

## VKLJUČEVANJE EVROPSKIH DRŽAV V NATO: VOJAŠKI IN POLITIČNI KAZALNIKI

### NATO INTEGRATION OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: MILITARY AND POLITICAL INDICATORS

Professional article

**Povzetek** Avtor v članku analizira obseg vključenosti držav članic v Nato. Za integracijo velja, da jo sestavlja več vojaških in političnih spremenljivk, in sicer obrambni izdatki, sodelovanje v operacijah v podporo miru, procesi obrambnih reform in javno mnenje. Kazalniki kažejo precejšnje razlike med evropskimi državami, na primer na področju obrambnih izdatkov in napotitve sil v mednarodne operacije. Medtem ko Nato z usmerjanjem spodbuja vojaško in politično integracijo, pa na takšno usmerjanje in politične odločitve kot njegovo posledico močno vplivajo okoliščine na nacionalni ravni. Zaradi vedno težjih razmer na področju virov bo treba reformna prizadevanja usmeriti v zmogljivosti za doseganje določene ravni ambicij v posameznih državah, druga pa opustiti, čeprav bodo za to potrebne težke politične odločitve.

**Ključne besede** *Nato, vojaška in politična integracija, obrambni izdatki, napotitev sil v mednarodne operacije, obrambna reforma, javno mnenje.*

**Abstract** This article analyses the extent to which member states are integrated into NATO. Integration is understood to consist of several military and political variables, namely defence expenditure, participation in peace support operations, defence reform processes and public opinion. The indicators show marked differences among European countries, for example in the areas of defence spending and international deployments. While military and political integration into NATO is facilitated by guidance from NATO, the implementation of such guidance and the resulting policy choices are being influenced heavily by national level circumstances. The increasingly difficult resource situation will make it important to focus reform efforts on capabilities that are required to meet the stated level of ambition in each country and to dispense with others, even though this will necessitate difficult political decisions.

**Key words** *NATO, military and political integration, defence spending, international deployments, defence reform, public opinion.*

## Introduction

Defence reform processes, including major restructuring of the armed forces, are in full swing in virtually all NATO members.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, militaries are increasingly deployed and involved in multinational operations beyond their countries' borders. In fact, deployments have played a role in fostering military reform and governments are trying to reorient their forces to reflect a modern security environment in which diverse global threats often demand military action. Operational demands have placed considerable strain on armed forces, in particularly since they are being asked to do more with less in the context of limited financial resources. Defining the most important requirements for the armed forces and translating NATO's political and military guidance to the national level is a demanding task. NATO, in the context of its discussion about a new strategic context, will debate its underlying purpose and the decisions member governments and NATO itself would need to take in order to best serve this purpose.

Integration in this context has to be understood in a rather loose way, not as the consolidation of several parts in one, hopefully harmonious, whole. Integration, for the purposes of this article, rather reflects the political, economic, and military investment governments make into the defined priorities of a multinational organization of which they are a part, NATO. Thus, it has to do with levels of support for what NATO as a whole is trying to do. This level of effort is operationalized by means of analyzing key indicators such as defence spending, contributions to international crisis management missions, defence reform processes and levels of ambition, and public opinion to develop a picture of different European countries' military and political integration into NATO. These indicators span the realms of political, economic and resource, and military aspects and will thus provide a multidimensional understanding of the levels of integration that different member states have achieved.<sup>2</sup>

However, it should be clear that these indicators ultimately describe the output of different national political systems. This output is the result of a variety of domestic and international variables. A straightforward foreign policy analysis approach would point to the importance of domestic factors such as the societal norms regarding the armed forces, political and legal constraints on their use, competing economic priorities, and bureaucratic perspectives. On the international side, pressures arise from the nature of contemporary security risks and threats, but also from bilateral relationships with other important states or demands of other multinational frameworks such as the EU or the UN. The priorities and demands of a multinational framework such as NATO is just one of these variables (see: Giegerich 2008: 11-14). An often

<sup>1</sup> *Defence reform refers in this article to a variety of modernization and restructuring efforts which central governments have adopted to try and create armed forces better fitted to modern operational demands. They refer to doctrine, equipment, structure, organization and resource allocations. The term 'transformation' is avoided in this article because it usually refers to a particular kind of defence reform. See: Foster (2006: 41-73).*

<sup>2</sup> *This article is concerned with levels of integration of European countries. Other, non-European, members of NATO will form a reference point in the analysis. For some indicators it is not possible to generate comparable data for all countries under consideration. Therefore, the analysis has to be somewhat selective.*

observed difficulty is that multinational defence planning, force planning, and force generation processes do not necessarily penetrate the national level where decisions are ultimately taken and justified. A hypothesis would be that governments would find it much easier to invest significant resources in the priorities of a multinational organization if those priorities are closely aligned with priorities the government determined at the national level anyways. From this follows that NATO's ability to direct member states on the indicators that will be discussed below are very limited.

## 1 DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, defence spending in Europe, has steadily declined. Although the pace of decline has moderated in recent years, the overall trend remains firmly in place. NATO encourages its members to spend around 2% of GDP on defence, but very few countries either within NATO or in the broader European area achieve this target. The 2% figure is a recommendation and not an agreed target and the data below underlines that the impact of this recommendation is rather limited. In fact, in 2008, it is estimated that Bulgaria, France, Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States were the only members who spent more than 2% of GDP on defence. Because of the high spending levels of the US, NATO members still spend a total of 2.6% of GDP on defence. However, if these calculations are limited to the European members of NATO only, the percentage goes down to about 1.7% of GDP (see table 1). Per capital spending levels vary from USD 42 in Romania to USD 1,479 in the US in 2008. Six NATO members spend less than USD 100 per capita on defence in 2008 (Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey).

The fall in European defence expenditure over recent decades, as both a proportion of national output and of government spending, is a result of economic, social and demographic developments that began with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact (Giegerich and Nicoll 2008: 93-98). Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, West European governments were quick to reduce the size of their armed forces and reallocate burdensome defence budgets to other spending priorities. Following this 'peace dividend', defence budgets came under further pressure as macroeconomic and demographic developments forced many European governments to adopt fiscal measures that limited their ability to spend on discretionary sectors.

Even before the economic and financial crisis of 2008/09 unfolded, macroeconomic and demographic developments have created a fiscal environment that limits the overall availability of resources for European armed forces, the reorganisation of those forces to be better prepared to meet future threats has also added to funding challenges. Many countries, especially those moving away from conscription towards all-volunteer forces, have found it difficult to balance the various internal elements of their relatively limited budgets. As a result, personnel and other operational costs (particularly in countries involved in international operations) have steadily consumed a higher proportion of the defence budget than is desirable, while investment funding – that is, equipment procurement plus research and development

**Table 1:**  
Defence  
expenditure

Country	% GDP 2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Per cap. 2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2008 pers. exp %	2008 equip. exp %
Belgium	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	281	269	265	284	272	72.5	9.3
Bulgaria	2.5	2.5	2.8	3.0	2.6	50	52	64	72	67	58.9	21.4
Czech Rep.	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.4	114	118	120	108	112	50.2	16.0
Denmark	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3	444	423	460	441	430	49.0	19.9
Estonia	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.9	1.9	85	90	96	133	132	32.8	10.6
France	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.3	583	566	572	565	556	56.9	21.7
Germany	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	326	324	320	322	326	53.6	18.1
Greece	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.8	355	387	401	399	442	74.1	16.4
Hungary	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.2	84	85	76	79	74	48.0	15.0
Italy	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.3	353	322	287	221	209	73.5	13.6
Latvia	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.7	58	64	90	103	106	46.3	14.9
Lith.	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	66	61	66	72	73	55.1	18.6
Luxemb.	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.4	349	346	332	336	247	49.4	32.2
Netherl.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	373	373	388	391	379	50.9	18.4
Norway	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.3	741	680	664	679	634	42.2	23.2
Poland	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	92	95	100	109	120	54.0	17.6
Portugal	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	177	189	182	170	174	71.7	13.5
Romania	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.5	44	45	45	40	42	69.6	16.7
Slovakia	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	76	83	85	87	93	51.9	15.1
Slovenia	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	167	171	197	196	210	62.0	7.4
Spain	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	187	181	188	190	195	53.7	22.5
Turkey	2.4	2.1	2.2	1.8	1.8	100	96	100	87	87	50.6	23.0
UK	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.2	609	679	687	714	656	40.7	23.0
NATO Europe	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	305	307	306	301	294	Na	Na
Canada	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	289	296	305	331	346	43.0	16.9
US	4.0	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.0	1,417	1,460	1,465	1,489	1,479	29.9	27.3
NATO Total	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.6	682	699	702	709	703	Na	Na

Source: NATO 2009

Note: NATO's defines military expenditure as the cash outlays of central or federal governments to meet the costs of national armed forces.

(R&D) – has been squeezed. Among EU member states about 80% of investment funding is accounted for by the top-five spending countries: the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

In general, European governments are striving to achieve a balance within their defence budgets that would allocate about 50% of spending to personnel costs, with 20–30% each allocated to operational and maintenance costs, and procurement and R&D. In 2008, many NATO member states still were still struggling to establish the desired balance. No less than 17 of the then 26 member states spent more than 50% on personnel costs. In many cases, spending on equipment is well below 20% (see table 1). Several defence budgets have fluctuated because of changes in political leadership or government priorities. Where spending has slipped, some have acted to reverse the trend, though they have been constrained by broader economic priorities. It will take significant and sustained increases by many countries to reverse the downward real terms trend in spending on European defence, but neither European threat assessments nor the continent's political and economic climates indicated that this will occur. In the context of the global economic downturn of 2008 and 2009 any such move has become even more unlikely for the foreseeable future. Defence establishments will have to confront the reality that there will be less money for defence in the future as governments will have to reign in sectors of discretionary spending.

## 2 DEPLOYMENTS

NATO members' armed forces have been engaged in an ever-wider variety of operations involving a multitude of locations and missions. While in the 1990s operations in which European forces were involved were for the most part confined to the Balkans, the Gulf region and Afghanistan have since become major theatres for ground troops and air assets, and European warships patrol the Indian Ocean as well as the Gulf. Because the primary function of European forces is now to address international security threats, there may be no geographical limit on areas of deployment. Almost all contemporary operations are multinational, since deployments are almost always undertaken in the name of global stability and security rather than as a result of a direct threat to a single NATO country. The intention is to spread the burden, to ensure legitimacy and to help win domestic political backing for deployments by pointing to the international consensus behind them.

International operations often begin at short notice – for example the attack on Afghanistan in 2001 and, on a smaller scale, the UK operation in Sierra Leone in 2000. Natural disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake demand immediate emergency action. Reflecting such needs, individual countries – in particular Britain and France – always keep a proportion of their forces at a high state of readiness, with procedures in place to increase the readiness levels of other units if required. While the need for a rapid-reaction capability is obvious, in practice most deployments occur with plenty of notice. The countries charged

with operational planning, provision of operational headquarters and generation of international commitments to forces will find themselves under considerable time pressure. However, the majority of deployments will be rotations of already-established forces, and there is ample time for contributing countries to prepare for these.

All operations in which NATO troops have been involved since the mid 1990s, including those that entailed combat, have been conducted with limited objectives because they were not conducted in response to existential threats, in the sense that the overall survival of a country or its population was at stake. Limited objectives for military operations are a natural consequence of the political goals set by the governments that order such action – for

example, to achieve a political solution in a troubled country with a minimum of casualties among its citizens. Operations are conducted to defend interests or address international threats viewed as important by governments, but not as threats to their own sovereignty or national security. Participation is optional, and objectives are narrowly defined. This was true even of the only operation during the period under consideration undertaken in response to a direct attack on Western interests: the invasion of Afghanistan that immediately followed the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

While numbers of troops deployed show an upward trend, they remain a small percentage of overall armed forces. The NATO Istanbul summit in 2004 set deployability targets: each member state should be able to sustain 8% of ground forces on operations, and 40% should be deployable. While countries have over time displayed an ability to deploy more troops on foreign operations, very few have attained the NATO targets. Of the European members of NATO only the UK had sustained more than 8% of its active forces on operations in 2007.

NATO members who joined since 1999 have gradually sustained higher percentages of active forces on deployments annually (see tables 2 and 3).<sup>3</sup> There are two marked shifts where increases were significant. The first one occurred from 2002 to 2003 when the Iraq war and the support for US action by many of the governments in the new and soon to be NATO member countries in itself meant an increase of deployments from 1% to 1.8% of active forces. The second occurred from 2005 to 2006 when increasing commitments, for example in Afghanistan, made up much more than the withdrawals and reductions to the Iraq mission that most countries were by then engaged in. Deployments rose from 1.8% to 2.5% of active forces. Currently, about 2.6% of active forces from the twelve new member states are deployed on international missions.

<sup>3</sup> *It is near impossible to obtain precise figures on troop deployments over time for all countries and there are many different ways of counting. The number of deployed personnel varies, sometimes from month to month. The data presented in tables 2 and 3 is the best estimated based on the data available to the IISS Military Balance. It has to be stressed that the figures present a snapshot and do not represent an average number of troops deployed during a particular year. Figures do not include permanent military bases in third countries.*

**Table 2:**  
Percentage of  
active forces  
deployed on  
international  
missions

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Albania	NA	0.21	0.37	0.37	0.92	1.04	0.78	2.01	3.06
Belgium	3.97	3.72	3.73	3.76	1.67	1.88	2.12	2.82	3.22
Bulgaria	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06	1.06	1.07	1.09	1.28	1.76
Croatia	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.25	0.23	0.35	0.73	1.38
Czech Rep.	0.99	1.27	1.28	1.57	2.14	1.25	3.27	3.63	4.71
Denmark	6.22	6.23	6.01	5.33	6.74	4.34	5.23	6.32	6.22
Estonia	0.98	0.98	1.06	0.05	0.05	3.07	1.32	5.39	4.78
France	2.85	3.49	3.48	3.83	4.26	4.05	3.82	4.62	4.51
Germany	2.15	2.40	2.28	2.83	2.39	2.53	2.51	3.67	2.89
Greece	0.49	0.43	1.23	1.12	1.12	1.22	0.97	1.35	0.74
Hungary	1.09	1.84	2.41	1.99	3.11	3.25	3.79	2.18	3.12
Italy	2.33	3.27	3.11	3.54	4.77	4.06	4.27	3.39	4.16
Latvia	0.70	0.99	1.65	2.04	3.38	2.11	3.07	3.09	2.10
Lithuania	0.34	0.56	0.26	0.93	1.37	1.65	1.58	1.85	1.70
Luxembourg	2.99	2.56	2.56	2.56	6.77	6.44	6.11	4.33	5.00
Netherlands	3.07	5.44	5.09	6.08	5.26	4.26	4.23	4.52	4.10
Norway	2.64	5.07	4.24	4.38	4.36	4.89	2.84	2.88	4.22
Poland	0.92	0.95	0.88	1.12	2.37	2.75	1.49	3.00	2.52
Portugal	1.29	3.23	3.61	3.21	3.20	2.88	1.59	1.81	1.58
Romania	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.91	1.61	1.60	2.20	2.27	2.02
Slovakia	0.08	0.35	1.85	2.45	3.87	3.81	2.82	4.16	3.09
Slovenia	0.16	0.34	1.17	0.96	1.30	2.75	3.74	4.76	3.31
Spain	0.86	1.51	1.75	1.60	2.76	1.51	1.66	2.31	1.85
Turkey	0.28	0.37	0.42	0.69	0.69	0.45	0.41	0.39	0.62
UK	7.24	3.60	4.12	2.96	8.31	5.56	6.65	8.64	8.24

Source: IISS 1999; 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008.

**Table 3:**  
Deployment  
on international  
missions

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Albania	101	101	101	101	203	224	167	222	338
Belgium	1659	1461	1471	1475	683	768	785	1118	1279
Bulgaria	39	36	42	43	543	546	554	654	719
Croatia	0	10	15	15	53	48	72	152	245
Czech Republic	574	734	684	775	1219	562	729	899	1089
Denmark	1512	1358	1287	1211	1543	920	1108	1366	1409
Estonia	47	47	47	3	3	153	65	221	196
France	9048	10261	9528	9981	11025	10483	9733	11766	11497
Germany	7154	7693	7026	8368	6810	7203	7142	9008	7045
Greece	811	690	1961	1989	1989	2085	1590	1992	1165
Hungary	475	806	816	665	1039	1049	1224	705	1010
Italy	6177	8203	7171	7674	9537	7868	8159	6482	7717
Latvia	40	50	107	112	165	103	161	165	120
Lithuania	41	71	32	125	174	223	214	222	236
Luxembourg	23	23	23	23	60	58	55	39	35
Netherlands	1733	2827	2569	3015	2792	2265	2246	2400	1871
Norway	818	1353	1133	1166	1161	1301	734	673	668
Poland	2205	2058	1812	1823	3856	3887	2113	4246	3205
Portugal	640	1442	1572	1401	1438	1294	715	795	680
Romania	205	215	90	905	1569	1558	2137	1578	1503
Slovakia	37	137	610	641	852	769	569	633	530
Slovenia	15	31	89	86	85	180	245	312	189
Spain	1600	2500	2505	2856	4158	2270	2439	3400	2762
Turkey	1811	2263	2153	3554	3546	2307	2104	2008	3171
UK	15369	7644	8702	6226	17669	11553	14421	16509	14883

Source: IISS, 1999; 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008.

For the deployments that the new member states undertake, NATO has clearly developed into the dominant framework (see table 4). This reflects a broader Europe-wide trend. However, it is remarkable that, in 2008, only Albania (not yet a NATO member in 2008), Poland, Romania and Slovakia deployed less than 60% of their troops abroad through NATO.<sup>4</sup> Even they deployed a majority or near majority in KFOR and ISAF with 49%, 57% and 53% respectively. Four of the new members had deployed 85% or more of their troops on missions in KFOR or ISAF in 2008:

<sup>4</sup> Croatia, although not yet a NATO member in 2008, had some 66% of its forces abroad deployed in ISAF that year.

**Table 4:**  
Dominance  
of NATO  
Framework  
for  
Deployments

Country	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008	
	KFOR	ISAF																
Albania	0	NA	0	0	0	30	0	30	0	81	0	22	0	22	0	138	0	140
% of depl.	0	NA	0	0	0	29.7	0	14.8	0	36.2	0	13.2	0	10	0	40.8	0	30.5
Bulgaria	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	5	37	46	150	46	401	51	460
% of depl.	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.2	0.9	6.7	7	22.9	6.4	55.8	6.5	58.5
Croatia	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	30	0	22	0	45	0	120	0	199	0	280
% of depl.	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	56.6	0	45.8	0	62.5	0	78.9	0	81.2	0	65.9
Czech Rep.	160	NA	175	0	400	0	409	133	408	19	500	17	501	103	500	435	400	415
% of depl.	21.8	NA	25.6	0	51.6	0	33.6	10.9	72.6	3.4	68.6	2.3	55.7	11.5	45.9	39.9	47.3	49.1
Estonia	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	98	7	25	7	26	120	28	128	30	120
% of depl.	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	64.1	4.6	38.5	10.8	11.8	54.3	14.3	65.3	15.6	62.5
Hungary	325	NA	325	0	325	0	325	0	294	130	484	187	268	175	484	225	317	240
% of depl.	40.3	NA	39.8	0	48.9	0	31.3	0	28	12.4	39.5	15.3	38	24.8	47.9	22.3	37.5	28.4
Latvia	10	NA	10	0	15	0	11	8	0	2	10	28	9	35	18	97	19	70
% of depl.	20	NA	9.3	0	13.4	0	6.7	4.8	0	1.9	6.2	17.4	5.5	21.2	15	80.8	20.2	74.5
Lithuania	30	NA	30	0	29	0	30	4	30	6	30	120	32	130	30	195	34	200
% of depl.	42.3	NA	93.8	0	23.2	0	17.2	2.3	13.5	2.7	14	56.1	14.4	58.6	12.7	82.6	14	82.3
Poland	763	NA	532	0	574	0	574	0	574	22	312	3	312	10	312	937	271	1130
% of depl.	37.1	NA	29.4	0	31.5	0	14.9	0	14.8	0.6	14.8	0.1	7.3	0.2	9.7	29.2	9.5	39.5
Romania	0	NA	0	0	221	48	226	34	226	32	150	550	146	558	153	536	150	725
% of depl.	0	NA	0	0	24.4	5.3	14.1	2.2	14.5	2.1	7	25.7	9.3	35.4	10.2	35.7	9.7	47
Slovakia	40	NA	40	0	40	0	100	0	100	17	111	17	132	57	134	59	196	70
% of depl.	29.2	NA	6.6	0	6.2	0	11.7	0	13	2.2	19.5	3	20.9	9	25.3	11.1	38.8	13.9
Slovenia	0	NA	6	0	6	0	2	0	2	18	92	58	158	54	92	42	360	70
% of depl.	0	NA	19.4	0	6.7	0	2.3	0	2.4	21.2	51.1	32.2	64.5	22	48.7	22.2	72.4	14.1
Total	1328	NA	1118	0	1610	48	1677	179	1732	287	1719	1024	1630	1392	1797	3055	1828	3500
% all depl.	31.7	NA	25.8	0	31.1	0.9	17.6	1.9	19.2	3.2	21.5	12.8	16.9	14.4	20.4	34.7	21.7	41.6

Source: IISS, 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009.

Czech Republic (96%), Latvia (95%), Lithuania (96%), and Slovenia (86%). The overriding importance of the Alliance as a mechanism for deployments is thus evident. In more general terms, deployments by European countries have definitively shifted 'out-of-area'.

### 3 DEFENCE REFORMS: CAPABILITY PRIORITIES AND LEVELS OF AMBITIONS

Since the end of the Cold War, the purpose of NATO nations' armed forces has changed considerably. The defence reforms launched in virtually every member state were designed at least in part to increase force-projection capabilities – the capacity of the military to be deployed on operations abroad. Both NATO and the EU have launched institutional initiatives aimed at guiding member states towards capability profiles that more adequately reflect the demands and requirements of contemporary operations. In general, however, the broad capabilities needed can be inferred from the characteristics of modern operations.

The ability to deploy means, first, having troops and equipment available, trained and ready, and second, the means to transport them. Most national reform processes have focused on increasing the proportion of armed forces that can be used in operations abroad, including those available at high readiness. Global participation in operations demands the ability to train for and operate in a variety of weather conditions. Harsh climates and challenging terrain cause high wear and tear on equipment, forcing repair or replacement sooner than planned. Access to reliable strategic air/sealift is fundamental to Europe's future as a strategic actor.

Interoperability – the ability of armed forces to cooperate and act with the services of other states at tactical and strategic levels – is a necessity when almost all operations are multinational, but is difficult to achieve. Among the areas in which common understanding is needed are the ability to operate together and communicate effectively in the field; adequate support and logistics; and rules of engagement, in which national differences of approach can cause problems for operational commanders. NATO members have benefited from the organisation's focus on harmonisation and common standards since its establishment in 1949. NATO coordinates and defines standardisation efforts throughout the alliance to increase interoperability of NATO forces and ensure the effective use of resources. The NATO Standardisation Organisation (NSO) aims to eliminate duplication and fragmentation in all aspects relevant to the Alliance, including operational tasks, procurement and research. However, operational experience has revealed limits. For example, although the allies who deployed Chinook helicopters on operations in Afghanistan, each operates a different configuration, limiting the degree to which they can be used interchangeably. Spare parts cannot be exchanged, and maintenance crews from one nation would not be able to service helicopters from another.

As noted above, crisis-management operations have shown a heightened need for rapid reaction. Both NATO and the EU have launched initiatives in this area, the fruits of which have yet to be seen in terms of actual deployments. The effort to make more personnel available at short notice will lead to an improvement in the general capabilities and usability of a nation's forces. It therefore has a value beyond the increased speed with which troops can be made available.

Among the tasks undertaken on modern operations, the same force may need, for example, simultaneously to conduct peacekeeping, counter-insurgency, stabilisation operations, intelligence-gathering and training. The many resulting requirements include a high level of mobility in theatre (operational experience has revealed deficiencies in this regard, particularly in helicopters); the ability to carry out urban operations; force protection that keeps casualties among intervening forces to a minimum (several countries, including Britain, France, Poland and the Netherlands, have acted to improve armoured vehicles following experience in Afghanistan and Iraq); surveillance and precision targeting. Soldiers must build relations with the local population both as part of the battle for 'hearts and minds' and to collect intelligence. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq seek to deliver a mix of security and reconstruction, intended to provide the basis for a long-term peaceful future. However, there is a risk of a lack of cohesion as separate national units enact differing national visions of this concept.

NATO countries contribute troops to more than one international mission at any given time. Operations, as already noted, often last a long time. This puts strains on several elements of defence establishments. For example, a sense among military personnel that operational tours are too frequent may undermine retention of personnel and thus limit the numbers available for deployment, especially in branches that develop skills attractive to private-sector employers. All foreign deployments must be supported by logistics chains providing fuel, food and medical supplies and maintenance, repair and replacement of equipment. These requirements are substantial and form a vital part of each nation's capability. NATO has made considerable efforts to expand communal capabilities in this area, and in 2008 the EU's European Defence Agency, EDA, launched an initiative intended to boost the mechanisms for outsourcing logistics.

At the Riga summit NATO leaders endorsed the Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG) setting out further capabilities priorities for the next 10–15 years (NATO 2006). The CPG defines a capabilities profile around ten requirements: to deploy and sustain expeditionary operations over a long distance with little or no host-nation support; to generate adaptable and flexible high-readiness forces; to counter terrorism and support consequence management; to protect critical information systems against cyber attack; to be able to conduct operations in which NATO forces have to defend against CBRN and ballistic missiles; to conduct operations in demanding geographical and climatic environments; to identify and counter hostile elements in urban environments, minimising collateral damage; to improve NATO's ability to conduct operations in which a comprehensive approach, including coordination with a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors, needs to be implemented; to be able to conduct military support for stabilisation missions including security sector reform, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of military personnel, and humanitarian relief; and to achieve the greatest practical level of interoperability and standardisation among allies and partner forces. The CPG also defined as top priorities the ability to deploy

and sustain joint expeditionary forces; high-readiness forces; the ability to address asymmetric threats; information superiority; and a capability of comprehensive action and coordination with other actors.

The armed forces of all NATO countries remain in a state of transition. In almost all cases, key elements of planned reforms have yet to be implemented. This is unsurprising in light of the fact that major changes in defence posture require acquisition or modernisation of equipment. Procurement of defence equipment takes time, and the process is hindered in all countries by defence budget constraints. A number of reform programmes also involve substantial changes to military structures, including shifts away from conscription towards all-professional volunteer forces. New rationales for armed forces, and new types of missions and tasks, involve changes to training and exercises. All this takes time. A further factor has been the challenge of simultaneously undertaking deployments and reforms intended to make forces more deployable. Finally, successful defence reform requires political will to drive through changes that may mean loss of jobs and skills as well as significant expenditure on new capabilities.

The overriding priority of most governments is to make their forces more flexible and to increase force-projection and rapid-reaction capacities, but their threat perceptions differ and they are at different stages in the process. While some nations have embraced a pure expeditionary-warfare model, it is more common to adopt a hybrid posture in which the armed forces are structured for roles in both territorial defence and operational deployments.

The central drivers of defence reform are, in general, perceived developments in the international security environment and obligations within NATO or the EU. All governments acknowledge the risks posed by asymmetric and transnational threats such as international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), failed states and organised crime. For several, however, this security agenda is overshadowed by conventional direct threats. Some northern and eastern European governments want to hedge against possible future developments in Russia, even if it is not currently perceived as a direct military threat. Other European countries – including NATO allies Greece and Turkey – have unresolved territorial disputes and view territorial defence as the prime concern of the armed forces. Commitments to participation in international crisis-management operations are an important but secondary priority.

Meanwhile, several countries have recent experience of instability and conflict and this inevitably influences their threat perceptions. These nations are also all driven by a strong desire to join NATO and the EU, and this has been a strong factor in building institutions and carrying out defence reforms to provide troops for multinational operations. In framing defence policies, countries must strike a balance between guarding against low-probability but high-impact events that would demand territorial or collective defence, and the high probability that demands will continue to be

placed on them for participation in international operations. Very few governments are willing to base defence reform unequivocally on the demands of crisis-management missions. But, in practice, most have taken the view that they would have a warning time of several years before emerging conventional military threats to their territory would come to a head.

Most European NATO governments have therefore made creating more effective and more deployable forces the priority. They have reduced the size of their militaries, and many have moved to all-professional forces and phased out conscription. They put a premium on quality over quantity, seeking to do more with less.

Capability choices expressed in defence-reform documents generally reflect multinational force goals as determined by NATO. In particular, smaller countries that recently joined NATO (and the EU) are keen to move from national to multinational planning assumptions, because the ability to rely on allies for some capability that would otherwise have to be provided on the national level frees up resources and opens the way to specialisation.

In comparison to other European members of NATO, the national levels of ambition in the new member states are relatively well defined. Of course, this statement has to be immediately qualified by the fact that for most countries these levels of ambition are aspirational, i.e. describing a planned ambition, the realization of which is often still years away. The national level of ambition here refers to a state's expression of the maximum military contribution it intends to make to international crisis management missions. This is of course distinct from the effort a country anticipates it would make in a territorial- or collective-defence scenario. Given that international crisis-management missions are not conducted to combat a direct existential threat to the contributing nation, governments will only ever make a part of a country's total capability available for them. The following paragraphs outline levels of ambition for those of the new member states in which publicly available documents paint a relatively precise picture.

According to the 2005 Strategic Defence Review, Croatia aims to be able to deploy up to 700 troops on international missions by 2010. Between 2011 and 2015 the number is set to increase again, and the range of operations in which Croatian forces can become involved in will be broadened. Before 2011, these will be limited to low- and medium-intensity operations due to existing training and equipment shortfalls. Croatia aims to have up to 10% of its active duty personnel available at 5-day readiness once its ongoing defence reform process is completed and a new force structure is in place (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia 2005; 2006).

In 2005, the Czech Republic defined its level of ambition for crisis management as participation in a peace-support operation with a mechanised battalion and a special company (up to 1,000 personnel in total), sustainable for a year with rotation at six

months, plus deployment of another contingent of 250 personnel for six months without rotation on a humanitarian or rescue mission. It also offered an alternative contribution, whereby the armed forces should be able to deploy one brigade-sized army task force (up to 3,000 personnel) for six months and an equivalent air-force contingent for three months (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic 2005).

In Estonia, the level of ambition, to be attainable by 2010, was defined in 2005 as a 'sustainable' (i.e., sustainable for a year or longer) deployment of one infantry company, a Special-Forces platoon, several military observers, a staff element and two vessels. By 2008, up to 250 personnel and one mine-countermeasure vessel were to be available for long-term deployment, the personnel figure rising to 350 by 2010. The maximum number of Estonian troops available for short-term deployment is 850. Regarding concurrency, Estonia aims to be able to send a contingent on a short-term mission while maintaining one sustainable deployment (Government of the Republic of Estonia 2005).

Lithuania's goal is to deploy larger, self-sustaining units, while simultaneously reducing the number of missions in which Lithuanian forces are involved. From 2015, a 950-strong battalion task force, including combat support and combat service support, plus a 50-strong Special-Forces squadron, is to be sustainable with full rotation in one operation. As an alternative, Lithuania also aims to make available three specialist units, each of company strength, for simultaneous deployment. The country aims to be able to participate in up to three international deployments in addition to up to two domestic-assistance missions.

From 2015 on, Romania aims to make available either one division with one combat brigade for six months without rotation; or two combat brigades in either the same or separate operations for six months without rotation; or three battalions in either the same or separate operations for up to 12 months, with rotation after six months (Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania 2006).

Slovenia seeks to have the capability to sustain one long-term, medium-scale operation at company level and one long-term small-scale operation at platoon level until 2010. Between 2010 and 2015, the Slovenian government aims to be able to commit one company-level unit to two medium-scale operations for a long-term period and one platoon-level unit to a long-term small-scale operation. Alternatively, a battalion-sized unit could be deployed to a large-scale operation for up to six months. From 2015, the commitment of one company to two long-term, medium scale operations and one platoon to one long-term small-scale operation is planned, or alternatively one battalion to one large-scale operation for up to 12 months (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia 2007). For all countries in the alliance, the current economic woes will make it harder to meet their targets in defence reform and level of ambition terms.

## 4 PUBLIC OPINION

Given that NATO member states are liberal democracies, the policy choices of governing elites will have to draw on significant levels of public support if they are to be sustainable. How public opinion evaluates NATO membership and the roles the alliance is supposed to play is thus another important factor of political integration into NATO. Public opinion can be expected to be influenced by a variety of macro- and micro-level factors (Kostadinova 2000). On the one hand, the shared historical experience of a society and the way in which domestic political institutions are set up and deal with defence policy questions can be expected to be among the macro-level influences. At the same time, individual factors such as political beliefs, levels of education and other socio-economic factors will play a role as well.

The influence of public opinion, especially on defence policy questions, is difficult to assess. On the one hand it is not clear whether policy-makers are leading public opinion or are being led by it. On the other hand, most members of the public have very little detailed knowledge about defence matters and are probably not affected by defence questions in their daily lives. Hence, they will find it difficult to form opinions on specific issues. Clearly, these limitations have to be kept in mind and public opinion data has thus to be interpreted with the necessary care.

Table 5 draws together data on several important questions. Unfortunately, the relevant data does not exist for all NATO member states so that this discussion will only represent a partial picture. On the question of whether NATO is essential to the security of the respective countries, the view that it is essential has lost ground between 2002 and 2008 even though there are signs that it is recovering again among European members of NATO. Differences among the members are quite strong on this matter. Whereas 70% of the Dutch respondents in 2008 were of the opinion that NATO was essential, only 38% of Turks polled agreed. Whereas only 19% of Romanians argued that NATO was no longer essential, a full 41% of Italians were of the same opinion. Clearly, country level differences exist which points to the explanatory power of macro-level factors in public opinion.

Questions relating to burden-sharing among allies provide another measure of political integration that is reflected in table 5. For example, whereas 82% of Americans, Brits, and Dutchmen polled argued that all NATO members should contribute troops if NATO conducts a military operation, only 28% of Turks, 37% of Slovaks, and 42% of Bulgarians were of the same opinion. Naturally, the US, the UK, and the Netherlands were heavily engaged in demanding operations in Afghanistan at the time which will have heightened perceptions of disproportionate efforts being undertaken by some countries but not others. It is very interesting to see that the issue of burden-sharing is almost identical in terms of financial aspects. Here 82% of Americans, 80% of Brits and 82% of Dutchmen agreed that all NATO members should contribute to the financial costs of a NATO military operation even if not all contribute troops. Only 27% of Turks, 37% of Slovaks and 41% of

**Table 5:**  
Public  
Opinion and  
NATO

	USA	FRA	GER	UK	IT	NL	PL	PT	SP	SK	TR	BG	RO
<b>Some people say that NATO is still essential to our country's security. Others say it is no longer essential. Which of these views is closer to your own?</b>													
Still essential 2008	59	62	62	68	55	70	51	60	60	47	38	54	57
2007	60	55	55	64	55	66	46	59	49	44	35	58	62
2006	61	59	56	62	52	66	48	56	49	45	44	58	63
2005	60	58	61	65	52	68	47	65	48	53	52	Na	Na
2004	62	57	70	70	60	71	52	67	55	47	53	Na	Na
2002	56	61	74	76	68	74	64	na	na	na	na	Na	Na
No longer essential 2008	32	34	36	25	41	26	32	30	35	27	32	25	19
2007	29	36	41	26	39	27	39	28	45	30	34	19	16
2006	29	36	41	30	41	29	37	31	45	36	35	22	16
2005	26	34	36	24	43	27	36	25	40	27	32	Na	Na
2004	28	34	27	22	31	24	32	18	34	37	26	Na	Na
2002	30	33	22	20	27	25	26	Na	Na	Na	Na	Na	Na
<b>To what extent do you tend to agree or disagree that ALL NATO member countries should contribute troops if the NATO alliance decides to take military action?</b>													
Strongly agree	54	19	22	50	17	53	19	31	24	9	11	17	25
Somewhat agree	28	43	33	32	34	28	38	38	32	28	18	25	39
Somewhat disagree	7	21	27	9	26	8	21	12	19	33	14	24	19
Strongly disagree	5	15	15	6	22	8	10	14	22	15	23	23	7
<b>To what extent do you agree or disagree that ALL NATO member countries should share in the financial costs of a NATO military action even when they do not contribute troops?</b>													
Strongly agree	60	24	32	56	18	59	20	29	28	9	9	16	26
Somewhat agree	22	38	30	24	33	23	37	35	32	28	18	25	42
Somewhat disagree	7	19	20	9	25	8	22	15	17	32	14	22	16
Strongly disagree	6	17	16	8	22	8	10	15	20	20	23	25	6

Source: Transatlantic Trends, 2008.

Bulgarians agreed. Thus on the burden-sharing question there are two groupings with the remaining allies falling somewhere in between. Since data does not exist for all members it is not possible to draw any definite conclusions about the composition of those groupings. However, it would be appropriate to suggest that low levels of support for burden-sharing within the alliance and significant support for the position that NATO is no longer essential for a country's security would point to low levels of political integration in NATO.

**Conclusion** A rise in demand for military operations and a fall in resources, the latter likely to become even more pronounced in the coming years, mean the day has long gone when NATO countries could afford to maintain large and static military establishments. The proportion made available for use in international missions remains on average low among the countries that joined NATO since 1999 and defence budgets are severely stretched. While in principle this situation is mirrored among most of the 'older' Alliance member states, the challenge is particularly daunting for some of the recent additions to NATO's membership roster. Efforts are underway in each country and progress is being made. The increasingly difficult resource situation will make it all the more important to focus reform efforts on capabilities that are required to meet the stated level of ambition in each country and to dispense with others, even though this will necessitate difficult political decisions. With regards to the different military and political indicators for integration discussed in this article it emerges that the implementation of NATO guidance and the policy choices that result are being influenced heavily by national level circumstances. Thus, NATO has limited means to direct the process after countries join. The increasingly difficult resource situation will make it important to focus reform efforts on capabilities that are required to meet the stated level of ambition in each country and to dispense with others, even though this will necessitate difficult political decisions.

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