**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**
**ORGANISATION DU TRAITÉ DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD**
HEADQUARTERS SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER TRANSFORMATION
7857 BLANDY ROAD, SUITE 100
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA,  23551-2490

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Read ahead for for Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA) Workshop on Regional Perspectives

Date : 6-8 November 2018, Budapest, Hungary

**STRATEGIC FORESIGHT ANALYSIS WORKSHOP ON REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

**Aim**

To share our ideas and objectives for the 2019-2020 timeframe with the SFA community of interest.

**References**

The SFA 2017 Report can be accessed via the following link.
http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/doclibrary/171004_sfa_2017_report_hr.pdf

**Background**

The SFA Report 2017 describes the future NATO expects to unfold to 2035 and beyond, depicted as political, social, technological, economic and environmental trends.

The SFA is the initial phase of the ongoing Long-Term Military Transformation (LTMT) efforts at Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and sets the intellectual foundation for a follow-on report, the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO). The FFAO looks into the interaction of trends, identifies instability situations then develops military implications.

**Current Situation**

The following provides the outcome of the discussions and key findings of the Cadiz workshop. The full Cadiz WS Report can be found at the following link. https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2012/fc_ipr/180430_sfa-ws-report.pdf.

1.  Confluence of Technology Trends and Implications:

    a.      Technology's influence on political trends – Potential implications. Technological developments will disrupt established geostrategic power and change NATO's ability to project power.  The West's ability to uphold its regulations against the pace of technology

development will be a challenge. With peer competitors increasing their use of disruptive technologies to influence power politics, NATO needs to adapt to be able to compete, notably in the grey zone.

b.      Technology's influence on human trends – Potential implications. The 2nd/ 3rd-order consequences of rapid adoption of technologies are almost more consequential than the disruptive impact of technologies themselves, creating a competition between newly established networks and long established hierarchies, leaving it up to the people to choose their side.

c.      Confluence of technology trends. The rate of technology advance and access to technology is enhanced by several factors; primacy of data, algorithm advancement, crowd sourcing as a driver and exponential commercial acceleration. Adversely, military change may be more linear with legal and ethical constraints impeding democracies more than potential adversaries. Modularity can assist the military to keep pace with the rate of advance and insert rapid developments in acquisition.

d.      Access to technology. Technology enhances access to skills, knowledge and resources (e.g. YouTube videos, crowd funding, etc.). New technology will expand commensurate to business demands, while old technology will persist in parallel (e.g. 3D printing with hobbyists, criminals, in remote areas, etc.).

e.      Global Network Development. There is a tendency to think in dystopian terms: technological mutually assured destruction. However, as we are all relying on the same infrastructure, disruption is less likely. If 5G delivers much faster connectivity, all personal videos become a potential data source for detecting anomalies (e.g., civil unrest and natural disasters).  CISCO predicts that 200Bn devices will be the Internet of Things by 2027.

f.      Dominance of the commercial sector in technological development. We won't be able to verify/reverse engineer everything in the software of the future (we already can't). The Alliance will become more dependent and bound to the commercial sector (outside the defence commercial sector). Future tech companies will increasingly be transnational entities.

g.      Technological dependencies. Most innovative minds are not in the military or government, they are working for industry (or for themselves). Furthermore, big companies continue to have an almost religious following. But continued dependence on technology by the community will affect regulation from government; the community needs to be resilient.

2.  Perspectives on Russia and Eastern Europe, the Arctic/High North, Asia-Pacific, and North Africa and the Sahel:

a.      Russia. Russia and the post-Soviet space will be more fragmented with weak institutional settings and more dissimilar identities. Russia is likely to be less stable than today with stability further challenged under post-Putin or even post-post-Putin regime. Russian capabilities will increase relative to the West and decrease relative to emerging powers such as China; however, major gaps in their capabilities will remain. Russia maintains its strategy to protect its borders. Further NATO expansion in Eastern Europe and/or the Caucasus increases Russian sense of insecurity.

(1)      Key Takeaways – projections out to 2040:

Efforts at NATO expansion in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus could trigger conflict.

Russia wants to maintain/increase influence and be the arbiter for the region – Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia.

Russia could try to exploit Russian speaking populations in the Baltics – particularly Latvia and Estonia.

(2)      Implications:

Russia is at a cross-roads – short-term autocratic or potential long term partner, depending on Russian internal politics and NATO actions/reactions. NATO should maintain its deterrence position while keeping doors open for dialogue from a position of strength.

NATO needs to improve resilience against the Russian hybrid toolbox as Russia tries to find cheap solutions to intervene in NATO countries beneath the Article V threshold.

b.      The Arctic. International commercial cooperation (Russia, Total, Exxon Mobile) may increase interdependency and common interests, and therefore may be a stabilizing factor for the region, but there are growing and legitimate concerns that the current era of high political stability in the Arctic may be lost.

(1)      Implications:

More violent weather patterns, more drifting ice, may potentially make operations more challenging.

Potential technological advances (ships construction, resources extraction, communication, navigation, situational awareness) may facilitate commercial and other human activities.

Non-Arctic and non-NATO states with interest in maintaining access to the Arctic may complicate conflict scenarios.

c.      Asia-Pacific. Asia-Pacific is a continental (or geographic) perspective of the region. It focuses on the Asian Land mass and the Islands in the Pacific and their geospatial relationship to each other. Indo-Pacific is a maritime view (or geostrategic) view of the region. Geo-strategically the Indo-Pacific is organized around access to seas, ports and maritime passages. The strategic interests that are at play within the region are global, and therefore any consideration of the Indo-Pacific region must take a global perspective.

(1)      China dominates the region.

It is hard to look past the rise of China and its competition with the U.S. But it is not all about China. It is the broader, secondary implications that should also gain attention. These are the issues that we are at a greater risk of being surprised by (pink flamingo events).

The Japanese Self Defense Force might change to an offensive force (including nuclear capabilities) to offset PRC and ROK.

Regional competing nations will continue to obtain arms (A2AD-anti ship missiles) as a cost effective offset to PRC and to protect their territorial waters and their exclusive economic zone.

d.      The Middle East and North Africa. For the next decade MENA will be the principal geopolitical challenge for NATO and European Union (EU) countries who struggle to develop a consistent strategy to address the numerous issues of the area. The main challenge to stabilize the region is to find a new way to be successful in the MENA states' political, social and economic transformation process.

(1)      Key Takeaways / projections out to 2030. HUMAN: Demographic transition not established yet; ECONOMY: A shift towards Asia; SOCIETAL: Urbanization, friction and instability.

Urbanization will have an effect on cultural mindset (patriarchal model challenged);

Secularization of Islam (in a conservative or in modern way) will result in counter action of radical Islam;

**Way ahead**

Over the next two years, we will focus on two main strands of work. First, a pilot study on using computing power to improve 'SFA Methodology' that focuses on the convergence of technology trends, and their implications on all other trends in political, human,

economy/resources and environment domains. A test report will be produced on the effectiveness of using computing power in the analysis process. The second strand of work will focus on regional perspectives: North Africa (and the Sahel), Russia and Eastern Europe, the Arctic/High North, and Asia-Pacific. A Regional Perspectives workshop will be conducted for each region and a report will be developed as an outcome of each regional workshop.

At the end of this workshop, we will have developed a greater understanding of the factors contributing to regional dynamics and perspectives. This will enable us to coordinate the agendas, discuss content and shape the follow on regional workshops. In addition we will also gain a greater insight into Microsoft's ability to support our methodology.

**Issues to be discussed**

According to the attached agenda.