

Click to read: NATO Defence College Occasional Papers Nos. 9: review: 'Security Strategies and their Implications for NATO's

Strategic Concept': November 2005

This Occasional Paper connects with NDC Occasional Paper No 5 published in March 2005 entitled 'Security Strategies: NATO, the United States, and the European Union' that was reviewed in summer 2005 (reference BR 07). It contains three presentations delivered in Sept 2005 at the 52nd Anciens' Annual Conference and Seminar on the subject of Security Strategies. A major issue for the conference was the impact that the evolution of the US and EU strategies may have on the Alliance current strategic concept.

1. The first paper is by Karl-Heinz Kamp who is the Security Coordinator of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and addresses the need to adapt NATO's strategic concept. He argues that the recovery from one of most severe transatlantic crises is an opportunity for reflection on NATO's strategic and conceptual foundations. He identifies three questions namely, what are NATO's key internal challenges and why is there a need for a debate on strategy and principles; why does a new Strategic Concept appear to be the solution for the problems identified; and what will be the content of a new alliance strategy?

In terms of internal challenges, the author claims that the "old" European members of NATO are increasingly less committed to the alliance as it is no longer the core of their security policy.

However, he fails to recognise that some "old" nations do not support a defence role for the EU, whilst others see the EU providing European political leadership and action separate to NATO because that will marginalise the role of the US.

The second assertion is that NATO no longer provides the primary forum for political consensus on security issues. In some respects this again reflects the tensions between nations over the NATO/EU role on political issues whilst also failing to acknowledge the increased role of the UN in regional conflicts post Cold War. Quite rightly the paper notes that NATO has been slowly improving its military capabilities whilst there is a waning consensus on how and for what purpose they will be used.

NATO's current Strategic Concept was agreed in 1999 but the author argues that the world has changed significantly since then not least because of the increased NATO membership and, because both the US and the EU have developed new security strategies post 9/11, then NATO needs to follow suit. There are dangers in such an initiative as it might serve to emphasise the divisions between member nations if forced to clarify their positions. Although the debate on that issue might raise NATO's political profile, the exposure could equally well lead to a greater and more serious transatlantic disagreement.

The remainder of the paper assumes that NATO will undertake this strategic debate and that it will be influenced by the dominance of the US in military, political and economic fields whilst the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) fails to provide a counterbalance due to lack of financial commitment by EU states. The author suggests an exemplary list of reasonably obvious questions that a new Strategic Concept will have to address, the most important being that of military pre-emption. The problem with pre-emption is mainly a legal one in that it is

contrary to

international law. The UN Charter is a corner stone of international law but it was written when the security threat was of a much different complexion to that faced today and that terms now in common use e.g. rogue states, are not mentioned or defined in the Charter. Similarly, it does not address when humanitarian concerns might override state sovereignty. Consequently, interpretations of these new terms lead to legal uncertainties that are not conducive to military employment. The author suggests that this should be the subject of political debate in the context of NATO's strategic foundations whereas it might be better argued that it is a matter for the UN itself. Overall, this paper has adopted a NATO-centric approach and as such could be accused of putting forward a naive view of the importance of NATO's political role in the post 9/11 world. A more informed view might be that NATO should focus on the role of being a honest broker to accommodate the political differences between the US and EU national strategies when the employment of NATO forces is being debated. That said it does articulate the shortcomings of the UN Charter and its inadequacy to deal with current security problems.

2. The second paper is by Robert Art of Bradeis University USA who reviews the causes and main elements of the 2002 US National Security Strategy (NSS), a brief analysis of the costs and benefits of the execution of this strategy and offers some guidelines for the preventive and pre-emptive uses of force. The author is a critic of the 2002 NSS and of the Iraq war, although his discussion of the first two elements does not reflect this view to any depth. His comments on the roots of the NSS do not reflect what must have been a deep and rigorous debate within the Administration but relies on his personal experience and public statements made by President Bush. His balance sheet of the Iraq war is more compelling and he recognizes the conflation by Bush of pre-emption and prevention. He sees the first potential benefit as being the removal of Saddam Hussein which is not contentious. However, he deliberately dilutes a weak argument for the second possible benefit of loosening up the Arab world politically, specifically Lebanon, Egypt and Libya, by arguing that these effects could have been achieved despite the Iraq war.

The author justifies his critical position by looking at the costs of the war that he claims outweigh the benefits. These include diverting resources and assets from Afghanistan and the war against terrorism before that war was finished as well as overstretching the US military (although US defence policy is to be able to fight two separate wars concurrently); strengthening the terrorists by fulfilling Al Qaeda's prediction of attacking another Islamic country; encouraging Iran and North Korea to pursue nuclear weapons programmes as a counterbalance to US power; lowered US standing and prestige in the world at large and finally fractured relations with the European allies. These 'costs' are not supported by robust arguments and the US establishment has on occasions argued a much stronger case against them which has been ignored.

In taking a stand in support of both preventative war and pre-emption as policy tools, he offers six guidelines for the use of both. Unfortunately, these guidelines are not original and in some cases are statements of the obvious. That said, perhaps the ultimate guideline should be writ large on the wall of all defence policy makers and that is "do not make a preventative war a publicly announced strategy".

In summary, this paper is of interest but does not provide the expected insight into the fundamental thinking that underpinned the 2002 NSS. Instead it concentrates on the context of the Iraq war. In many respects the paper's arguments are superficial and should have been

more forthright in the face of widely circulated official US statements on many of the topics addressed.

3. The final paper is by Gustav Lindstrom of the EU Institute for Security Studies who reviews the background to the EU Security Strategy (ESS), the developments in European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and considers whether the ESS is converging with the US NSS. The Mars and Venus of the title is a reference to Robert Kagan's article in Policy Review (Jun 02) where the Americans are Mars (the god of war) and Europeans are Venus (the god of love). The inference is that to resolve strategic issues the US will use hard power whereas the Europeans will use soft power. The paper first sets the scene with a brief background of the ESS before

going on the recent operational developments in the ESDP and then considers whether the EU is evolving to become 'less Venus and more Mars'. In reviewing the ESS the author quite rightly warns against misinterpreting those aspects of the ESS - the five key threats - that are apparently similar to the NSS, as perceptions are different depending upon which side of the Atlantic you are standing. Most importantly there is a semantic difference between the US waging a "war" against terrorism whilst Europeans see themselves "fighting" against terrorism. In comparing US and European operations it is clear that the operations are quite different in nature and scale in that US forces are engaged principally on high intensity operations whilst European operations tend to be of crisis management and peacekeeping nature i.e. 'Venus like'. However, the author identifies three examples that give European operations the potential to become more 'Mars like'. The most important is the EU-NATO permanent agreement, however, he omits to mention the fragility of the EU relationship with NATO that does not enjoy the fullhearted support by all EU member states. The second is the Civil-Military Cell and Operations Centre which is due to become operational this year which it is claimed will give the EU its own operational headquarters. In reality, to be an effective headquarters capable of controlling operations requires a range of quite comprehensive support facilities that are ready in-place - there is no mention as to whether this vital support is available. The third element was the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004 to help member states to enhance the efficiency of their defence spending. However, whilst this may well improve European interoperability and operational capability it is not explained how the EDA might make EU operations more 'Mars like'.

The paper recognises that essentially these examples promote the capacity to act like Mars and do not necessarily mean that the EU will act like Mars. At this point it avoids the main policy issue as to whether there is the collective will (through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)) to become more Mars than Venus. Instead it offers a short discussion of doctrine and capability development and alludes to improved interoperability with friends and allies. It is evident that the ESS is yet to become a sufficiently mature strategy that will clearly define whether Europeans are becoming more Mars than the present Venus.