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NATO and the Revolution in Military Affairs

Die Autoren konstatieren, dass die meisten Diskussionen über die Transformation der US-Streitkräfte von falschen Vorstellungen über die Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) ausgehen. Sie argumentieren, dass die RMA aus der Sicht der Amerikaner konzipiert wurde und dass NATO-Europa nicht zwangsläufig eine ähnliche Streitkräftereform kopieren muss. Die europäischen NATO-Partner sollten sich stattdessen auf Krisenmanagement und Operationen zur Stabilitätsförderung im internationalen Umfeld konzentrieren. ag

Steven Metz* und Raymond Millen*

Most discussions of NATO and the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) are based on misconceptions. It is usually held that the United States has uncovered the essence of an ongoing military revolution. While the European partners in NATO have the capacity to capitalize on this revolution, the argument goes, they have been unwilling to spend what it will take or to make difficult adjustments such as abandonment of conscription based forces, and thus continue to fall further behind the United States in decisive military capabilities. Eventually this gap could threaten the viability of the alliance itself since America, once it has completed the revolutionary transformation of its military, may find that operating with NATO partners is more of a burden than an advantage.

The discussions of NATO and RMA are based on misconceptions

In reality, the American RMA does not reflect objective and universal changes in the nature of armed conflict, but is a logical response to a specific set of strategic conditions that the United States found itself in during the 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, American leaders recognized that they might need to project military power long distances against enemies with significant conventional militaries, including some advanced capabilities acquired from the Soviets. American strategists also needed to minimize friendly casualties, keep the armed forces as small as possible, and limit the length of conflicts in order to sustain domestic support for military engagement in areas of modest national interest.

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Luckily, the American culture and economy provided solutions to these problems, particularly advanced information technology, a wealth of talented and technologically adept people willing to serve in the military, and a culture that valued creativity, adaptability and quick, decentralized decisionmaking.

The result was what might be called the «Joint Vision» RMA since its clearest expression can be found in the documents *Joint Vision 2010* and *Joint Vision 2020* produced by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The key idea is that on the future battlefield *knowledge,* developed from advanced technology and superior methods for using it, will permit rapid, efficient, effective, distributed, decentralized, noncontiguous operations. Massed and integrated effects will be brought to bear on targets in a short period of time from a wide variety of air, ground, and sea-based platforms. The goal is rapid decisive operations leading to the disintegration of the enemy. In this construct, the four «imperatives» of the RMA: *dominant maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics,* and *full-dimensional protection.*

Stability Operations RMA: The answer of Europe!

However much this Joint Vision RMA is logical for the United States, it does not necessarily reflect the strategic imperatives and constraints of the European partners. Emulation of the Joint Vision RMA is not likely to attain the national or collective interests of the European states, nor is it likely to acquire the necessary political and popular support. Yet the need for revolutionary transformation and the ability to undertake it is certainly as great in Europe as it is in United States. What, then, is the appropriate path to the RMA for the European NATO states?

While the United States concentrates on a military revolution concerned primarily with long range power projection and rapid decisive operations against a conventional enemy, the European NATO partners should lead a parallel but equally important revolution that focuses on crisis management and complex stability operations during a collapse of civil order or internal war. This is likely to be a much more common challenge in coming decades, yet the methods to deal with it have not changed significantly in the past fifty years.

Unlike the Joint Vision RMA, this Stability Operations RMA would build seamless linkages between early warning and pre-conflict activity, actual military and nonmilitary activity during armed conflict, and post-conflict reconstruction and resolution. This would be driven by technological initiatives to verify compliance of treaties and agreements, quell riots with non-lethal weapons, permit the rapid establishment of law and order and a return to normalcy, and to provide early warning of activities that are designed to disrupt peace. Unlike the Joint Vision RMA, the Stability Operations RMA would place great stress on the integration of military and non-military activities. While the Joint Vision RMA seeks rapid decisive operations, the Stability Operations RMA would be based on operations that might take months or even years for ultimate strategic success. Open source intelligence would be as important as that collected with advanced sensors. And cross-cultural psychological precision would be more important than simply targeting precision.

The Stability Operations RMA would certainly require some investment, but would not be the capital intensive venture that the Joint Vision RMA has become. The most fruitful venues for investment would be the intellectual ones rather than the acquisition of complex and expensive systems. Specifically, the Stability Operations RMA would require some research and development of appropriate technology, to include advanced data bases, artificial intelligence, non-lethal weapons, and robotics. A good portion of this, though, could be undertaken in parallel with the private sector since it would be dual use technology. Investment would also be required to build a functioning community between the military and nonmilitary partners in the Stability Operations RMA, to include other government agencies, think tanks, various institutes, political parties and their affiliates, universities, the private sector, and international organizations. Within the military realm, investment would be needed to develop operational and strategic concepts. In particular, Europe would need an interlinked, continental system of analysis, research, experimentation, and wargaming based on its war colleges, staff colleges, and military think tanks. The eventual goal in every military – and the key to success in the Stability Operations RMA – would be an institutional culture that identifies, develops, and rewards creativity rather than adherence to procedure and doctrine. This is, after all, the key to revolution. ■