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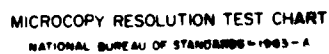
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US FORCES FOR NATO
MILITARY QUESTIONS--POLITICAL ANSWERS

BY

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

US FORCES FOR NATO
Military Questions - Political Answers

An Individual Essay

by

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US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
23 March 1987

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Martin R. Berndt, LtCol U.S. Marine Corps
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Each year, the US provides the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with a commitment of military forces for the coming year. The commitment is made in the US response to the NATO Defense Planning Questionnaire (DPQ). The Secretary of Defense takes a DPQ recommendation from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and modifies it to address political concerns. NATO war planners then use this commitment to develop war plans. However, US planners use a force structure for Europe based on a military strategy and force apportionment unaffected by these political decisions. There is currently no mechanism to ensure that both US and NATO plans are harmonized. The problem can be diminished by applying four principles to the force planning and strategy development process: (1) the JCS must receive top-down guidance on political imperatives, (2) US-only plans should be modified to reflect DPQ response decisions, (3) political decisions must be made recognizing their impact on military planning, (4) Congress must better understand the military strategy. Through application of these concepts, we can guarantee that military questions will receive appropriate political responses.

U.S. Forces for NATO
Military Questions--Political Answers

The treaty [NATO] itself, I observed was simple and straightforward. We hoped that it would serve to prevent World War III.

Harry S. Truman, 1956¹

Our Military Commitment to NATO

The United States formalized its post-World War II interest in the security of Western Europe by becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on April 4th, 1949. Since that time, the US has placed the security of the NATO Alliance at the top of its national security interest list. This fact is evidenced, in part, by the forward deployment of over 320,000 US forces in Western Europe. One way that the US reaffirms its commitment to NATO, is to annually reflect its plans for the contribution of military forces to the Alliance should hostilities be launched against any member nation.

The consignment of these forces to NATO is formalized in a document that reflects US military plans for the size, character, capabilities, and availability of its forces. The document answers military questions posed by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT), and becomes a source for their war plans. The US does not share a similar formalized commitment of its forces with any alliance but NATO.

The synthesis of this commitment is a difficult process that involves several agencies within the executive branch of the government. Unfortunately, the process is flawed. Our ability to pledge forces in response to military questions is severely impacted on by political realities. Despite efforts to avoid it, our commitment to our NATO allies reflects political answers to military questions.

National Interest in Western Europe

The problem of correctly defining US national interests lies not in identifying areas of interests (economic, defense, values, or world order) "... but rather in assessing the intensity of the interest ... at different moments of history.... "2 The intensity of our interests changes as world affairs affect the way we view our responsibilities. It is sometimes unclear as to what interests are so important that our government would "refuse to compromise beyond the point that it considers to be tolerable."3 The boiling down of volatile interests and policies, in order to develop military strategy and plans, presents a most formidable challenge to military planners. A clear picture of national interest priorities is necessary for the military planner to determine how to slice the limited resource "pie." According to Robert W. Komer, "If capabilities are constrained, we must prioritize missions and resource allocation."4

The US does not have the military means to defend all of its interests world-wide. We stretch our military resources thin while trying to defend all of our national interests.

Priorities must be established in order to allocate constrained resources. These priorities are often not clear for many regions of the world. Nonetheless, today, and for the foreseeable future, the security of Western Europe is as important as it was on July 21st, 1949, when 82 of 96 US senators ratified the NATO treaty.

Planning for Our Commitment to NATO

US membership in NATO has been its foundation. We have historically set the standard for the contribution of each member's national energy to the Alliance and are unquestionably its natural leader. Our commitment of forces demonstrates our support for Article 5 of the Treaty which states, that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all.² It makes sense that our commitment of forces to NATO should be based on a regional strategy, further based on a global military strategy. The forces that we commit should be the resource (means) portion of this regional strategy. The Department of Defense has overall responsibility for military strategy formulation. A succinct description of the process is described in the U.S. Army War College text Warfighting: Its Theater Application:

Basis for Planning

(1) The NSC (National Security Council) formulates national strategy and determines national security objectives. The Secretary of Defense and JCS coordinate with theater commanders in translating national strategy and strategic military objectives. The JCS use these objectives and consider both the recommendations of theater commanders and the total military capabilities of the nation to arrive at a strategic concept and resource allocations that will accomplish the objectives.⁶

Development of the strategic concept (military strategy) and the allocation of resources are the two tasks that form the foundation of our military commitment to NATO. Secretary of Defense Weinberger has described what the military strategy should accomplish:

Defense policy sets forth the general objectives and guides for the development of defense strategy and military capabilities to counter security threats and advance U.S. interests. Defense strategy details how defense policies are to be pursued. It is the plan for employing defense resources to safeguard our national security interests. Thus, strategy specifies how our defense means are to accomplish our desired national security ends.⁷

Within DOD, the responsibility for establishing a military strategy further falls to the only organization that has such a responsibility; the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Here military strategy is formulated, coordinated, approved by the Joint Chiefs, and reflected in the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). Published biannually, the JSCP provides:

... guidance to the unified and specified commands and the Chiefs of Services for the accomplishment of military task, based on projected military capabilities and conditions during the short-range period. This concept is based on the capabilities of available forces, intelligence sources, and

guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense. It provides guidance for the development of plans to support national security objectives and assigns tasks to the commanders of unified and specified commands.■

The JSCP also allocates forces to the Commanders in-Chiefs (CINCs) to allow them to plan for the accomplishment of their tasks. Because of competition for limited resources, there are obviously some tasks which cannot be satisfactorily accomplished.

So far so good. The Joint Chiefs provide guidance and allocate forces to the CINCs for planning, while the nation as a whole commits forces to NATO to allow it to conduct its military planning. Theoretically, both Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and US European Command (USEUCOM), along with Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT) and US Atlantic Command (USLANTCOM), should be able to plan along parallel lines. One very important factor prevents this from happening. Our military commitment to NATO is manipulated by non-military considerations which cause it to take on a political rather than military character. The same considerations that affect our Alliance apportionment, however, do not modify the complexion of the JSCP and its allocation of forces. Hence, maintaining harmony between both processes (US to NATO and US to US CINCs) under current policy is extremely difficult.

Creating our NATO Commitment

The NATO Defense Planning Questionnaire (DPQ) solicits information on almost every aspect of each nation's plan to support the Alliance. The response to this questionnaire is submitted every year and becomes the basis for the NATO Five Year Defense Plan. Normally, the DPQ consists of seven sections, each dealing with a different aspect of our military pledge, including force structure, logistics, and finances. Although not a technical document, it is detailed and lengthy. (In 1985 the document weighed seven pounds.)

The Secretary of Defense charges the Joint Chiefs of Staff to formulate all but the financial section of the response to the DPQ. The JCS in turn, task the Joint Staff to prepare the recommended response. During its development, the DPQ is coordinated within the Joint Staff, with all of the Services, and with USEUCOM and USLANTCOM. Additionally, close informal coordination is done with Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) action officers. These officers make major contributions to the DPQ response as the Joint Staff presses it toward approval. This OSD involvement is somewhat unique and is pursued in order to preclude later interference by political factors. The working relationship between the OSD and Joint Staff is an excellent one that, in the long term, helps to produce a better quality product. Even with OSD involvement however, preparation of the document lacks specific political direction.

The only DPQ guidance given by the Secretary of Defense to the JCS, is to reflect in the response, only those programs and plans that are included in the President's budget at the time it is submitted to Congress. There is no specific guidance provided relative to what should, or should not, be committed. This is left to the discretion of the Joint Chiefs.

The Joint Staff, under the supervision of its director, goes to two principle sources to decide what forces the JCS should recommend be promised to NATO; the previous year's DPQ response, and the JSCP.

The first source of information on which to build a response to the DPQ, and hence a military commitment to NATO, is the previous year's edition of the document. Because the previous edition was endorsed by both the Secretaries of Defense and State and was released by the President's National Security Council Advisor, it provides a creditable starting point. Once updated to show how individual programs are progressing, it is evaluated in terms of the operational changes deemed necessary by the JCS.

The second source of DPQ information is the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). Because Volume II of the JSCP apportions forces to CINCs for planning, it is relatively easy to translate USCINCEUR and USCINCLANT apportionment into a commitment to the corresponding NATO commands of SACEUR and SACLANT. This helps to ensure that the DPQ response is in harmony with the force apportionment in the JSCP. The goal is

for both NATO and US commanders to use the same information to formulate their reinforcement and war plans. The effort to harmonize plans has long been a goal of military planners.

Shifts in JSCP force apportionment between CINCs are periodically made to better satisfy regional requirements. Changes in doctrine and in the perception of the threat result in the need for these modifications. Over the last few years, these changes have caused corresponding changes in the recommended commitment to NATO in the DPQ. Unfortunately, these changes have not always been favorably received by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It has become obvious that any reduction in either the quality or quantity of forces for NATO will not be tolerated. Whether or not these reductions are actual or perceived, (or even if they make good sense) has not been the subject of much debate within the DOD. What has been debated, however, has been how NATO will respond to changes. Historically, if indications are that either the NATO military or civilian leadership will frown on a US change, the change will not be made. Once the US reveals plans to commit a particular force to NATO, the chances are very good that it will be "locked-in" forever. Reductions in force commitments are even less likely during election years.

Military leadership has been unable to reflect the product of a sound military strategy in the DPQ response, without political concerns steering the ship. The unwillingness of civilian leadership to provide adequate guidance on political matters in advance, and the inability of

military planners to become political experts, have created an atmosphere which fosters disharmony between military advice and political decisions. Bernard Brodie has given an explanation for why this happens:

Now the man who has risen to the top finds himself with new concerns, political and diplomatic. He is not simply directing the Army or Navy or Air Force. He is consulting with his colleagues and advising his civilian superiors, the Secretary of Defense and the President. He is advising them on matters having to do with the goals and ends of peace and of war. For this he has certainly not been trained--unless a nine month survey course in international and other political affairs at one of the war colleges can be considered training. However he has absorbed ideas and convictions and biases all along the way, and these are a large part of his working capital."

While I agree with Brodie's assessment concerning the goals or "ends" of war, I don't think that this same evaluation can be transposed to the resources, or "means". Indeed, civilian leadership must rely on the military for recommendations on what resources should be applied to ensure successful use of the military as an instrument of power. Yet, when it comes to committing forces to NATO, this advice sometimes falls on deaf ears.

The DPO has become a political document that deals with military matters. Because it is so flavored with political imperatives, some military planners believe it has lost much of its military utility. Actually, it would be ignorant to believe that military planning can take place absent the realities of politics. To plan in a political vacuum would violate the statute directing a civilian-controlled military

found in Article 2 of the US Constitution. Additionally, the DPQ is the only place where the basis for US military planning is blessed by the Office of the Secretaries of Defense and State. As a result of this exposure and approval, the DPQ response is a very powerful document that is a blend of regional military and national policy decisions in one document. Its uniqueness makes it the preeminent document for military planning for Western Europe. It also enjoys international credibility. Ensuring that the development of our NATO force commitment satisfies requirements of both the US and the Alliance, becomes the task for military planners.

Applying the following principles will reduce the NATO force planning problem: (1) provide specific top-down guidance to the JCS prior to their development of a recommended DPQ response, (2) modify national strategic plans to conform with the approved response to the DPQ, (3) specifically isolate those political decisions that conflict with our national military strategy and ensure conscious addressal, (4) seek congressional endorsement of our military strategy.

Top-Down Guidance

Guidance given to the JCS from the Secretary of Defense on the development of our force commitment to NATO, is insufficient. There is confusion concerning political intent. "The 1958 National Security Amendment gave greater authority, more influence in strategic planning, and greater control over the JCS to the Secretary of Defense."¹⁰ Greater exercise of this authority, through more specific guidance on forces that

should be promised to NATO, would greatly reduce uncertainty within the JCS and Joint Staff.

Currently, there is a need for the JCS to ascertain what implied political tasks are included in their responsibilities to recommend a commitment of forces to NATO. There is no place for implied tasks during the formulation of the US response to the DPQ. The mission assigned to the JCS must clearly state those tasks that will reflect the Secretary of Defense's political concerns. It is unrealistic to assume that the Joint Staff has a political crystal ball that identifies these tasks. The staff's job is to provide military advice based on military strategy--not political advice based on policy. Even OSD participants in DPQ development have been unable to glean the Secretary of Defense's political intents. For example, if the Secretary of Defense envisioned a major US effort to have other countries improve their air defense capability, he could tell the JCS to: "Demonstrate that the US will take the lead in improving NATO's air defense capability by increasing the number of tactical fighter squadrons committed in this year's DPQ response." "The onus is on the senior to define to the junior what must be accomplished without telling him how to do it. The onus is not on the junior to ferret out what his commander wants. The senior must state what he wants. Otherwise, he should not expect to get it."¹¹

In June 1986, the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management made several recommendations that provide for greater Presidential and Secretary of Defense involvement in the development of a military strategy. The President would provide specific guidance for the formulation of a military strategy based on national security objectives, priorities, and fiscal constraints. Upon receipt of this guidance, the Secretary of Defense will task the JCS to appraise military threats, derive military objectives and priorities, and recommend a military strategy. This military strategy should attain the national security objectives and identify the forces and capabilities required. The JCS would also provide some options to the military strategy that would identify different force structure mixes, address trade-offs between the Services, and highlight the differences inherent in the options.¹²

When fully implemented, this formalized process will result in a military strategy guided and approved by the Secretary of Defense and the President. It will allow DPQ forces to be based on a JSCP that meets the needs and has the approval of the Commander-in-Chief and his Secretary of Defense. If additional guidance based on political concerns could be specifically provided for the DPQ response, this first requirement would be fully satisfied.

Changing Strategy Resources

When the JCS forward their recommended DPQ response to the Secretary of Defense, they are presenting military advice.

Because of a paucity of guidance on political factors that influence our commitment of forces, this JCS recommendation can lack the balance necessary for it to be palatable to our NATO allies. Subsequently, the Secretary of Defense (in conjunction with the Secretary of State) makes changes to the JCS recommended product to reflect political concerns. For example, the JCS may redistribute some forces from USCINCEUR to USCINCPAC to address a change in the perceived threat in the Pacific, and reflected this change in the JSCP. Subsequently, a reapportionment would have to be reflected in the DPQ response to keep both documents aligned. If, however, the Secretary of Defense believed that such a change would be politically unacceptable to NATO, he may ignore the JCS recommendation and direct that the DPQ response not be changed. This creates disharmony between the JSCP and the DPQ response. What happens then to the credibility of the JCS apportionment of forces to the CINCs for planning, as found in Volume II of the JSCP?

When the DPQ response is released to NATO, it becomes a "road-map" for the US reinforcement of Europe. Because of the international nature of the document, it is available to hundreds of political and military leaders for use in planning. Theoretically, it should be fully synchronized with US-only plans based on JSCP guidance. If Secretary of Defense changes to the JCS recommendation on forces for Europe are not subsequently reflected in the JSCP, US and international planning cannot proceed along parallel lines. Additionally,

if these changes are not made, the US could appear to be talking to Europe out of both sides of her mouth.

It is important to recall that the US DPQ response is released to NATO by the National Security Council Advisor for the President of the United States. No other military planning document in peacetime enjoys involvement at this level. Hence, the integrity of the document cannot be compromised. Even though the DPQ response includes political answers to questions about military forces and plans, once approved it becomes another source of strategic guidance for military planners. The approved DPQ response must be used for JSCP refinement just like National Security Decision Directives (NSDDs) and other sources of security policy.

Targetting Political Decisions

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff can specifically address those political decisions that negatively impact on the military strategy of the US commitment to NATO. In his role as the principal uniformed military advisor to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman can discuss those decisions that contradict the recommendations of the JCS. The consequences of the political decisions for the credibility of the world-wide military strategy, and for military planning for the reinforcement of Europe, should be specifically pointed out to the Secretary of Defense.

Increasing or decreasing the NATO commitment from one year to the next is based on the threat and the world-wide requirements of the CINCs. The rationale for these decisions

must therefore be well articulated to the Secretary of Defense so that he can fully analyze the political impact of them. If political concerns are so strong that they require The Secretary of Defense to disapprove the military recommendation, at least the advice of the Chairman and the JCS will have been considered. The current lack of OSD involvement in the military strategy development process precludes full appreciation of the impact of political changes on military planning.

Congress and Our NATO Commitment

Section 8 of Article 1 of the US Constitution empowers the Congress to raise and support armies, provide and maintain a navy, declare war, and make laws to execute these powers. These legislative powers are primarily executed through the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives. These committees concentrate on the defense budget as a means to support the military strategy of the defense establishment. Because the Congress controls the funds which are the life blood of military forces, it inherently enjoys a powerful position in the execution of our military strategy. Such has been the case since our early involvement with NATO. As SACEUR, General Eisenhower made this same observation:

Personally, I thought that the President had complete authority to deploy troops as he chose and to determine the strength of the deployment. However, I well knew, as the others did, that troops could be maintained in Europe only as Congress provided money for their maintenance and, indeed, for their existence.'3

In recent years, the enactment of the War Powers Resolution, prohibition on Nicaraguan Contra aid, and restriction on military equipment sales to Saudi Arabia and Jordan, reflect the impact that congressional decisions have on the execution of both national policy and military strategy.

The ability of the Congress to introduce new requirements into an equation means that it has a vital role to play in the commitment of our forces to NATO. The 1984 Nunn-Cohen amendment establishing a ceiling on US troops stationed in Europe was a classic example of this involvement. The amendment was an effort to demonstrate US resolve to reduce our commitment to the Alliance if other member countries did not increase theirs. While this action reduced the prerogative of USCINCEUR to tailor his forces to meet the threat, it highlighted the Senate Armed Services Committee's ability to micromanage the maintenance of the armed forces in Western Europe. Decisions on the ratio of foreign military aid given to Turkey and Greece is another example of congressional involvement in our commitment to NATO. Such actions and their impact on the military strategies of deterrence, forward defense, and flexible response are obvious.

Congressional play in policy, strategy, and even defense structure and reform will continue to be based on the interest of the Congress to pursue such participation. Arguably, the role that Congress plays will increase in the future. Unless

this role includes an understanding and approval of the US military strategy, there will be friction within the formulation of our military commitment to NATO.

Congressional disagreement on defense issues may result in the cancellation or reduced funding for a particular line-item in the defense budget, regardless of the role the program plays in the execution of the overall defense strategy. Congress must be cognizant of the military strategy that its decisions support. Currently, there is no mechanism for congressional review or endorsement of the US military strategy.

The US commitment to NATO is heavily reliant on the approval of the defense budget submitted to Congress by the President. Service budgets support programs that fulfill DFO commitments. Without congressional approval, these programs will fail and the commitment will not be met. The cancellation of the Sergeant York air-defense weapons system exemplifies the impact that congressional decisions can have on NATO commitments. The decision to cancel that ineffective program was a sound one, but it required lengthy explanations to the NATO military authorities who had requested that US forces provide such an air-defense capability to its forces identified for Europe.

It is questionable whether or not a presidentially approved military strategy could be approved by Congress; consensus requires extensive compromise. Likewise, the DFO response prepared for submission to NATO would stand a similar

chance of receiving congressional blessing. However, it would be in the best interest of our strategy and force commitment to involve the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees through an exchange of information. Such action would assist in insuring that decisions on the defense budget would be made realizing that they impact on the commitment of forces to Europe. Only with congressional appreciation of the status of Western Europe as the premier defense interest outside of the US, can Congress support those military decisions that contribute to the overall strategy and the commitment of forces to the North Atlantic Alliance. A Congress that acts on defense budget issues on a line-by-line basis without understanding the Presidentially approved overall military strategy, is inefficient. Amos Jordan and William Taylor in their book American National Security, Policy and Process, make the following observation:

...to increase the likelihood of coherent national security policy, earlier congressional involvement in policy-making is undoubtedly needed. Such involvement will, itself, produce difficulties and misunderstanding and is certainly not a panacea yet is essential if the "new" Congress is to work in tandem with the executive.¹⁴

Recent efforts by the Senate Armed Services Committee to understand the military strategy process, through briefings by Defense Department officials and others, are encouraging. But, an understanding of the strategy content--not just the process--is also needed.

Conclusion

As long as the US maintains membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it will be its leader. All other members will look to the US for a demonstration of its resolve. This resolve will take the form of a commitment of military force to the Alliance in the US response to the NATO Defense Planning Questionnaire. This response continues to be the supreme reflection of our commitment to the NATO treaty.

The requirements for our military resources will always exceed our resources. As long as we have interests throughout the world, we will be faced with a paucity of forces to execute our military strategy. The requirement for the civilian leadership of the nation to establish regional priorities will exist as long as our resources are constrained. While some of these regional priorities shift from time to time, the relative position of Western Europe among them has not.

The US has a moral obligation to fulfill its commitment to NATO. Having entered into a treaty agreement with 16 other nations, we must stand by our commitment and ensure that it enjoys credibility and integrity. The JCS formulation of our commitment must be based on specific "top-down" guidance from the Secretary of Defense that addresses the political concerns of the nation. The JCS can then ensure that our commitment is not only militarily sound--but politically acceptable.

Our DPQ response must be consistent with the US-only plans for the reinforcement of Western Europe. As long as US

and NATO commands are both operating from the same force commitment to Europe, problems for the military planner will be minimized. This will require reexamination of, and adjustment to, our strategic capability plans upon approval of the US response to the NATO DPQ. By changing the apportionment of forces in the JSCF to reflect the political decisions made during DPQ formulation, harmonization can be accomplished, credibility will be maintained, and integrity not jeopardized.

Military planners should not be expected to be statesmen, politicians, or even national policy makers. They are tasked to provide military advice to the Secretary of Defense based on an honest appraisal of the threat to US national interests and policies. If political decisions threaten the US force commitment to NATO, it is the obligation of the JCS to so inform the Secretary of Defense. Once these political decisions are made however, the task of the military planner is to ensure that consistency is maintained between US-only and international plans for the reinforcement of NATO. It is imperative that we realize that the Presidentially approved DPQ is the principal force commitment document issued by the US. It is the document that drives all others.

A Congress that understands how military strategy is formulated will more effectively administer its responsibilities to raise and maintain its armed forces. It will also more fully appreciate the impact of its decisions on the resources of our NATO commitment. Our military strategy

and commitment of forces to NATO can more coherently be decided if the House and Senate Armed Services Committees are sensitive to the military decision-making process that results in these efforts. Congressional understanding of what our strategy is, and how our treaty obligations are served by that strategy, should be a goal of military leadership.

Over forty years of peace in Europe can be attributed to the cohesion of the NATO Alliance. Dedication to continued peace is measured by each nation's contribution to the total defense effort. As the leader of this successful Alliance, the United States sets the standard for nearly every NATO endeavor. Perhaps by making a conscious effort to improve the manner in which we reflect of commitment of military forces to the Alliance, we can encourage scrutiny of our integrity and credibility. We will be better able to balance the realities of politics with the requirements of military planning, and ensure that our military questions receive appropriate political responses.

ENDNOTES

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