

NATO's Military Structure: Change and Continuity

NATO'nun Askeri Yapısı: Değişim ve Süreklilik

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Öz

NATO'nun askeri yapısı komuta ve kuvvet yapısı olmak üzere iki bileşenden oluşur. Komuta yapısı, askeri kuvvetlerin komuta ve kontrolünden sorumlu karargahları içerir. İttifakın kuvvet yapısı ise üye devletlerin NATO'ya tahsis ettiği askeri birliklerden oluşur. İttifak kuruluşundan itibaren komuta yapısında dört büyük dönüşümsel safhayı tecrübe etmiştir. İttifakın, sabit birlikler de dâhil olmak üzere üye devletlerin tahsis ettiği bütün kuvvetlerden oluşan başlangıçtaki kuvvet yapısı, Soğuk Savaş sonrasında birbirini takip eden üç değişiklikle, giderek konuşlandırılabilir (hareketli/taşınabilir) bir yapıya dönüşmüştür. Yeni kuvvet yapısı, kademeli hazırlık seviyesi esasına göre oluşturulmuştur. Bu makale, akademik çalışmalarda nadiren incelenen, NATO'nun komuta ve kuvvet yapısının tarihsel değişim ve dönüşümünü ve bunların gerekçelerini ele almaktadır. Bu bilgi yetkinliğinden hareketle, her iki yapının etkinlik ve rasyonallitesi irdelenmektedir. Bu makalenin savı, NATO'nun geçmişi boyunca ittifakın askeri yapılarının sadece değişimin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmadığı, aynı zamanda ittifakın evrim ve dönüşümün ana nedenleri ve temel belirleyenlerinden biri olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: NATO, NATO'nun dönüşümü, NATO'nun Askeri yapısı, dönüşüm, değişim

Abstract

The military structure of NATO is of two components; command and the force structure. Command structure comprises military headquarters responsible for the command and control of the military forces. Force structure of the Alliance is made up of forces allocated to NATO by member states. The Alliance has experienced four major transformative steps in command structure since its establishment. The initial force structure of the Alliance which covers all allocated forces including the fixed ones to NATO has gradually transformed to deployable (movable) force structure by three subsequent changes after the Cold War. The new force structure is set based upon considerations on a gradual readiness level. This paper deals with the historical changes and continuity of NATO's both command and force structures' transformation and their justifications -which have been rarely studied academically. Based upon this knowledge adequacy, effectiveness and rationality of both structures are scrutinised. The argument of the paper is that throughout NATO's past the military structures has not only been a result of organizational change but also one of the main causes and determinants for the evolution and transformation of the Alliance.

Keywords: NATO, NATO's transformation, NATO's military organization, transformation, change

Introduction

NATO is unique, as being the longest-lasting and most successful alliance in the history of mankind. The premise behind its conspicuous sustainability is the ability of the Alliance to proactively and effectively manage change in the

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face of uncertainty while preserving its commitment to founding values, interests and principles. NATO's ability to accord and shape security environment can be considered in four folds of which all are mutually integrated: First, the Alliance's solidarity-based upon collective security is fortified by value-based functioning of TTPs (tactic, technique and procedures). Second, this nature of unity enables the Alliance to develop a coherent common vision which embodies for both policies of the Alliance and grand strategies of the member states. Third, the interrelation between common values like democratic culture, consultation, fair burden share and consolidated vision within the framework of strategic concepts help to shape the security architecture as well as PPBPS (planning, programming, budgeting, procedures and systems) of the organization. Forth, all these contribute to determine priorities and member states' participation to NATO operations.

As noted above the security architecture is one of the four basic elements of NATO. The security architecture of the Alliance covers both core and peripheral organizations. The peripheral structure deals with relations with partners. As an umbrella organization, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) provides a multilateral forum for dialogue and consultation on political and security-related issues among Allies and partners. This architecture also includes additional initiatives such as MD (the Mediterranean Dialogue), ICI (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative), CC (Contact Countries) also coded as PatG (Partners across the Globe). The core organization conducts basic functions of the Alliance with the participation of the member states.

Core or internal organization of the Alliance is composed of political, military and complementary structures. NATO is a political alliance as well as a security organization. As the ontological certainty of the Alliance, collective security can be considered as the '*raison d'état*' of the organization¹ which also put forth the crystal-clear military influence to the whole organizational and functional entities. Strategic concepts draw general guidelines for the realization of the vision, more important than that they are main documents to clarify the pure identity of the organization. Starting from the first strategic document; "The Strategic Concept for Defence of the North Atlantic Area"² to the final strategic concept named "Active Engagement, Modern Defence"³

- 1 Klaus Naumann, "NATO's New Command Structure", *Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs*, Volume IV - Number 1, (March - May 1999)
- 2 M.C.3 "Memorandum by the Standing Group to the North Atlantic Military Committee Transmitting the Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Area", 19 October 1949, <https://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a491019a.pdf>
- 3 Strategic Concept 2010, Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2010. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf

dated 2010 which outlines three essential core tasks –collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security– all high-level documents consider the *primus inter pares* nature of security without any exception. Thus, military interferences shape the structures and procedures of the Alliance. The main thesis of the paper is that throughout NATO's past changes in military structure have constituted consistent continuity. The supplementary argument of the paper is that the military organization of NATO has not only been a result of organizational arrangements but also one of the main determinants for the evolution and transformation of the Alliance. This paper deals with the historical changes and continuity of NATO's both command and force structures transformation and their justifications. Based upon this knowledge adequacy, effectiveness and rationality of both structures are scrutinised.

Military Influence On The Core Political Organization And The Decision-Making Process In NATO

Military influence on political decision-making process spurred from both functional and structural causes. This influence's functionality lies in NATO's major mission on preserving the security of its members. Structural character of this influence results from its heavily security-based organizational architecture. Led by the political decision-making bodies NATO's military structure has been one of the leading factors of its military formation. Apart from that, there have been mutual interferences between the military structure and transformation of the Alliance. NATO's political structure particularly the NAC (North Atlantic Council) which take decisions on Permanent (representatives) Council or ministerial level meetings or the summits attended by heads of state or government, has always been the steering body for all functions of the Alliance. Having said that NAC is not an influence-proof organization. Not only national interests and expectations of the member states but also collective initiatives and internal organizations of the Alliance which support the NAC, help to shape NATO's organizational changes. Thanks to this type of conduct which makes NATO an open-system helps the Alliance to be more resilient and flexible.

The IS (International Staff) as the primary team to provide advice, guidance and administrative support to the national delegations at NATO Headquarters is composed of bureaucrats with military background. Four out of seven main functions of the IS are directly military in nature. These are: 1) Developing and implementing the defence policy and planning dimension 2) Managing NATO's operational commitments and crisis response capabilities 3) Developing assets and capabilities 4) Managing staff, finances and security standards.⁴

4 Other functions of the IS are: 1) Providing political advice and policy guidance 2) Communicating with the wider public 3) Cooperating with the science community.

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The IMS (International Military Staff) as the military shadow of IS accommodates mainly military staff with various expertise including civilian ones. By close liaison with the IS the IMS provides the linkages between the political and military decision-making bodies of the Alliance. Main areas of concern of the IMS are summarised under seven headings. These are planning and policy; regional cooperation and security; operations; intelligence; logistics and resources; C3 (Consultation, command and control) and the conduct of the SITCEN (NATO Situation Centre). IMS products –mainly assessments, studies, reports etc.– not only provide essentials for MC decisions and policies but also help to re-shape the military structure with continuity and change. Additionally, 55 specialised organisations, agencies and committees operating in 13 areas also provide similar inputs to decision-making bodies of the Alliance.⁵

The MC (Military Committee) as the senior military authority in NATO is an integral part of the policy and decision-making apparatus of the Alliance⁶ and provides an essential link between the political decision-making process within the NAC, DPC (Defence Planning Committee) and the NPG (Nuclear Planning Group) and the integrated command structures of NATO charged respectively with the conduct of military operations and the further military transformation of the Alliance.⁷ The MC is composed of the permanent military representatives, the Chief of Staffs of the member states. The IMS works as the executive body of the MC. Heads of the two strategic commands also take part in MC meetings as required. They are both responsible to the MC for the overall conduct of all Alliance military matters within their areas of responsibility. On the one side, the MC provides the Strategic Commanders with guidance on military matters; and on the other side, it works closely with them to bring forward for political consideration by the NAC, military assessments, plans, issues and recommendations, together with an analysis that puts this information into a wider context and takes into account the concerns of each member country. In sum, the Military Committee serves, inter alia, as a link between the political structure and leaders of member states and the two Strategic Commanders.⁸ Thus, military influence on the core political organization and decision-making process of NATO is realised at a strategic level.

NATO' Military Structure's Transformative Voyage

Apart from the MC which conducts political-military decision-making, NATO's military structure is composed of two components; command structure and

5 NATO web page, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/structure.htm>

6 *AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, STANAG 2437, NATO Standardization Office (NSO), 2010, p. 3-2, https://www.fit4russland.com/images/NATO-Kriegsplan_Allied_joint_doctrine_2010.pdf

7 *NATO Handbook*, Public Diplomacy Division, 2006, p. 73.

8 Military organisation and structures, 25 May 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49608.htm

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the force structure. The command structure is the mechanism which enables NATO authorities to command and control the forces assigned by the member states. The command structure of the Alliance follows a hierarchical link through strategic, subordinate regional headquarters and their affiliates.

Currently, the NCS (NATO Command Structure) is composed of ACO (Allied Command Operations) and ACT (Allied Command Transformation), headed respectively by the SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander in Europe), responsible for operations and the SACT (Supreme Allied Commander Transformation), responsible for transformation. The NATO Force Structure (NFS) consists of military forces (army, navy, maritime etc.) along with their command and control facilities for disposal of the Alliance by the member states, temporarily or permanently, either as part of NATO's multinational forces or as additional national contributions to NATO. These forces are available for NATO operations in accordance with predetermined readiness criteria and with rules of deployment and transfer of authority to NATO command.⁹

NATO's current military structure is an outcome of continuous changes throughout its past. Mainly two basic phenomena have directly affected both command and the force structures of the Alliance; first international security environment, emerging risks, threats, dangers and opportunities; and secondly mutual interactions between the political and military wings. In addition to these two factors accumulation of experiences and constant information and knowledge flows which promote situational and organizational awareness have initiated continuity in change, in Alliance's military structure. In this context, NATO's military structuring mainly has followed requirements of the strategic conceptual approaches of the organization. The Alliance's command structure has experienced four major transformative steps while the force structure witnessed two major shifts since its establishment. Major changes met at the aftermath of the Cold War.

The Cold War Military Structure

Cold War Command Structures

December 19, 1950 when the NAC appointed the SACEUR, the military structure of the Alliance was not well prepared to carry out its mission. There was no command structure to direct the overall defence until the integrated command structure established in 1951. Regional Planning Groups were charged with drawing up plans for the defence of their regions.¹⁰

9 *NATO Handbook*, Public Diplomacy Division, 2006, p. 88; Military organisation and structures, 25 May 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49608.htm

10 1949-1952: Creating a Command Structure for NATO, *History of SHAPE*, <https://shape.nato.int/page14612223.aspx>

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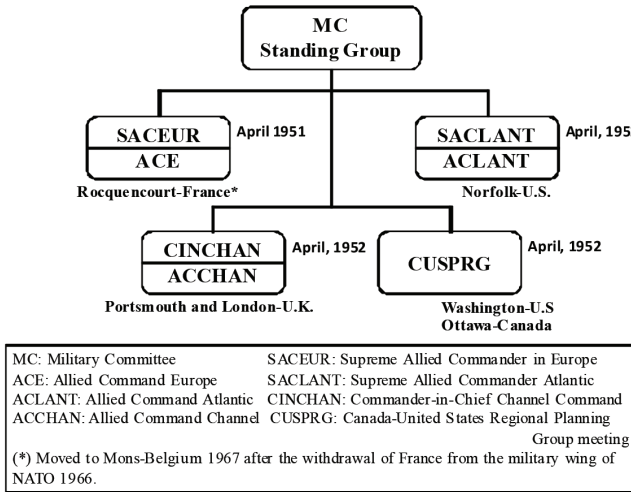
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NATO's first integrated military structure was formed between 1951 based upon D.C. 24/3 dated 18 December 1951.¹¹ The structure matured between 1952-1954. This structure was heavily relied on SACEUR and SACLANT (Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic) which were activated in 1951 and 1952 in sequence. Together with these two strategic commands CINCHAN (Commander-in-Chief Channel) and CUSPRG (Canada-United States Regional Planning Group) were operating under NATO Military Committee's Standing Group. This main structure which is combined with one strategic command both in Europe and in the U.S. stood still until 1991 however there occurred various changes in subordinate headquarters at the operational level

(Figure 1.).



Sources:

- NATO the first five years 1949-1954, NATO Archive, NATO, 2008, Ch. 7.
- 1949-1952: Creating a Command Structure for NATO, *History of SHAPE*.
- G.W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009", p. 4.
- NATO Means Peace (1955-1956), NAO, 1955.

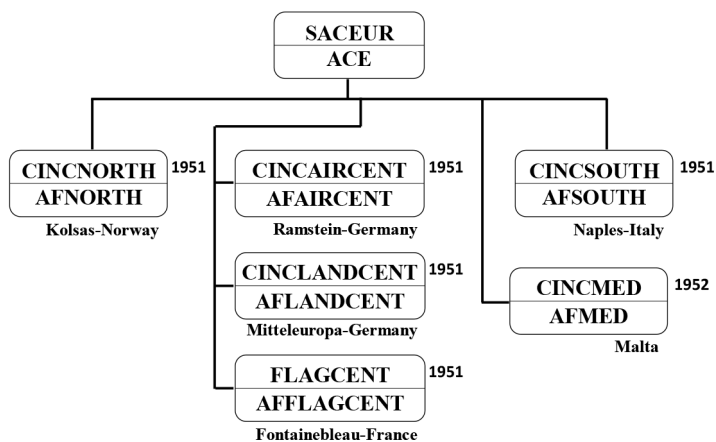
Figure 1. Major NATO Commanders, 1952-1991

11 Standing Group Memoranda (1949-1966), Summary of The NATO Military Command Structure, Terms of References and Areas of Responsibility of the Major NATO Commanders' and Their Immediate Subordinate Commanders, NATO Archives Online, 2017, <http://archives.nato.int/summary-of-nato-military-command-structure-terms-of-references-and-areas-of-responsibility-of-major-nato-commanders-and-their-immediate-subordinate-commanders;isad>

- Before reaching to 1951 organizational structure mentioned ACE (Allied Command Europe) was divided into three CINCs (Commander-in-Chief) based upon geographical areas of responsibility: CINC-North, containing Scandinavia, the North Sea and the Baltic; CINC-Centre, with Western Europe, and CINC-South, covering Italy and the Mediterranean in 1950. Although this concept made great usability in militarily sense but failed on implementation because of major political burdens.¹²

- In 1951 ACE reorganised its first level subordinated under five CINC-NORTH; CINCAIRCENT, CINCLANDCENT, FLAGCENT and CINC SOUTH. In 1952 AFMED (Allied Forces Mediterranean) is added to these regional forces command, increasing the number of forces commands to six (AFNORTH, AIRCENT, LANDCENT, FLAGCENT, AFSOUTH, AFMED) (Figure 2.). This structure which keep the land, air and maritime forces commands of the central region bounding directly to SACEUR although politically compromised and settled diversities between France and the U.K., was too complicated because of its nineteen sub-regional commands.

In addition to 1951 NCS, with the membership of Turkey and Greece to the Alliance in 1952, a land command; LANDSOUTHEAST (Allied Land Forces South-Eastern Europe) was created in Turkey as the subordinate of AFSOUTH in Italy. This was not only because of geographical requirements for effective military conduct but also due to meet political concerns on which nation would lead the ground forces in the region.



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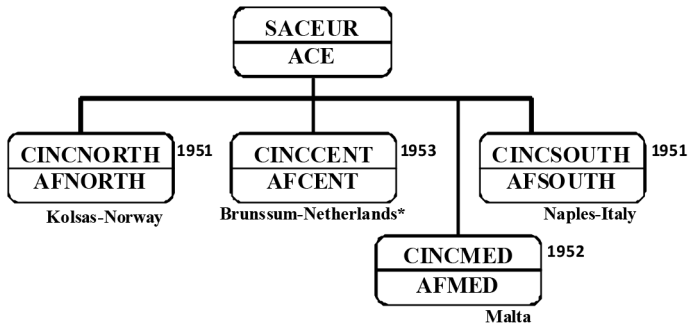
12 Gregory W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009". <https://shape.nato.int/resources/21/Evolution%20of%20NATO%20Cmd%20Structure%201951-2009.pdf>

Sources:

- NATO the first five years 1949-1954, NATO Archive, NATO, 2008, Ch. 7.
- G.W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009", p. 2, 5.
- Doris M. Condit., *History of the Secretary of Defense, The Test of War 1950-1953*, Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington D.C., 1988, p. 364.

Figure 2. Initial ACE Structure, 1951-1953

- In August 1953 ACE command structure simplified and by reorganizing a single CINCENT (Commander-in-Chief) for the region with subordinate Land, Air and Naval Commanders (COMLANDCENT, COMAIRCENT, and COMNAVCENT respectively). Thus, the number of Major Subordinate Commanders in ACE was down to four (**Figure 3.**). This formation lasted until 1967.



(*) AFCENT initially established in Fontainebleau-France, moved 1967.

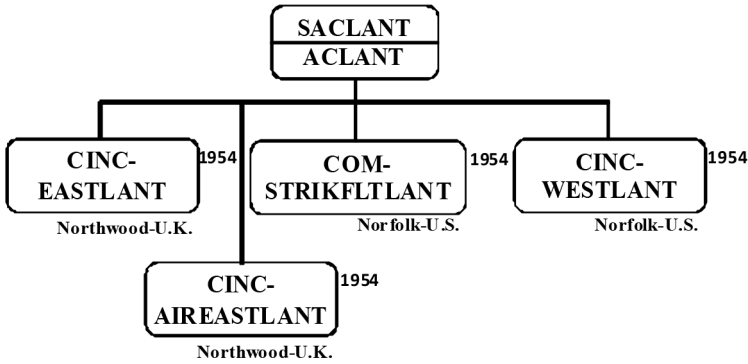
Sources:

- NATO the first five years 1949-1954, NATO Archive, NATO, 2008, Ch. 7.
- G.W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009", p. 5.
- JFC Brunssum History, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page583594.aspx>

Figure 3. Major Subordinate Commanders in ACE, 1953-1967

1953 change in NCS retouched to meet the new AOR (Area of Responsibility) requirements of Germany's membership to the Alliance in 1955. There occurred subsequent changes at the subordinates of AFNORTH and AFCENT mainly spurred from the tension on AOR of the Baltic Sea between Germany and Denmark in 1961 and 1961.

- As of 1954, the SACLANT was composed of three headquarters and a naval command. Those subordinate commands were CINCEASTLANT (Commander in Chief East Atlantic Area), CINCAIREASTLANT (Commander in Chief Air East Atlantic Area) COMSTRIKFLTANT (Commander Strike Fleet Atlantic) and CINCPACFLTANT (Commander in Chief Western Atlantic Area). Except for the change in 1989 SACLANT retained its main structure until 2003 when its strategic vision changed to the transformation of the Alliance (**Figure 4**).

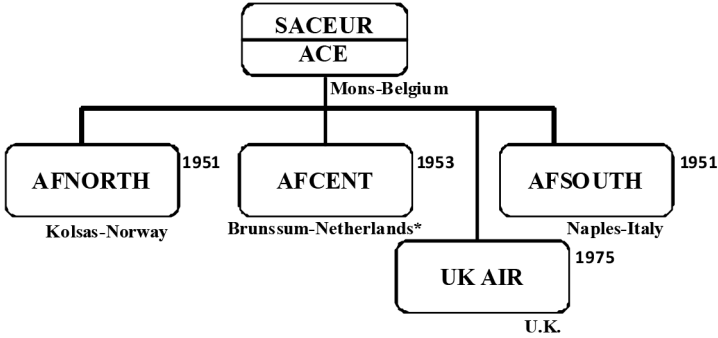


Source: NATO the first five years 1949-1954, NATO Archive, NATO, 2008, Ch. 7.

Figure 4. Major Subordinate Commanders in SACLANT, 1954-2003

- France's withdrawal from the military wing in 1966 obliged the Alliance to re-organise its central and southern regions subordinate headquarters. New arrangement for the central region did not work properly particularly in the air force level since it mismatched the principle of central control. This problem resolved in 1974 with the establishment of Allied Air Forces Central Europe as a major subordinate command of AFCENT which would be active until 1994. In the southern region, AFMED disappeared in June 1967 and AFSOUTH was reorganised with a structure that would remain fundamentally unchanged for the next three decades.
- With the allocation of the UK Air force to ACE with the name of UKAIR (United Kingdom NATO Air Forces) in April 1975 ACE consolidated with a four major subordinate command structure which will be on power until 1994 (**Figure 5**).

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(*) AFCENT initially established in Fontainebleau-France, moved 1967.

Source: G.W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009", p. 11.

Figure 5. Major Subordinate Commands of ACE, 1975-1994

Cold War Force Structure

Throughout the Cold War NFS was composed of three different types of forces; allocated forces, reserve forces and assigned forces by case. Allocated forces which established the core of the NFS, were determined by the defence planning cycle and identified in peace time. Allocated forces were to operate under NATO headquarters' operational command in case of crisis and the war. Those were more active forces readily available. Reserve forces were the ones with low readiness level with lower operational capacity. Assigned forces were the ones given to NATO's operational command case by case.¹³

Overwhelming superiority of the Warsaw Pact on conventional forces deeply influenced the force structure of NATO. In order to face this threat, NATO accelerated its nuclear proliferation on the one hand while trying to compose much possible bulk of conventional forces to defend the territory and assets outlined in article six of its charter on the other hand.¹⁴ Cold War force structure included much possible military units covering the regional security forces, gendarmeries, guard-forces even the coast-guards. This way of conduct was rational for a purely defensive approach. Another characteristic of the Cold War NFS was the relatively low interoperability. Although the U.S. military doctrine and equipment were overwhelmingly common in allied armed forces and military standardisation was at a considerable level, interoperability was not one of the main concerns -as it is today- because of the nature of the threat and NATO's mission limited within the boundaries of territorial defence.

13 Report of the North Atlantic Council Deputies, North Atlantic Council, Fifth Session, Document No 5/2, New York, September 1950; Aydın Alacakaptan (Hazırlayan), *Atlantik İttifakı*, Türk Atlantik Antlaşması Derneği Yayını, 1983, s. 37.

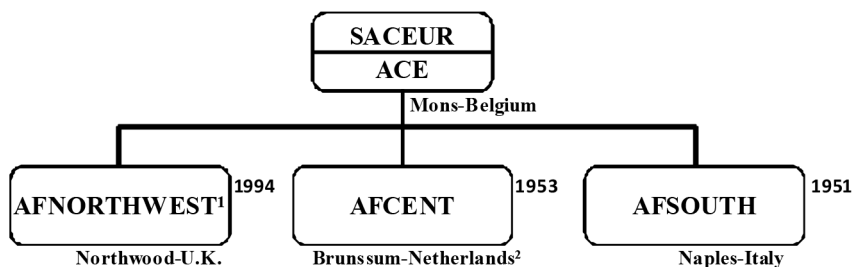
14 The North Atlantic Treaty (1949) Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949

Post-Cold War Military Structure

Post-Cold War Command Structures

The end of the Cold War created a more ambiguous and unstable security environment which could only be met by a broader security concept rather than the traditional defence mentality. 1991 Strategic Concept which justified an era of multi-faceted and multi-directional risks and threats in nature hard to predict and assess¹⁵ highlighted the need for the transformation of NATO's military structure. The post-Cold War era witnessed extensive changes in the NCS.

- In 1991 the Allied Command Channel eliminated and the number of the strategic commands reduced to two; ACE and ACT. Abolishing AFNORTH and UKAIR, AFNORTHWEST (Allied Forces Northwest Europe) was established as a new major subordinate command of ACE in 1994. ACE's new trilateral structure composed of AFNORTHWEST, AFCENT and AFSOUTH lasted until 1999 (**Figure 6.**).



(1) Decision to close in 1999, close accomplished in 2000.

(2) AFCENT initially established in Fontainebleau-France, moved 1967.

Sources:

- Gregory W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009", p. 12.
- The Organisation and Headquarters Structure, <https://www.nato.int/related/afnw/orga.htm>

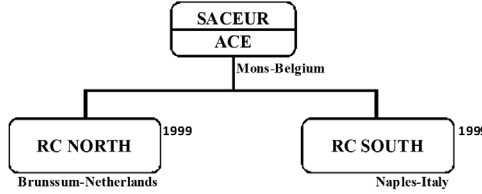
Figure 6. ACE Command Structure, 1994-1999

- Military Committee's proposal for a 'new' NCS approved in 1997 and implementation commenced in 1999.¹⁶ The two strategic commands the ACE and the SACLANT reorganised with two and three regional subordinate

15 The Alliance's New Strategic Concept, 08 Nov. 1991, article 8, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm?

16 "NATO's Command Structure: The Old and the New", International Military Staff, 01.06.2004, <https://www.nato.int/ims/docu/command-structure.htm>

commands respectively. 1999 ACE restructuring marked a shift from 'allied command' organization to 'regional command' organization. ACE's new dual structure composed of RC NORTH (Regional Command North) and RC SOUTH (Regional Command South) remained until 2003 (**Figure 7.**).



Source: Gregory W. Pedlow, "The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009", p. 13.

Figure 7. ACE Command Structure, 1999-2003

The main premise for the reorganization of ACE subordinate headquarters into two was to shift concentration of military power to new risks and threats areas rather which were diversified from the Cold War areas of concern. The reorganization policy of this era also oversaw a reduction in subordinate headquarters. Between 1992 and 1999, the number of headquarters reduced from 78 to 20. This reorganization which met a forty per cent reduction in NATO's military structure was the major one in all times of the Alliance history.

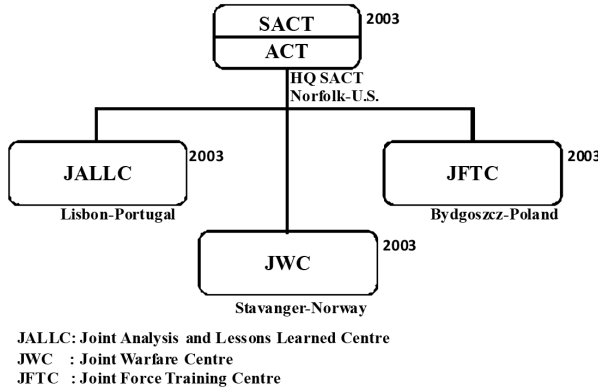
One unique feature of 1999-2003 era was introduction of combined joint task-force concept into NATO's military doctrine. Once again military structuring would enable application of the new warfare approach as well as NATO's transformation for a more flexible, more robust and interoperable combined and joint military capacity. A number of Joint Commands (JCs) as subordinates in place of the single-service land commands of the past, and a number of Combined Air Operations Centres (CAOCs) which replaced previous air commands are prevailed as a consequence of the new military understanding.

- 2003 witnessed a dramatic change in NATO military structure leaving all operational responsibility, including those previously undertaken by SACLANT on the ACE newly named as ACO (Allied Command Operations) and replacing SACLANT by ACT (Allied Command Transformation) which is tasked to promote transformation of NATO forces and capabilities. The headquarters of ACO retained to be called as SHAPE and the commander continued to be named SACEUR. The headquarters of ACLANT transformed to HQ SACT while changing the name of its commander from SACLANT to SACT (Supreme Allied Commander Transformation).

2003 reorganization of NATO's military structure defined distinct tasks to each strategic level commands of the Alliance. ACT's core task is defined as

to lead the transformation of NATO's military structures, forces, capabilities and doctrine.¹⁷ Its key responsibilities are directed in six titles. These are:¹⁸ 1) conducting operational analysis at the strategic on defence planning, 2) concepts, policy, and doctrine development of the Alliance, 3) communications and information systems development, 4) leading training, exercises, evaluation and experimentation of NATO, 5) leading in the area of scientific research and development, 6) providing the direction, control and co-ordination of military cooperation activities across the Alliance along with ACO. ACO's core task is defined as to assess risks and threats, conduct military planning and identify and request the forces needed to undertake the full range of Alliance missions as and when agreed upon by the North Atlantic Council (NAC).¹⁹ Its key responsibilities are directed in six titles. These are: 1) Ensuring NFS effective combined or joint military headquarters, 2) Contributing to stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area, 3) Conducting strategic level analysis to identify capability shortfalls and assign priorities, 4) Managing the resources allocated by NATO for operations and exercises, 5) develop and conduct training programmes and exercises in conjunction with ACT.

Newly formed SACT's major subordinate units are the JALLC (Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre), the JWC (Joint Warfare Centre) and the JFTC (Joint Force Training Centre) (**Figure 8.**). ACT has direct interrelationships with member-sponsored twenty-five excellence centres. These organisations are considered as indispensable part of training and education of NATO and Partnership for Peace staff and bureaucrats. Certification for the excellence centres are taken over by ACT in co-ordination with ACO.



17 *A/P 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, op.cit., p. 3A-2.

18 SACT's missions are directed in MC 58/3.

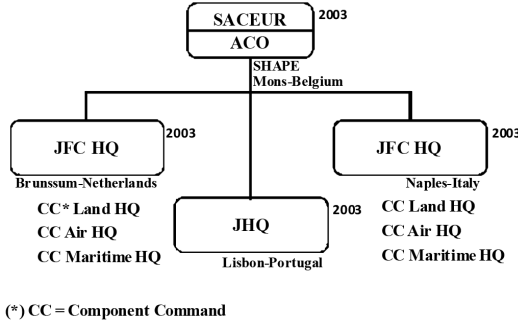
19 *A/P 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, op.cit., p. 3A-1.

Sources:

- MC 324/1 "NATO Military Command Structure (NCS)", 2004.²⁰
- The NATO Command Structure, Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) – Press & Media Section
https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/1802-Factsheet-NATO-Command-Structure_en.pdf

Figure 8. ACT Command Structure, 2003-

According to 2003 restructuring the ACE's subordinate commands were composed of two JFCs (Joint Force Command) one in the north the other in the south as it were 1999 organization and one JHQ (Joint Headquarters). Major differences were in two folds; the first was the establishment of JHQ in Lisbon-Portugal. This HQ was not at the level of JFCs which had already assigned force, merely a ready headquarters formation to command allocated forces in case of crisis. The second major difference was the enhancement of NATO's combined joint operation concept which focus to meet new threats and crisis areas so different from the previous RCs the names of the subordinate commands changed as JFCs (**Figure 9**).



Source: MC 324/1

Figure 9. ACE Command Structure, 2003-2012

This new structuring saw a reduction considerable in operational headquarters. In total there remain ten headquarters: one at strategic level, three at operational level and six at component level. This was the second largest downgrade in military structure after 1999 reorganization mentioned above. The reform also resulted in a significant reduction in Combined Air Operations Centres and reflected a fundamental shift in Alliance thinking.²¹

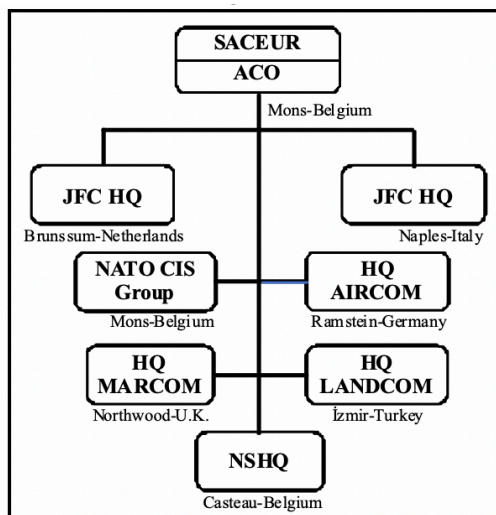
20 MC 324/2 dated 2004 later replaced by MC 324/2 (Final) dated 2010.
 21 NATO A-Z pages (December 2014), p. 584, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20150316_2014_AZ_pages.pdf, in NATO Encyclopaedia (Archived), 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_151400.htm,

Sources:

- The NATO Command Structure, Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) – Press & Media Section
- *AJP-3 Allied Joint Doctrine, for the Conduct of Operations*, Edition C Version 1, NATO Standardization Office (NSO), 2019, p. 1-4.

Figure 10. ACT Command Structure, 2012-

- Taking collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security as the essential core tasks for the Alliance's Strategic Concept 2010²² triggered a change in military structure approved 2011 and transition which started in 2012 completed in 2015. The new shift only modified the ACO while leaving the SACT unchanged (**Figure 10.**).



To sum up, as of 2019 NCS is composed of three levels; strategic, operational and component.²³ The strategic level ACO led by SACEUR is responsible for overall operations²⁴ while ACT led by SACT is dealing with issues on developing capabilities through education, training and exercises, experimentation, assessing concepts and promoting interoperability of the Alliance.²⁵ The operational level responsibilities are dealt with designated operational commanders who exercise their responsibilities through a joint permanent or deployable

22 Strategic Concept 2010.

23 *AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, op.cit., p. 3 A-2.

24 Ibid., p. 3 A-3.

25 *AJP-3 Allied Joint Doctrine, for the Conduct of Operations*, Edition C Version 1, NATO Standardization Office (NSO), 2019, p. 1-4, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797323/doctrine_nato_conduct_of_ops_ajp_3.pdf

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headquarters.²⁶ The operational level of command is normally exercised by a commander joint force commands (JFCs).²⁷ The operational level also includes single-service command headquarters; NATO CIS Group (NATO Communications and Information Systems Group), HQ AIRCOM (Headquarters Allied Air Command), HQ MARCOM (Headquarters Allied Maritime Command), HQ LANDCOM (Headquarters Allied Land Command) and NSHQ (NATO Special Operations Headquarters). At the component command level, one or more component command headquarters provide service-specific expertise for JFCs, as well as advice on joint operational level planning and execution.²⁸

From organizational management point of view, NATO followed a considerable structural simplification and manpower reduction trend. The current NCS' seven commands function with 6.800 staff.²⁹ When compared the Cold War 33 commands NCS activated by 22.000 posts this meets nearly 21 per cent reduction in the number of commands and a 31 per cent reduction in manpower.

The economization of NCS process is coherent with recently agreed capacity development process of the Alliance called "Smart Defence", which was echoed by the Secretary General, at the Munich Security Conference in 2012. Smart Defence, refers to "ensuring greater security, for less money, by working together with more flexibility."³⁰

Post-Cold War Force Structure

1994 reorganization also reflected the first major change in the concept of NATO's operational approach which led the current force structure. This force structure was even short to meet the security environment requirement of that time but was an important attempt for future development. This initiative is called L-TS (Long-Term Study) triggered the subsequent three review on NFS.³¹ In accordance with Defence Capabilities Initiative³² issued at 1999 Washington Summit, the NATO military authorities agreed in July 2001 on the principles and parameters of the 'new' NFS.

26 *AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, loc.cit.

27 *AJP-3, Allied Joint Doctrine, for the Conduct of Operations*, Loc.cit.

28 *AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, loc.cit

29 NATO Factsheet, The NATO Command Structure, Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) – Press & Media Section, 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/1802-Factsheet-NATO-Command-Structure_en.pdf

30 NATO Multimedia Library, Smart Defence, 2019, <http://www.natolibguides.info/smartdefence>

31 Thomas-Durell Young, *Multinational Land Forces and The NATO Force Structure Review*, June 2000, p. 1-3 <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/1447.pdf>

32 Defence Capabilities Initiative NAC-S (99)69 - 25 April 1999. <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99s069e.htm>

Actually, the new NFS was an outcome of the L-TS NFS which over-saw gradual readiness level-based structuring mainly composed of immediate and rapid reaction forces followed by the main defence forces and augmentations.³³ The new NFS would provide the Alliance with rapidly deployable, mobile, sustainable and flexible multinational forces and their command and control capabilities. The implementation of the new NFS was part of the adaptation of NATO to instable security environment exacerbated by various risks and threats. Considering the intensity and unpredictability of the crisis increased in NATO AOI (Area of Interest) the Alliance enhanced its previous relatively small-scale crisis response organization and established the ARRC (ACE Rapid Reaction Corps).

In 2002 this initiative triggered the NRF (NATO Response Force) structuring which is the highest ready force comprising of air, land, maritime and Special Forces units capable of rapid deployment activated between five to thirty days. This new force structure is fundamental and far-reaching for the success of NATO's future operational capabilities. Overall command of NRF belongs to SACEUR. NATO's two JFCs (based in Brunssum-Netherlands and Naples-Italy) have operational command of the NRF each year on a rotational basis.³⁴ The structure of NRF is composed of a headquarter, VJTF (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force), IFFG (Initial Follow on Forces Group) and FFG (Follow-on Forces Group).³⁵ The combination of these three forces are called DJTF (Deployable Joint Task Force)

According to AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine 2010, "NFS comprises IPF (In-Place Forces) and a pool of DF (Deployable Forces). Both elements are held at graduated readiness levels in order to afford a high degree of flexibility in meeting any requirement to conduct and sustain operations."³⁶ Since IPF conduct or contribute to missions in their vicinity are not supposed to be fully deployable. DF are fully operational to conduct or contribute to missions throughout the AOR and AIR of the Alliance. Both IPF, DP are held at appropriate readiness levels. DF reinforce IPF in case of any collective defence operation.

As mentioned above NFS is architected in accordance with varying readiness levels. Forces for gradual readiness levels are categorised under two layers; 1) GRF (Graduated Readiness Forces) 2) LTBF (Long-Term Build-Up Forces). GRF's duration for reaction is gradually arranged. The latest time for the completion of GRF deployment in total is 180 days. Actually this time

33 Young, *Multinational Land Forces and The NATO Force Structure Review...* p. 6.

34 NATO Response Force (NRF) Fact Sheet, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-response-force-nrf-fact-sheet.aspx>

35 Ibid.

36 *AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine*, op.cit., p. 3 A-3.

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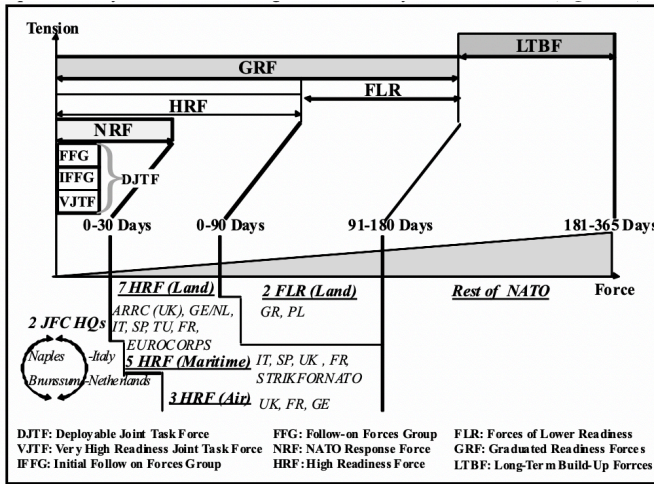
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interval is divided between follow on forces at different readiness levels. LTBF react 180 days after the first deployment of NRF.

GRF are composed of HRF (High Readiness Forces) and FLR (Forces of Lower Readiness). HRFs which include service-specific forces are to respond rapidly to the full range of Alliance missions. HRFs are organised in a pool of single-service formation. In order to be able for a flexible composition of force appropriate to the mission, force structure of any operation is composed by assigning forces from the pool of HRFs. In another word, force packages are built around HRFs dependent upon the task. Generically the scales of HRFs for ground forces is a division or brigade with independent operational capability; for air force, a task force capable of conducting at least 200 sorties per day; for navy, a fleet or a task force which could include aircraft carrier and at least six frigates. HRF have the capacity to be activated within 90 days. FLR are the second echelon forces which reinforce or rotate HRF in action. FLR's duration for activation is between 91-180 days. Currently there are nine GRF (Land) (Seven HRF and two FLR, five HRF (Maritime) and three HRF (Air)³⁷

AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine 2010 defines LTBF as: "an augmentation capability for the worst-case scenario of large-scale defence operations, thereby enabling the Alliance to build-up larger forces, both for limited requirements and in response to any fundamental change in the security environment".³⁸ (Figure 11.).³⁹



37 High Readiness Forces and Headquarters in the NATO Force Structure, <https://shape.nato.int/page134134653.aspx>

38 AJP 01- (D) Allied Joint Doctrine, op.cit., p. 3 A-4.

39 NATO Multimedia Library, "The New NATO Force Structure", International Military Staff, 2011, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69721.htm

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Figure 11. NATO Force Structure and Gradual Readiness Levels

Conclusion

The organizational structure of NATO mainly consists of peripheral and internal organizations. The peripheral one covers partners while the internal organization includes political and military institutions supported by the member states. Mutual interferences between these organisations have initiated conceptual changes in NATO.

The military organization of NATO has not only been a result of organizational arrangements but also one of the main determinants for the evolution and transformation of the Alliance. Military influence on political decision-making process spurred from both functional and structural causes. NATO's military organization is composed of both command and force structure. Regional headquarters are the core elements of the command structure. Force structure of the Alliance is the composition of military forces allocated to NATO commands by the member states.

NATO's past changes in military structure have constituted consistent continuity. After a short while of its establishment, NATO transformed into the integrated command structure. This shift which started in 1951 and matured in 1954 has constituted a seamless, continues transformation up-to-date. Until 2003 regional responsibility was divided into two major strategic commands; ACE (Allied Command in Europe) and ACLANT (Allied Command in Atlantic).

Until the end of the Cold War ACE experienced five major organizational change -consequently in 1951, 1953, 1967, 1975 and 1994- in its subordinate commands. 1951 ACE structure which oversees military necessities was hampered by the political issues between France and the UK. NATO's command structure continued to change in 1952 with the enlargement of the Alliance to south-east Europe including Turkey and Greece. The command structure which came into body in 1953 lasted 14 years, until 1967. During this period the change which took place in 1954 on the restructuring of the SACLAND would survive 36 years –except for the amendment in 1989- until 2003. The period of 1967-1975 witnessed changes caused by France withdrawal from the military wing of the Alliance (in 1966) and UK Air Force's consolidation to NATO's command structure. 1975-1994, 19 years lasting command structure

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of the Alliance was composed of three Allied Force Commands based upon the distribution of responsibility between the northern, central and southern regions and UK Air Forces.

The post-Cold War era witnessed four major changes succeeding in 1991, 1994, 1999, 2003 and 2012 in ACE.

In 1991 cancellation of the Channel Command of U.K. reduced the main strategic commands into two; ACE and ACT. In 1994, AFNORTH stationed in Norway was replaced by UK stationed AFNORTHWEST keeping the trilateral subordinate command structure of ACE. When the clouds of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 disappeared and the revive of threat from central and eastern Europe constantly eliminated in 1997 NATO initiated an effort for a 'new' command structure which would come into force in 1999. Thus, ACE transformed into bi-regional subordinate commands between the north and the south both of which have mutual operational capacity complement each neighbouring command. This structure enabling major reduction in the number of subordinate commands and the posts designated at headquarter remained until 2003. 2003 witnessed another dramatic change in NATO's command structure which concentrates all operational responsibility into ACE with its new naming ACO and transforming SACLANT to ACT which became the solely responsible major command for the transformation and training of the Alliance. ACO's 2003-2012 structure was reflecting a trilateral joint force command headquarters divided between Brunssum/Netherlands, Naples/Italy and Lisbon/Portugal. Except for the last all others were commanding land, air and maritime headquarters. The current command structure of the ACO activated in 2012 -leaving the headquarters in Lisbon to ACT- retains the other two joint forces commands; additional includes land, air and maritime headquarters in İzmir/Turkey, Remstein/Germany and Northwood/UK respectively. NATO's Communication and Information System Group and the Security Headquarters in Belgium are also included to ACO.

NATO's Cold War force structure which focuses to balance the superiority of the Warsaw Pact in conventional forces was composed of all possibly available forces at three categories; allocated forces, reserve forces and assigned forces by case. This force structure was purely defensive within the territorial boundaries of the member states. The post-Cold War era dictated new military requirements to face various symmetric and asymmetric risks and threats including the ones beyond the original area of responsibility of the Alliance noted in article six. This enforced NATO force structure to transform territorial defence in-place feature to deployable force formation. This also shaped a gradual build-up of forces architecture which is composed of NRF, GRF (includes HRF and FLR) and LTBF.

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