



# Air Land Sea Application Center

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## ENSURING STABILITY IN NORTH AMERICA AND THE EURO-ATLANTIC REGION THROUGH NATO'S WARFARE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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The U.S. National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and National Military Strategy identify 'Strengthening Alliances and Partnerships' as vital to meeting national and military strategic objectives. As events unfold in Ukraine demonstrate, this strengthening of alliances and partnerships is just as important today (if not more) than in recent history. To further these efforts, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dunford, brought to the NATO Military Committee the need for NATO to develop a future concept on warfare development for the Alliance.<sup>1</sup> Like the U.S. Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020 (CCJO), this recommendation was later adopted by NATO and became the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC), which looks forward to guiding force development towards an Allied Joint Force in 2040. This new NATO concept directly aligns with the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) primary functions of *providing strategic direction for the armed forces* and *advising on global military integration*, thereby sustaining and advancing U.S. Global Leadership by strengthening Allies and Partners to meet priorities for 21st Century Defense.<sup>2</sup> To help further clarify the connection between the NWCC and CJCS, Major General Tony Wright stated the NWCC would help support and further global military integration efforts.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, the U.S. and NATO are both in a state of transformation to develop better deterrent capabilities and, if required, defeat an adversarial attack on the Alliance. To these ends, the NWCC, through NATO's Warfare Development Agenda (WDA), aims to focus the Alliance's strategic way forward by starting with an initial ten Lines of Delivery (LoDs) or transformation efforts. However, a connection between NATO and the U.S. on where the U.S. can help lead in these efforts is yet to be defined. This paper proposes a recommendation towards two suitable LoDs the U.S. could lead on behalf of the Alliance while also providing recommendations towards governance on what it means to lead an LoD. Additionally, this paper aims to highlight how these two NATO LoDs, Multi-Domain Escalation Management (MDEM) and Long-Term Military Strategic Shaping (LTMSS), are complementary to each other and would best align with U.S. strategic

objectives and enhance deterrence, and prepare Allies and Partners to prevail in any conflict.



Figure 1. NATO's North Star and Warfighting Capstone Concept (2020).<sup>4</sup>

### History of the NWCC and WDA Concepts

NATO's Allied Chiefs of Defense (CHODs) signed a new Military Strategy in May 2019 recognizing the strategic competition and instability stemming from Russia and terrorism. Additionally, some Allies expressed concerns that China was also becoming a significant challenge within the strategic environment. To implement the new Military Strategy, NATO agreed in 2021 on a Concept for the Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) from a 360-degree approach.<sup>5</sup> The DDA concept is a single, coherent framework to contest, deter, and defend against the Alliance's main threats in a multi-domain environment.<sup>6</sup> It broadens the concept of deterrence in the direction of contesting hostile acts rather than entirely preventing them. The NWCC envisioned the complex nature of modern warfare as a contest where deterrence must demonstrate an apparent ability to defend, and what this defense is based on, controlling multiple domains of warfare simultaneously.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, to further operationalize NATO's Military Strategy, NATO introduced its NWCC, which outlined a longer-term vision for the Alliance's warfare development (see Figure 1). The NWCC provides the Alliance and Allies with a 'North Star' and organizing principles for warfare development for the next 20 years.<sup>8</sup> It focuses on building advantage and 'pulling forward' the most critical ongoing work towards an ambitious view of a future military instrument of power. Furthermore, Rear Admiral John W. Tammen asserts that the NWCC maps out a path for Allies to focus, synchronize, and cohere efforts, stating that the Alliance is poised to stay ahead of the competition in an increasingly fluid, connected, and complex global security environment.<sup>9</sup>

The NATO Military Strategy and its two implementing concepts, the NWCC and DDA, set a new baseline for NATO's military-strategic advice on the employment and

development of the Alliance's military instrument of power. It forms a road map for NATO and for Allies to focus, cohere, and synchronize efforts. The NWCC identifies five Warfare Development Imperatives to ensure NATO's success in future warfare: cognitive superiority, cross-domain command, influence and power projection, integrated multi-domain defense, and layered resilience.<sup>10</sup> The NWCC and its implementation through the WDA aim to establish a framework organization for the changing character of warfare. According to The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, to achieve these imperatives, the NWCC recommends the development of key enablers, such as the *right people with the right skills* as well as those technologies that can have a game-changing impact and master big data and advanced analytics.<sup>11</sup> The WDA puts these enablers into the context of emerging and disruptive technologies, adversary asymmetry, and how the art of projecting power is no longer about generating mass. By taking this approach, the WDA operationalizes the five NWCC imperatives through LoDs and spreads them out over the next 20 years.

## **Lines of Development (LoD) Discussion**

### **LoD 1: Multi-Domain Escalation Management (MDEM)**

The first LoD in which the U.S. should lead transformation efforts is MDEM. What exactly defines MDEM? According to Dr. Michelle Black, MDEM is a Whole of Government (WoG) approach to synchronize, resolve, and or deescalate tensions at the strategic level.<sup>12</sup> Stated differently, MDEM is shaping up to be what the U.S. would view as the Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic (DIME) approach to using various instruments of power. This approach is supported by Cross-Domain Military "M" operations commonly known as land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace warfighting domains. MDEM involves the mixing and merging of military and civilian action.<sup>13</sup> Looking at the current situation in Ukraine, the concept of MDEM is informally being applied by the U.S., EU (European Union), NATO, and the international community. However, if the U.S. would take the lead in the formal development and implementation of MDEM for NATO, the U.S. would ensure the Alliance is more capable of coordinated efforts while supporting U.S. strategic objectives within the region.

The ultimate purpose behind MDEM is to prevail in a situation while deterring one or more hostile actors by using all necessary systems to exploit and achieve freedom of maneuverer within a conflict to achieve strategic objectives and return to the preferred status quo.<sup>14</sup> Based upon the WoG nature of MDEM, these efforts need to achieve a "strategic rather than tactical objective" aimed to deter or defeat hostile actors during an armed/non-armed conflict or competition. "By including multiple domains and their capabilities – lethal and nonlethal, the warfighting space can include many possibilities."<sup>15</sup> Opponents to the U.S. leading efforts for NATO's MDEM concept might point to wanting a more EU or even national focus. However, this narrow view of the concept would diminish utilitarian benefits that the Alliance would receive from a broader perspective and wider coordination. To scope this paper, the MDEM efforts discussed will focus on the military options the U.S. could lead (realizing that MDEM can expand to WoG), both from an operational design and integration point of view (see Figure 2).

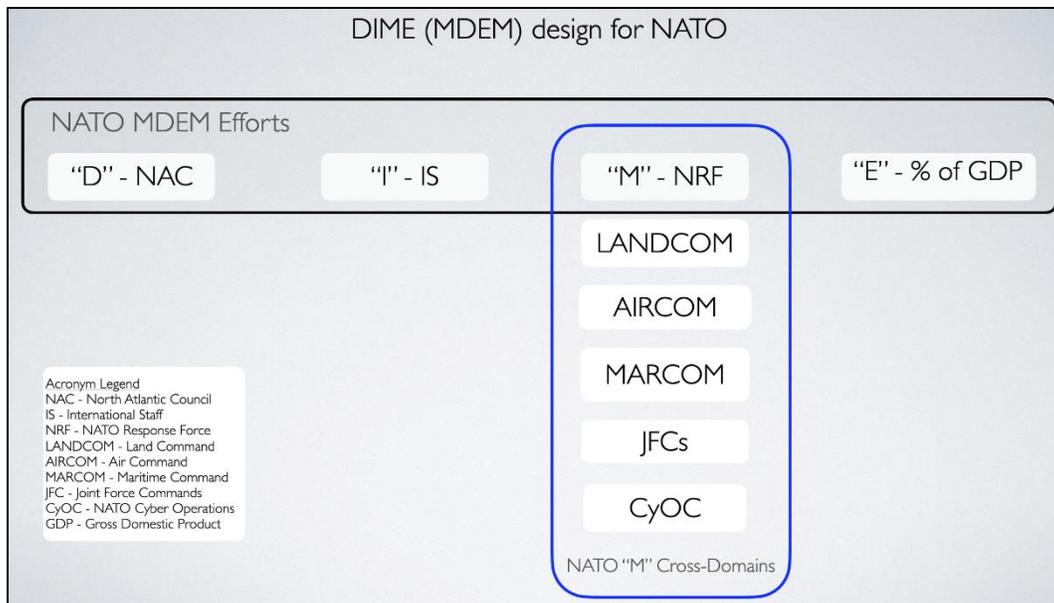


Figure 2. DIME (MDEM) NATO Design

The U.S. military is currently working towards better integrating the Joint Force across the domains of Air, Land, Sea, Cyber, and Space. The DoD addressed gaps in Joint integration in space and cyber by establishing the U.S. Space Force and Cyber Command to achieve these ends. Now that the U.S. has established and delineated leads across the military cross-domain spectrum, these services could be leveraged to aid NATO's military cross-domain integration of MDEM. Moreover, by focusing on cross-domain integration with the Alliance, the U.S. military would ensure our national planning efforts complement those of NATO. This integration of capabilities will continue to grow as we look towards the future fight against adversaries in an era of global competition. Furthermore, the U.S. has the most experience and understanding for escalation management across the nuclear enterprise that would ultimately underpin any NATO multi-domain escalation management. Therefore, it befits the U.S. military to act now and lead the cross-domain integration efforts, which are an inherent part of MDEM, for both the U.S. and NATO to ensure the Alliance remains the deterring force in Europe.

### LoD 2: Long Term Military Strategic Shaping (LTMSS)

The second LoD in which the U.S. should lead transformation efforts is LTMSS. LTMSS should be viewed as a complementary concept to MDEM. The purpose of LTMSS is to go beyond established planning processes and consider potential strategic effects and identify, illuminate, and analyze elements of uncertainty and future alternatives that have not before been part of the equation. LTMSS is not designed to predict the future or solve its uncertainty but rather to define a range of possibilities that consider all possible strategic effects. By utilizing NATO's established planning processes, analysis, and strategic influences, LTMSS compliments these processes and produces more comprehensive advice for political and military leaders. Another way to think about LTMSS is to look at it as a WoG holistic process that supports military and political

decision-making by shaping the future operational environment (OE) and presenting multiple dilemmas for adversaries.

The U.S. should consider LTMSS in the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) context. LTMSS presents an opportunity for the U.S. to expand and link its continuum of strategic planning direction on force development and design to NATO through this LoD. NATO's LTMSS concept is similar to the CJCS's statutory responsibilities to keep a global perspective and develop military advice (i.e., Chairman's Risk Assessment, Joint Military Net Assessment, Capability Gap Assessment) for civilian leadership. From a NATO perspective, the new CHODs Risk Assessment, Net Assessment LoD, and the NATO Defense Planning Process serve nearly identical purposes of informing military and political bodies across the Alliance and partner nations to shape future policy decisions that maximize deterrence to any adversary. Furthermore, benefits from U.S. leadership on LTMSS could, by the end of the projected LoD timeline, positively shape and develop both allied and partner capabilities, thereby reducing Joint, Allied, and Partner risks to various campaign plans and or regional conflict. By using Ukraine as an example, developing a concept like LTMSS could have aided senior leaders throughout the Alliance to recognize better, prepare, coordinate, and execute a comprehensive, unified plan that may have deterred Russia from ever entering Ukraine.

### **Recommendations for the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) and Warfare Development Agenda (WDA)**

Key aspects must still be defined for the NWCC and WDA concepts to succeed. For example, what does it mean for a nation to have *lead* LoD development responsibilities, where should the LoD development requirement reside within NATO, and how can lead nations source these LoD development teams within NATO?

Regarding NWCC and WDA, the term *lead* needs to be clearly understood within NATO. Utilizing existing concepts in NATO, the best way to describe a LoD lead is to frame it in the context of *Coordinating Authority* (CA), as described by DDA. In DDA, CA is designated to a Joint Force Command (JFC) at the operational level within NATO to ensure synchronization, deconfliction, and coordination within their designated Joint Deterrence Area (JDA) or a Joint Task Force. CA enables a JFC to have Operational Control (OPCON) over the mission while delineating subordinate commands Tactical Control (TACON) for the operation. In the NWCC and WDA concept and implementation, the same construct for CA would be applicable and the term is understood within NATO. The key takeaway is that NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) would retain OPCON over the NWCC and WDA process, but the "lead" nation that volunteers for an LoD would be assigned CA for the research, development, and implementation plan for that LoD.

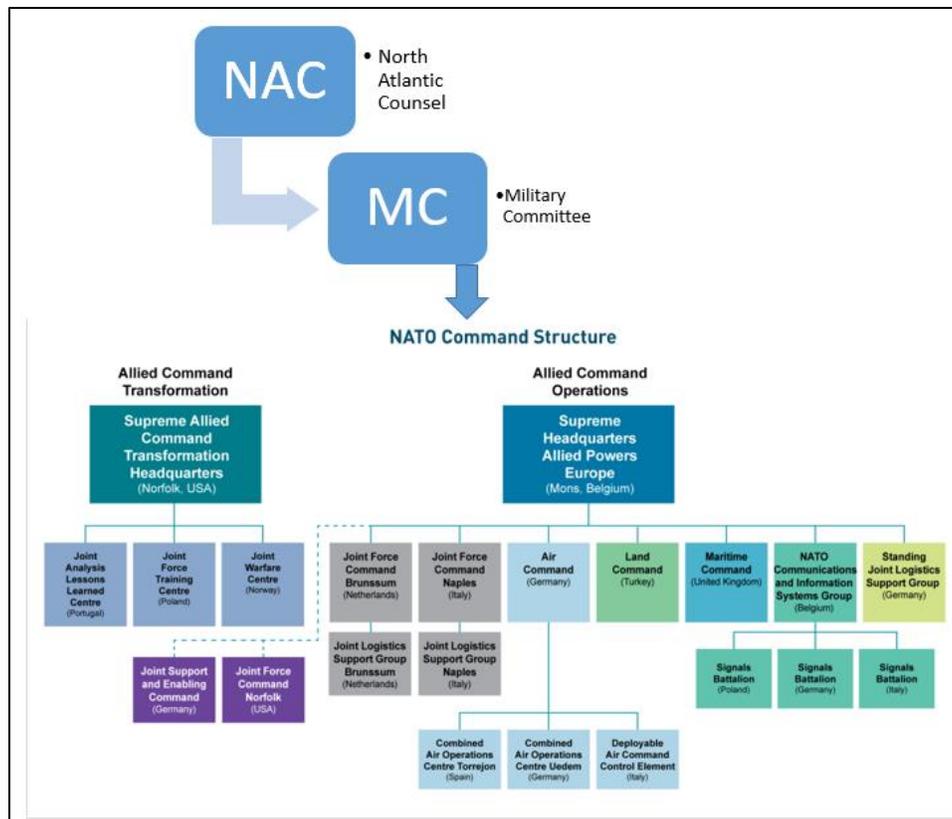


Figure 3. NATO Command Structure<sup>16</sup>

The next issue is where within the NATO Command Structure (NCS) should this lead nation implementation reside? Based upon the organizational structures of NATO and access required throughout the development of a LoD, the team should not reside just within their nation. Team leads should be embedded within the NCS to ensure accessibility to NATO leadership for guidance and direction throughout the development and implementation of their LoD. Also, NATO Allied Command Operation's (ACO) JFCs are focused on current operations within their assigned JDAs and are not staffed to take on strategic projects. Therefore, Allied Command Transformation (ACT) is the most logical organization within the NCS where these efforts should reside.

The third piece that needs immediate attention for LoD development is how the leadership team is sourced. Assigning human resources within NATO is approved through the North Atlantic Council and reflected in what is known as the Peacetime Establishment (PE) postings. The challenge here is the NWCC and WDA are new concepts requiring an additional workforce, but the PE process is a multi-year endeavor that could take over five years for approval. Therefore, when a nation decides they want to volunteer to lead an LoD, the three solutions from within the NATO human resource structure available are contractors, Voluntary National Contributions (VNCs), or a combination of the two. As a result, as nations assess LoDs, it is vital that they account for the additional appropriate skilled workforce (which is likely going to come from their own nation's VNCs).

A final vignette for the future of the NWCC and WDA is that ACT must develop a “red team” to ask the question of “What are we missing” and assess the development of the LoDs to ensure they still are relevant. This is an absolute requirement because of the lengthy LoD timelines (some LoDs are not planned to be fully operational until 2040). As a result, this requires a team to challenge assumptions, identify new and emerging LoDs continuously, and critically assess gaps in what is being developed compared to the future challenges NATO will face.

## **Conclusion**

While both the U.S. military and NATO are at a critical point in their history, they are both looking for opportunities to integrate across multiple domains to achieve strategic, operational, and tactical advantages while simultaneously creating dilemmas for an adversary. Based upon achieving mutual benefits and the DoD’s existing processes, expertise, combined with organizational structures, the U.S. military should volunteer to lead NATO’s LoDs of MDEM and LTMSS. These two complementary LoDs are directly tied to ensuring the Alliance’s strength as a deterrence force in the future and support the U.S.’s strategic objectives of regional stability by countering Russia and China’s aggression and destabilizing effects of terrorism.

Whether taken from the historical perspective of World Wars or the current situation in Ukraine, there is a clear reason *why* NATO needs to deliver on the concepts of MDEM and LTMSS. By taking these proactive steps now, NATO (and the U.S.) will be in a greater position of power should deterrence fail and future conflicts arise. Perhaps if NATO had these concepts in place across the Alliance today, Ukraine and the region would have been better prepared. Additionally, through these efforts, NATO may have had the tools needed to de-escalate the unfolding crisis before it resulted in a full-out invasion. Future Alliance integration and transformation efforts will require a significant commitment for NATO. However, the U.S. can work to ensure connectivity and interoperability across the NATO Alliance and DoD. Furthermore, U.S. expertise in escalation management and proven processes would significantly shape the strategic future of NATO, creating new research and improved capabilities. As a member of NATO, the U.S. should take the lead in these transformation efforts within NATO to ensure both the U.S. and the Alliance remains a significant deterrence force in the Euro-Atlantic region.

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### End Notes.

<sup>1</sup> General Joseph Dunford, 180<sup>th</sup> Military Committee Chiefs of Defense Session, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium, 15-16 January 2019.

<sup>2</sup> United States Code, Title 10. Armed Forces, Subtitle A - General Military Law. Part I – Organization and General Military Powers. Chapter 5 – Joint Chiefs of Staff. Sec. 153 - Chairman: functions.

<sup>3</sup> Major General Tony Wright, Deputy Chief of Staff, Allied Command Transformation, NATO, 2 March 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Allied Command Transformation, NATO Warfare Capstone Concept 2020, 8 November 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Brussels Summit Communiqué, NATO Press Release (2021) 086, 14 June 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Brussels Summit Communiqué, NATO Press Release (2021) 086, 14 June 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), The NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept: *Key Insights from the Global Expert Symposium Summer 2020*, 30 June 2020, available at [https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/attachments/NATO\\_Symposium\\_Final\\_Version\\_For\\_Publication.pdf](https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/attachments/NATO_Symposium_Final_Version_For_Publication.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Allied Command Transformation, NATO Warfare Capstone Concept 2020, 8 November 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Rear Admiral John Tammen, NATO's Warfighting Capstone Concept: *Anticipating the changing character of war*. 9 July 2021, available at <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/07/09/natos-warfighting-capstone-concept-anticipating-the-changing-character-of-war/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> Allied Command Transformation, NATO Warfare Capstone Concept 2020, 8 November 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), The NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept: *Key Insights from the Global Expert Symposium Summer 2020*, 30 June 2020, available at [https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/attachments/NATO\\_Symposium\\_Final\\_Version\\_For\\_Publication.pdf](https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/attachments/NATO_Symposium_Final_Version_For_Publication.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Michelle Black, Allied Command Transformation, Food for Thought Paper: *Perspectives on NATO Multi-Domain Escalation Management (MDEM)*, January 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Cordesman and Grace Hwang, *Broadening the Definition of Gray Area, Hybrid, Irregular and Multi-Domain Operations. Chronology of Possible Russian Gray Area and Hybrid Warfare Operations*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), December 2020, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27622>

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Black, Allied Command Transformation, Food for Thought Paper: *Perspectives on NATO Multi-Domain Escalation Management (MDEM)*, January 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Michelle Black, Allied Command Transformation, Food for Thought Paper: *Perspectives on NATO Multi-Domain Escalation Management (MDEM)*, January 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Allied Command Transformation, NATO Warfare Capstone Concept 2020, 8 November 2021.