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EUCOM TASK FORCE

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June 2011

EUCOM's Future Force Structure

Summary

- Losing the argument on European stationing
- EUCOM needs to regain domestic – especially Service – support
- Strongest arguments are: training forces that fight with us, allied assets that reduce demand for U.S. (airlift, troops), and the affectionate bonding of host nation support
- The NATO Strategic Concept provides some opportunities: increased attention to Article 5 requirements, "ensure maximum coherence in defense planning," expanding nuclear participation.

The Atlantic Council's Strategic Advisors Group and the Institute for National Security Studies at the National Defense University launched a project in 2010-2011 to assess the future roles, missions and tasks of the United States European Command and how it relates to NATO. The study assesses in particular how the new NATO Strategic Concept and other initiatives launched at the November 2010 NATO Lisbon summit might impact EUCOM and its future. The study brought together leading experts from the United States and Europe for three workshop discussions in Washington to inform the production of a series of issue papers offering recommendations for EUCOM. The views expressed in these papers are those of the authors themselves and do not necessarily represent the views of EUCOM, the National Defense University or the Atlantic Council.

Introduction

When in 1950 General Eisenhower reluctantly argued for the long-term stationing of U.S. military forces in Europe, North Korea had just invaded South Korea. Prior to the Korean invasion, the Soviet Union was considered a major threat to Western Europe but was largely balanced there by the recovering strength of the West and the challenges of consolidating its hold on Eastern Europe. The invasion of South Korea by Soviet-supported North Korean troops precipitated alarm about the vulnerability of Western Europe to a surprise attack by a newly-aggressive Soviet bloc.[1]

As the NATO alliance transitioned from a political pact to an integrated military command, Eisenhower accepted the need for American troops in Europe to consolidate the West in freedom. However, he always envisioned that need as temporary, existing only until the economies of western Europe were again vibrant enough to afford militaries adequate to the needs of their security. And he had real doubts about the sustainability of the western Alliance, telling Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1955 that "the NATO experiment had about run its course."

Subsequent to Eisenhower, the Army leadership sunk roots in Europe so deep that even the end of the Cold War did not shake their faith in a continued presence of U.S. forces in large numbers. Even during the Vietnam War, the Army considered large-scale stationing in European-positioned forces for the defining fight. One of the bitterest recriminations against General Colin Powell as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff came from the Army in 1992 when, as part of the

[1] Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, NATO Archives, http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/4.htm

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NATO command restructuring, Powell removed the NATO billet in which the U.S. Army Europe Commander was dual-hatted.

Pressure to reduce troops in Europe often came from Congress, in the form of the Mansfield Amendments, which tied stationing to increases in European defense spending and Congressionally-mandated certifications in the Base Closure and Realignment process (so that all overseas bases that could be closed had been closed before considering closing domestic bases). But that pressure was successfully resisted by the commitment of the Army leadership to the value of continued forward stationing.

The Army leadership no longer serves as a bulwark against pressures to reduce troops stationed in Europe. But several factors have caused atrophy of the commitment to European stationing for U.S. forces: the demands of operations in two theaters distant from Europe; limited participation by most European allies in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; differential pace of innovation between U.S. forces and their allied counterparts; diminishing value to U.S. forces of NATO training and operational standards; migration of effort and talent from United States European Command (EUCOM) to United States Central Command (CENTCOM); improved ability to rapidly transship forces from U.S. bases; and sheer pace of activity that makes the United States less patient with bringing along other militaries while we fight.

U.S. European Command is losing the argument on stationing troops in Europe because it no longer has the support of the ground forces' leaders. Since Eisenhower's confirmation testimony, they have always been the key to sustaining Congressional support. For EUCOM to regain a stable measure of support for force structure in Europe, it will need to win the argument, persuading the Army and Marine Corps leadership that significant value accrues to the U.S. military from locating ground fighting forces in Europe.

This can be done; however, it is not now being done. EUCOM appears to have persuaded itself that it has a narrow problem of one individual – Army Chief of Staff George Casey – rather than a broader pattern of disillusionment by ground force commanders in the reliability and value of participation with European militaries. The current EUCOM perspective ascribes to General Casey greater effectualness than he merits; the pressure to draw down Army forces in Europe would not have momentum without widespread support among the Army's senior leadership.

Turning this tide is essential to regaining domestic support for European stationing; Congress will not force on the Army a distribution of forces the leadership opposes when the tempo of operations is as high as the Army is currently sustaining. EUCOM will have to win the argument.

The strongest basis for continuing with significant force structure in Europe will be arguments that the stationing eases the pressures of operations for American ground forces. Five types of such argument are likely to have particular resonance:

1) the main purpose for U.S. troops in Europe is the value to us of training forces that fight with us;
2) training and operations conducted with European forces persuade Europeans to invest in military forces that reduce demand for American troops and assets;
3) without active U.S. participation, European allies will not retain military forces with the ability to contribute to wars America is fighting;
4) rather than an additional burden of deployment, stationing in Europe is welcomed by service members and their families;
5) stationing demonstrates the strong foundation of allied cohesion even when countries have differences over high politics or war strategy.

The 2010 Alliance Strategic Concept provides some opportunities to strengthen the rationale for continued European stationing of U.S. military forces: Article 5, expanded use of defense planning and nuclear burden-sharing. Increased attention to Article 5 requirements in the strategy will create momentum for revisiting both the operational concepts for defending NATO countries and the requisite forces to do so.

Commitment in the NATO Strategic Concept to "ensure maximum coherence in defense planning" becomes even more urgent in light of the significant cuts to defense spending coming to pass in most NATO countries, including the United States. NATO's defense planning process has fallen into disuse as American innovation outstripped the ability of the process to keep pace and many European allies concentrated on building processes in the European Union. The magnitude of cuts now coming into consideration will necessitate significant restructuring of defense establishments, placing a premium on collaborative planning

to identify and multi-nationally address national shortfalls and can be connected to requirements for Article 5.

The Strategic Concept has the strongest endorsement of NATO's continuing nuclear mission of any alliance document since at least 1969. In addition to validating the enduring contribution of nuclear weapons to the security of NATO nations, the NATO Strategic Concept makes a powerful case for the political value of shared responsibility for participation in nuclear missions. This commitment will be sorely tested by the choices of the German government about aircraft modernization in subsequent force structure reviews. Implementing the Strategic Concept's nuclear component in ways that expand and diversify participation will broaden the basis of collective defense and also provide EUCOM with opportunities to partner with countries involved in current and future nuclear responsibilities.

"Most Capable, Most Willing Allies?"

Differences in capabilities always existed among NATO allies, but had been growing progressively wider with the end of the Cold War, as most European countries took significant peace dividends with the dramatic improvement in their security. But by the Kosovo air war, a divergence also existed in allies' willingness to undertake the work. Not only did allies not have the weaponry to participate in strike packages, but their differing approaches to rules of engagement caused significant friction between allied militaries, while Europeans complained about American emphasis on force protection without connecting it to the lower risk tolerance for casualties by Americans (in what was for us a peripheral war).

The Bush Administration's impolitic behavior toward allies masked for some time real concerns in the American defense establishment about the ability of European allies to contribute meaningfully to the kind of military campaigns the United States envisioned in Afghanistan and other fronts of the war on terror. Europeans were genuinely mystified that the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) was not the commander of choice to run operations in Afghanistan after invocation of Article 5 on September 12th, 2001, and deeply affronted to be consigned to trailers in Tampa just like other coalition contributors. They were not persuaded by American arguments that familiarity with regional leaders and experience with current war plans were prerequisites of greater importance to the United States than European familiarity with the combatant commander. Unsaid even by Secretary Rumsfeld in his rudest moment was the quiet truth that the timeline for execution and degree of operational difficulty in the U.S. plan precluded participation by most European allies unless significant American effort were diverted to assist them. And the tasks had such a high degree of difficulty associated with them already, the American military argued for exclusion.

Iraq reinforced doubts about both the political commitment and operational contributions of allied forces. What has gotten less attention in our own analysis is the operational decisions we made that compounded difficulties, such as aggregating small contingents of forces from nineteen different countries into a multinational division under Polish command rather than partnering allied forces with American units at lower levels to spread the risk more evenly. Also underrated is the stalwart work of the German defense minister in preventing Belgium from closing its ports to U.S. transshipment and the generous support given by Germany to assist the movement of U.S. forces and protect families and installations in Germany during the war.

Still, the point is that with NATO's shift from the Cold War to engaging in actual shooting wars, the crucial constituency for stationing U.S. forces in Europe – the U.S. military – found less value than expected in European partnerships. And as the aperture widened on training foreign forces beyond coalition contributors, opportunity costs grew of training with advanced NATO militaries not participating in the wars. There are now serious questions raised in the American defense establishment about why U.S. forces remain in Europe, what value training in Europe provides, and complaints about the schedule of obligations in NATO training when U.S. forces are overwhelmingly busy and the training is not considered to enhance U.S. forces.

The fabric of military-to-military relationships has frayed, and EUCOM is losing American buy-in as the pace of operations frays U.S. patience. The argument has been disproven that U.S. presence buys European commitment to a common approach on problems we are worried enough about to commit military force. EUCOM's challenge will be to make the case for the benefits to the United States of stationing forces in Europe – and the standard for success is far higher than having the CENTCOM commander tell Europeans in private that EUCOM training adds value. It will need to be a qualitative as well as a quantitative argument. The CENTCOM and other combatant commanders will need to make that case in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill, and carry the support of the Chief of Staff of the Army and the

Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Naval Operations, that stationing and training in Europe equates to improved performance for U.S. forces. The degree of success in this area will dictate the EUCOM force structure.

As the wars have dragged on in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States has gained greater appreciation for burden-sharing, but there remains a strong skepticism that European governments and militaries are much help. An opportunity exists to make the argument anew for burden-sharing as the basis for European stationing: letting others help us train and helping us train others. The Lisbon summit may prove to be a turning point in this regard, since allies coalesced around the strategy and at least nominally agreed to support the mission until Afghanistan is capable of taking over security operations. This remains to be seen, however, as shortfalls in commitment of trainers and the schedule of departures from Afghanistan by European troops could yet reinforce the underlying aggravation.

Budget Redux

Another possible line of argument in rebuilding military confidence that European stationing adds value for U.S. forces may be presented by the stampede to defense cuts, as even the U.S. budget will come under pressure. While NATO's Defense Planning Questionnaire was never really a force sizing document for the United States, the process has come to be seen as without value. Handing the responsibility for the budget back and forth between major NATO Commanders in recent years added confusion to the burden.

A moral hazard has developed in NATO planning and operations whereby U.S. forces undertake the most dangerous work and run the greatest risks. This is a perverse incentive structure: those countries that invest least are rewarded with the least demanding obligations. European governments have made spending choices that increase their risk, and it is corrosive for the United States to continue underwriting that risk for them.

It would be an enormous benefit to the United States, and give inroads to greater Service and Congressional support for force structure in Europe, if EUCOM could begin – delicately and in a politic manner – to shift the balance such that countries with the greatest willingness to obligate money and forces for the common defense were rewarded rather than penalized. This also applies to funding of common NATO operations, where pooling of funds to support countries that volunteer to lead the NATO Response Force or participate in operations the North Atlantic Council has approved should be brought on line.

So far, the NATO defense planning process has not been enjoined to build a mosaic of forces that will minimize risk to allies of the spending cuts they are individually making. But a very strong case could and should be made that we revive the DPP for this purpose. It is unlikely this could be effectively done in either Mons or Evere, because there will not be adequate visibility into the Service programs or across allied Service components. EUCOM's Service component commanders will be essential building blocks in outreach to allied partners and in working through Service channels in the Pentagon. EUCOM should hasten to bring them into the leadership team for justifying force structure by linking it to the Service components of other allies and NATO partners to create an integral NATO force structure.

NATO IMC Atrophying

The Integrated Military Command (IMC) was for decades the spinal column of allied cooperation, but this is no longer the case. The United States tends not to send officers with the strongest operational credentials to NATO headquarters jobs, and cooperation on the wars occurs more at CENTCOM than Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). As such, NATO trap lines are less important than they once were, which increases EUCOM's importance as the link to U.S. forces and U.S. policies.

Multinational headquarters are now considered by many in the American defense establishment to be of questionable value for producing common approaches. Partly, this is the shift from multi-nationality to the spokes in a hub model of folding other countries into CENTCOM. But it is also partly because the United States is less interested than previously in operational compromises on which multi-nationality depends.

If the NATO command restructuring succeeds in producing a thirty percent reduction in NATO headquarters (which the North Atlantic Council is seeking for cost savings), that will push even more liaison and common operational work into EUCOM channels. This provides a real opportunity for EUCOM to make itself distinct from the multi-nationality of SHAPE, and produce plans and outcomes of greater value to U.S. Service components.

EUCOM should capitalize early on this opportunity by determining what functions currently undertaken in multinational NATO headquarters it wants responsibility for, and what kinds of partnerships would facilitate the performance of that work to higher levels than are currently achieved. Folding small groups of staffers from countries especially interested in or proficient at some elements of what are now undertaken multi-nationally could develop stronger partnerships and better value for the United States.

Nuclear Missions

The Alliance Strategic Concept made the strongest statement since at least the 1985 intermediate-range nuclear force deployment decisions about the importance of nuclear deterrence and nuclear risk-sharing. Ironically enough, the recommitment to an integral nuclear component of NATO strategy and force structure was precipitated by the German government seeking to shed its participation in NATO's nuclear mission. What many worried would be a cascade of European countries withdrawing from their current statue and shifting even greater responsibility to U.S.-based nuclear forces turned out to be an affirmation of the importance of risk-sharing.

A fight may yet be brewing as effort shifts from writing the Strategic Concept to determining the force structure necessary to carry out the strategy; some reports have Germany seeking to regain surreptitiously what it could not achieve boldly in the NATO Strategic Concept. This, however, is manageable by reference back to their commitment in the language of the Strategic Concept. As such, nuclear stationing is unlikely to be a politically fraught discussion and may provide substantial opportunities for further expanding the number and types of participation.

If German defense cuts exclude funding for follow-on to their Dual-Capable Aircraft, other roles should be found that keep Germany involved both operationally and technically. NATO members that joined after the Cold War have only minimal participation and would find reassuring roles that signal their inseparability. There has been a tendency in recent years to avoid nuclear strategy and force discussions out of concern they would precipitate change for the worse; the Alliance Strategic Concept proves that NATO can win the argument and should engage it more broadly.

This is especially true given the threat posed by Russian non-strategic nuclear forces. Negotiations to reduce the overwhelming Russian advantage in short-range nuclear forces are unlikely to produce short-term results, but they would draw attention to the imbalance, the lack of transparency in Russian nuclear deployments, and the commendable record of unilateral NATO reductions.

The Case

EUCOM needs to get a clearer focus on what will change attitudes in U.S. military leadership about the value of European stationing for U.S. forces. For example, the fact that Admiral Stavridis listed interagency cooperation as his top priority in last year's budget testimony sends an unintentional signal that EUCOM lacks operational seriousness. If the Service and Congressional leadership are to be persuaded to take a different direction than they are trending (which is away from continued stationing), EUCOM will need to make a more forceful case that stationing has both political and operational value for U.S. forces and the command is spending its time working with Europeans to further increase that value.

The main elements in a more persuasive case for EUCOM to make about the value of U.S. force structure in Europe would seem to be that:

- European forces would be less capable if we weren't training with them, and their governments less inclined to continue at current levels;
- Building partner capacity is DoD's top priority because it increases the capacity of others to undertake work that otherwise the United States would be doing;
- NATO commitment keeps troops in the fight longer, makes them better able to partner with us, and that is a successful burden-sharing strategy for long wars;
- Operational demands of other theaters mean those combatant commanders are unlikely to have expertise on the force capabilities and political tenor of Europeans; EUCOM has that expertise and can spend the time to pull together robust force contributions for other U.S. combatant commanders;
- Presence in Europe is essential to training European forces and to those forces feeling valued in our operational universe - which increases their commitment to our fights;

- "Rotational" forces are no substitute for consistent presence.

Practical Priorities

These arguments can be underpinned by specific EUCOM policy initiatives and choices as the NATO strategy review is translated into command and force structure and budget cuts by NATO allies become clearer. Particular opportunities exist to make a stronger case for continued stationing of U.S. forces in Europe:

- Admit that current forces and planning are inadequate for preventative Article 5; current plans would result in NATO recapturing allied territory from an aggressor;
- Bring differential risk into the discussion and begin to sensitize governments to make the connection between equipment/training and risk;
- Use NATO's force structure review to set an operationally defensible standard for "visible assurance;"
- Use the NATO defense planning process to build a cohesive alliance force structure and validate that European reductions are being made without creating gaps in essential alliance needs;
- Allied Command Operations (ACO)/Allied Command Transformation (ACT) are incapable of running the budget and planning process; EUCOM needs to define what it wants and make the system produce it;
- Multinational asset pools provide relief for needs in short supply even in U.S. forces; identify other multinational asset pools of operational value to the United States and create them;
- Become the force packager/trainer for other combatant commanders.

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