



Officer Education and Training in the
21st Century:

*Nourishing Effective Innovative
Military Structures*

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The Challenge:

- During the next decades we are likely to remain in a de facto state of war with a dedicated, often non-state based enemy, a war where ready, deployable expeditionary forces may be essential in some phases and theatres of conflict
- We – NATO Europe and PfP states – have 3.3 million paid personnel in the Armed Forces – of these maybe 4% are available for deployment. The forces are dominated by heavy forces with obsolete equipment
- *We may fail in that war if we do not transform our continental European forces now, using all energy in a common effort to develop an institutionally innovative structures that maintain strong, always updated ready forces, with an expeditionary profile,*





The Spectrum of Operations:

- Symmetric, high-tech Force-on-Force Operations (last time: the Falklands conflict) – *traditionally the main focus of officer education and professional focus*
- Asymmetric - only one part high-tech - Force-on-Force Operations, (as the intervention phases of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts)
- Counter-Insurgency (> Stabilisation) and Counter-Terrorist Operations (as the follow-on phases of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, U.S. and the UN in Somalia, Russia in Chechnya)
- Humanitarian and Peace Support Operations (as the Balkans and African operations)
- Operations in support of Homeland Security





The Complexity of Operations:

- Probably in the middle of a civilian population (from neutral to hostile) either in densely populated urban areas or in areas with little infrastructure
- Multinational – with conflicting participant' agendas
- Probably with lowest common denominator mandate that leaves you with the "bucket"
- Also otherwise legally constrained
- With an opinion in own state that is critical to both own casualties and use of fire support that could reduce the risk
- Observed by a friendly, critical CNN and unfriendly, critical al-Jazeera
- With jealous NGOs competing in capitals and the mission area





Technology:

- The technological development will – network-enabled - give enhanced situation awareness in relation to own and other mobile and fixed “hard-ware”. *However, it will only change, not remove the “fog” and “friction” of war, as these are linked to chance, human weakness and the cunning of man*
- It will make decisive, “joint” firepower available to low level tactical commanders in the mission area
- It will make it possible for senior commanders and political leaders - with an itch to interfere - to “look over the shoulder” of low level tactical commanders in the mission area





Organisation and Doctrine:

- It will make smaller army units (battalion battle groups) and the smallest formations (brigades) increasingly independent and capable (in force-on-force missions), leading to
 - Increasingly “flat” command structure (initially without divisions or army corps) with a larger span of control
 - More responsibility to lower level (younger, junior) commanders and leaders (including even NCOs)
- The present situation in all continental European armed forces with a still smaller part of the officers – of all three armed services - serving in operationally related jobs
 - > career dominated by administrative and management experience
- No longer one capstone service doctrine, but a set of “doctrines”, now emphasising co-operation procedures to avoid misunderstanding more than outlining standard behaviour





Officer Recruiting and Basic Education - 1:

- Essential that the forces attract and nurture quality. The officer cadets should arrive with a basic – BA – academic background or with a clear, acute academic potential: intelligence and an open, independent, critical, searching mind
- The basic professional education should be open minded, with no or very little dogmatic rote-learning of tactics. The teaching of tactics should instead have a clear emphasis on building understanding of the - technologically developing - capabilities and weaknesses of the combined arms elements. *A parallel: they should not only be educated to “conduct” of 3-5 pieces of music, they should understand the instruments well enough to compose their own small pieces*
- The military professional faculty members must combine fresh practical mission experience with open professional minds






Officer Recruiting and Basic Education - 2:


- The general part of the basic officer education should emphasize languages (leading to – as a minimum - fluency in English) and the ethics of the profession
- The academic part of the basic education should ensure academic quality rather than just academic credits
- The academic faculty should as be varied in educational background as possible, and understand that its role always includes challenging the group-thinking military





Advanced Officer Education – "Junior Staff" and "Command and Staff" Courses:

- Junior Staff Courses should have a significant joint phase and should cover the full operations spectrum and complexity
- Command and Staff Courses should be multinational, conducted in English partly or fully, joint, have international (bilateral or multinational) benchmarking – and it should cover the full mission spectrum and complexity. *Academic quality performance equivalent to MA level should be natural for a Command and Staff Course graduate*





The development of officers – in unit training:

- The units and formations – where the officers learn their profession – should be constantly exposed to an intensive collective training programme
 - Emphasising experimentation with tactics, procedures, organisation and technology, both initiated from above and allowed on local initiative (but monitored by from above)
 - Mirroring the full spectrum and complexity of the possible missions
 - Should always have at least one independently acting opponent
 - The exercises should be extended in time, realistic and demanding for all elements and branches
 - Conducted in English language with multinational participation






The development of General and Flag Officers:

- The character and complexity of the operations spectrum makes professionally up-to-date and innovative senior military leaders essential in the 21st Century
- However, the career pattern with very demanding *administrative* job dominance undermines the possibility of continuous self education
- Therefore a situation and future missions oriented, joint (including senior "agency" career hopefuls) war college level course is essential for identifying and educating those who will lead the development of institutionally innovative armed force structures
- The war colleges should be given the staff profile necessary - and explicit mission – to discretely challenge the accepted wisdom of the national armed forces





Final remarks:

- SACT on transformation: *"It is bringing changes to doctrine, organisation, capabilities, training, education and logistics. It is not just about new weapon systems and improving capabilities. It is understood that Transformation is a process and a mind-set. It is an iterative, ongoing process that seeks to adapt and master unexpected challenges in a very dynamic environment. It is about managing the future in a joint and combined way."*
- An early officer education – and career management – reform is an essential early step in the necessary transformation of the European armed forces: it is doable and actually cheap

