

The Military Balance 2004•2005 Editor's Foreword

Since the end of the Cold War, traditional military thinking and defence planning methodologies have hampered governments' abilities to deal with increasingly diverse threats posed by failed states and non-state actors – as illustrated by 9/11. Moreover, for some countries, progressing defence concepts remains hostage to the will and political considerations of governments, thus limiting their ability to respond to new challenges in an appropriate and timely fashion.

The Military Balance 2004•2005's analysis shows that while this trend still exists in many states, others are beginning to find ways of working more effectively against the plethora of global threats which are facilitated by globalisation, trade liberalisation, and weak borders. Moreover, there are signs of greater military cooperation between countries which historically have been adversaries, thereby pointing to the possible emergence of new trends in defence cooperation.

In 2004 defence planning – the structure, equipping and employment of armed forces – is complicated by the amorphous nature of security threats which challenge the sovereignty of states as traditionally understood, and which have increased in number. New approaches to the way states respond are being sought by governments as they grapple with these increasingly overlapping dangers. Terrorism, illicit trafficking, and organised crime are tightly interwoven, and the rising number of militarily capable non-state armed groups (see pp. 362–377) is a growing challenge as many of these groups cooperate commercially as well as militarily. The challenge for states, therefore, is how to integrate their armed forces, border control forces, and police forces into an architecture capable of reacting to and managing 21st century threats in an effective and seamless fashion.

In this respect, for some, the concept of common security agencies and common security budgets is being given serious thought, as is the possibility of some form of common doctrine to help national armed forces – each with their own traditions and experience – cope with the great variety of tasks that they now face. Some states are developing transformation programmes of their own to bring a networked approach to defence and security; although networked national systems will be limited in their effect unless they integrate and are compatible with those of other states. The more developed programmes increasingly concentrate on space-based systems (see pp. 253–260) and attempt to incorporate all government security agencies in a network-centric matrix which should enable seamless operations at an international level.

To facilitate a comprehensive network-centric approach, it is necessary to identify the separate capabilities of national armed forces so that they can become interoperable. In Europe, within NATO and through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) mechanism, some work has been done to identify common capabilities. Much more, however, needs to be done if global capabilities are to be assessed, and if the military deployments of some countries are to be of more than just symbolic value. Increasing joint military exercises between countries shows, however, that some progress is being made (see p. 30, 39, 102 and 224). Some new regional military organisations, notably in Africa (p. 219), are also emerging.

The change in traditional alliance structures and the advent of multinational alliances of convenience, or 'coalitions of the willing', assembled to generate a sufficient number of troops for operations, has resulted in the grouping of a large and diverse number of temporary 'allies'. This has presented new challenges in terms of compatibility and interoperability. However, even among NATO allies and coalition partners, interoperability is proving a complex issue – and not only for reasons of technological compatibility; assuring 'psychological compatibility' between allies also demands a degree of flexibility which is currently lacking. The US, for example, is faced with interoperability problems with some of its allies because its emphasis on 'warfighting', which dwells heavily on force protection, does not fit easily with Peace Support Operations or those defined by the Petersberg tasks. The Iraq coalition lacks cohesion among the 10–15 contributing states that make up a multi-national division (see p. 111). Not least among their limitations is the lack of a common operational language.

Nevertheless, those countries which are bonded by NATO membership arguably show greater operational efficiency and cohesion. The same operational cohesion was seen in Afghanistan in *Operation Enduring Freedom*, and within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) where the benefits of the NATO alliance with its common procedures and standards are self-evident. It is unfortunate that these considerable practical advantages have been largely forgotten in the political wrangling over the alliance's future.

Another challenge for planners that has been exemplified by military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is how to cope with adversaries' increasing use of asymmetrical methods. An important lesson has been that technology is not the key response to this aspect of warfare. Furthermore, the response of a technologically inferior force to overwhelming technological superiority is likely to be one that uses increasingly sophisticated, but unpredictable, asymmetrical methods. In coping with this aspect of combat – which is not new – traditional conventional tactics and methods still have a place on the battlefield, particularly in terms of the collection of human intelligence and policing. Moreover, in post-conflict environments, the dominant security authority has to take responsibility for myriad security roles in the absence of strong local indigenous structures, and has to plan accordingly, in advance of the operation. Finally, in the post-conflict phase and in peace support operations, the 'hearts and minds' of a population become the 'territory' that has to be captured and held. Governments need to realise that such operations are manpower intensive, as the human component replaces the weapon system as the key enabler to success.

Christopher Langton
Editor, *The Military Balance*
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