of NATO concepts and military structure is a continuous process of transformation, carried out in order to respond to new security requirements and to create new forms of response compatible with the level of threats that have arisen.

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