# Toward Multinational Professional Military Education in Europe

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# Abstract

European NATO nations need better staff officers. Operation Unified Protector exposed a widespread deficiency in the professional knowledge of field-grade European officers. Professional military education (PME) is where corrective Alliance action must focus. The Nordic countries—Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland—have conducted joint training courses for decades and are considering ways to facilitate cooperation in the education of the field-grade officers that would populate the staff of any future NATO-led expeditionary operation. We suggest three alternative paths that increased cooperation in PME at the level of the command and staff course could take: a Nordic Defence College, standardized national command and staff courses, and a core curriculum of common courses for common purposes. We conclude with a discussion of how the Alliance can facilitate clusters of cooperation between strategically proximate groups of Allies to improve their number of knowledgeable and skilled staff officers.

# Introduction: Toward Multinational Professional Military Education

*NATO Unified Protector*

In March 2011, NATO undertook air and maritime operations protect civilians and rebellious forces from the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. Operation Unified Protector resembled Operation Allied Force, where NATO undertook similar air and maritime actions to protect Kosovar civilians and rebellious forces in March 1999. Unified Protector revealed vast improvements in the ability of European Allies to contribute to operations: 90 percent of all precision munitions dropped and 61 percent of sorties in Kosovo were American compared to 10 percent of precision munitions and 25 percent of sorties in Libya.[[1]](#footnote-1) In many ways, NATO members demonstrated that they had corrected previous capability shortcomings.

Still, most analyses of Unified Protector have focused on remaining hardware deficiencies. “Without U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles, drones, and electronic warfare aircraft to guide combat missions, the Libya intervention would have been extremely difficult and probably would not have succeeded,” concluded a RAND assessment.[[2]](#footnote-2) The United States supplied 75 percent of air-refueling, 75 percent of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance data, and had to replenish rapidly depleted allied stocks of precision munitions.[[3]](#footnote-3) Although many allies wanted to do more, “the military capabilities simply aren’t there,” Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said at the time.[[4]](#footnote-4) Making the appropriate investments to correct for such shortfalls in a time of austerity presents a well-understood challenge.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Less attention has been devoted to the personnel deficiencies that hampered operations. “[T]he alliance has failed to devote the necessary resources to developing key skills, including the capacity to find and engage the types of mobile targets common in contemporary operations, plan joint operations in parallel with fast-paced political decision-making, support the targeting process with legal advice, and provide timely and reliable information on operational developments to the public,” argued U.S. Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder and SACEUR Admiral James Stavridis. “U.S. commanders in Europe had to quickly dispatch over 100 military personnel to the NATO targeting center at the outset of the intervention when it became clear that other member states lacked the knowledge and expertise to provide their aircraft with the correct targeting information.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Indeed, “[s]everal Nations reported that personnel assigned to fill staff positions in support of OUP often lacked pre-requisite training and/or experience resulting in a mismatch of people and skills required, and that there was a reduced effectiveness of OUP Headquarters due to the frequent rotation of some assigned personnel.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The “chaotic transfer of command” from the United States to NATO and staff shortfalls halved the ability of NATO aircraft to carry out strike sorties—a real impact on operational effectiveness.[[8]](#footnote-8)

European NATO nations need more and better staff officers. While there are many exceptional officers in Europe, their numbers were too small to meet the requirements of even this limited operation. Operation Unified Protector exposed a widespread deficiency in the professional knowledge of field-grade European officers. Professional military education (PME) is the place where that knowledge is developed and so that is where corrective Alliance action must focus.

The difficulty is that PME is a national responsibility and it primarily serves national purposes. Furthermore, most European PME systems have been preoccupied with converging with their national systems of higher education as part of the Bologna Process. These domestic initiatives have diffused any momentum for international harmonization within PME. But now that domestic convergence is complete in most European states, international harmonization can commence.

Solutions could be sought at the level of the Alliance. NATO possesses two PME institutions that are clearly relevant to this situation, the NATO Defence College and the NATO School at Oberammergau, but neither possesses the capacity to appropriately educate and train the officer corps of European NATO nations, even if most were willing to delegate this task to them.[[9]](#footnote-9) Rather, improvement of PME is more likely if undertaken by is small groups of strategically proximate states that commit to one another that they will together adopt reforms to increase the ability of their officers to conduct international military operations.

The Nordic countries—Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland—present just such a model of cooperation.[[10]](#footnote-10) They have cooperated in peacekeeping operations and conducted joint training courses for military and civilian personnel for decades under the banners of NORDSAMFN and NORDCAPS.[[11]](#footnote-11) Under the NORDEFCO framework,[[12]](#footnote-12) they have formed a working group to further develop such “common courses for common purposes.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Now that all but Denmark have completed their Bologna reforms they are considering ways to facilitate cooperation in the education of the field-grade officers that would populate the staff of any future NATO-led expeditionary operation.

We use the Nordic case to consider how strategically proximate groups of NATO allies can cooperate to overcome the dearth of qualified staff officers across the Alliance. We first discuss professional military education in general, the measures that have been undertaken thus far by NORDECO to increase cooperation in PME, and the substantial barriers that exist to systematic cooperation in their command and staff courses. We then consider the principles adopted to further European cooperation in civilian higher education and suggest the areas where they apply to PME. We then consider three alternative paths that increased cooperation in PME at the level of the command and staff course could take: a Nordic Defence College, standardized national command and staff courses, and a core curriculum of common courses for common purposes. We conclude with a discussion of how the Alliance can facilitate clusters of cooperation between strategically proximate groups of Allies to improve their number of knowledgeable and skilled staff officers.

# A National Affair

*Professional Military Education*

The military is a profession that utilizes specialized knowledge with regard to the use of force to achieve the purposes of the state. Military officers are the possessors of this specialized and esoteric knowledge. At the highest levels, it is their job to advise political leaders as to the wisdom of using military force in particular ways to achieve particular objectives. At middle levels, it is their job to manage, lead, and command military personnel in the use of violence as well as ancillary functions. Finally, at lower levels, it is their job to utilize violence with skill and discrimination to achieve tactical objectives on the battlefield. Professional military education is an integral part of the development of military officers. It expands their knowledge and ability to exercise judgment so as to carry out these tasks competently.

Professional military education is a mix of higher education and vocational-technical training. Over the course of their careers, officers undergo training to develop the skills necessary to perform practical tasks at the tactical level. They also undertake education to develop the knowledge and intellectual acumen to command, lead, and manage their subordinates as well as to advise their superiors in the chain of command as to the most appropriate course of action. This developmental process is usually quite explicit, with particular training and educational objectives tied to specific assignments, career progression, and promotion. Moreover, as with most professions, there is a general consistency across borders, with the body of skills and knowledge to be mastered reflecting the tasks that these professionals undertake at different levels of responsibility albeit in a national context.

PME takes place at four levels: at the undergraduate level where cadets are prepared to be commissioned as officers, a specialty phase where officers focus on a functional specialization and small unit leadership, an intermediate level where officers transition from being technically proficient in their specialty to being proficient at command and staff processes, and a senior level where officers transition to being strategic thinkers. Each level addresses different needs of the profession. Pre-commissioning PME introduces a large number of students to the military profession, educates them in national issues and processes, socializes them into military culture, and molds them into loyal agents that are licensed to command others to use violence on behalf of the state. Such education lasts 3-4 years. The specialty phase produces tactically proficient junior officers and company-grade leaders and last 3-6 months. Intermediate PME at the command and staff level develops a smaller number of officers who have been promoted to field-grade ranks and have been selected for further development. These officers form the middle management of the military and are educated for 10-24 months. Senior PME at the war college level develops an even smaller cadre of officers to become senior leaders of their services and interact with civilian policy makers at the highest levels. Such courses last 1-3 years.

The potential for international cooperation in PME increases across these levels. Pre-commissioning education at the undergraduate level is the state’s primary opportunity to indoctrinate future officers to be loyal and to introduce them to the national system of government, military procedures, and other topics specially geared toward the home state. Institutions in other states cannot meet these needs. At the specialty level, many technical aspects are common enough to permit cooperation: maintenance of common vehicles and airframes and individual proficiency in the use of common weapon systems have been pursued for many years.[[14]](#footnote-14) Other aspects, such as small unit operations and leadership, depend upon national doctrine and command structures and therefore are less amenable to international cooperation.

At the command and staff college level, higher education in military science is combined with training in staff processes and leadership skills for mid-career officers. It is designed to foster critical thinking skills as well as impart particular knowledge. The typical curriculum is divided into military theory and history, international politics, national decision-making, leadership, and joint military operations, perhaps supplemented with elective courses, a war-gaming exercise, and a thesis. Much of this curriculum is (and should) be geared toward orienting officers toward multinational, coalition, and Alliance policies, procedures, and practices at the operational level. Active learning through seminars fosters a mixture of higher and vocational-technical education. The seminar environment replicates small unit dynamics and larger exercises emphasize group coordination, management, and leadership. The hybrid curriculum socializes a cohort of officers and builds their informal connections, and can educate them broadly for the second half of their careers where they assume management roles in military organizations numbering in the hundreds or thousands. Given that most European nations cannot operate alone, much can be achieved in a multinational environment.

The war college level expands military science to the “strategic level” of national policy. It aims to produce senior military (and some civilian) leaders who are “nimble-minded, creative, and knowledgeable experts in service, joint, and national security affairs” that are able to “effectively bridge the gap between virtuosity in operations and the achievement of policy objectives.”[[15]](#footnote-15) International considerations loom large in the curriculum and the ability to develop arguments, analyze complex policy issues, and communicate effectively orally and in writing are essential to this level of education. Multinational cooperation at this level also has much to commend it, particularly as there are a limited number of senior-level programs in Europe.

**Multinational Educational Cooperation**

*NORDEFCO Cooperation*

Nordic cooperation in education and training dates back to 1965 when “the Nordics set up a joint UN training program for officers and non-commissioned officers…. The 1973 programme consisted of UN observer courses hosted by Sweden and Finland, a UN staff course hosted by Sweden, a course for movement control personnel hosted by Norway, a military police course hosted by Denmark and a logistic officers course hosted by Norway.” Later a Nordic seminar on UN peacekeeping operations for civil servants and field-grade officers was added.[[16]](#footnote-16) These courses grew to 25 in 2003 and were attended by 850 students that year.[[17]](#footnote-17) Currently under NORDEFCO,[[18]](#footnote-18) Denmark offers training courses for military police and in civil-military cooperation (CIMIC). Finland offers training to be a military observer, liaison officer, and military advisor as well as in communications. Norway offers courses in UN and NATO logistics and support. And Sweden officers a host of courses in civil-military relations, gender issues, international police, generating lessons learned, operational planning, and brigade and battalion level staff officer processes in different types of multinational environments.[[19]](#footnote-19) These courses are taught in English and open to international personnel. In 2008, “some 900 students” were trained in the various courses, 300 of which were not Nordic.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Since 2009, NORDEFCO has focused on developing “common courses for common purposes”[[21]](#footnote-21) that supplement specialty training. In 2013, they offered twenty week-long training courses for personnel deploying to multinational assignments in partner capacity building or low intensity stabilization and training missions under the auspices of NATO’s Partnership for Peace program or the United Nations.[[22]](#footnote-22) Furthermore, a working group has identified language courses (English, Pashto, and Farsi), technical courses in aircraft maintenance, combat medical courses for special forces personnel, mine counter-measures, and logistics as areas with “good potential for further cooperation” in training and education.[[23]](#footnote-23) The working group has even indicated that “common competent bod[ies] for recognition [and] certifying staff” should be pursued to ensure quality.[[24]](#footnote-24) Such language indicates that the countries of NORDEFCO can do more and, importantly, desire to do more to cooperate.

The Nordic states are therefore considering cooperation at higher levels, moving beyond admitting a small percentage of foreign officers to attend their command and staff courses.[[25]](#footnote-25) But cooperation at this level is much harder for many reasons. The courses are long and vary in length: 11 months in Denmark, 1 and 2 year programs in Norway, and 2 years in Sweden and Finland. Thus attendance in the course by each officer requires a substantial time commitment and cannot be accommodated by a short-term leave from regular duties. Furthermore, each country teaches their command and staff course in their native tongue and therefore admission is limited to those with requisite language skills. Admission criteria range from “careful selection” in Sweden, to approval by the defence command’s personnel office in Denmark, to possession of a baccalaureate degree in Norway, to possession of a baccalaureate degree, passing an entrance exam, and proficiency in English in Finland. Graduation also means different things for an officer’s career progression. It results in promotion in Finland, is a prerequisite for promotion but does not guarantee it in Denmark and Sweden, and is a prerequisite for “advanced officer training” that is required for promotion in Norway. Finally, accreditation differs substantially across the Nordic countries. In Denmark, “certification of the quality of the course is governed by national directives … and evaluated through key performance indicators reported to national authorities [e.g., Defence Command]. The equivalency of the course to other courses amongst NATO and/or European PME institutions is not certified”[[26]](#footnote-26) and it has yet to comply with the Bologna standards for credits and accreditation.[[27]](#footnote-27) In Norway, the Ministry of Education accredits the National Defence University, its command and staff course is recognized as meeting civilian university standards, and “parts [of the course] are accredited by NATO.”[[28]](#footnote-28) In Sweden, the Ministry of Education accredits the command and staff course and graduates receive a masters degree.[[29]](#footnote-29) Finally, in Finland, the content of the command and staff course is “determined by the Defence Staff,” it is accredited by the Ministry of Education and Culture, and graduates receive a masters degree.[[30]](#footnote-30) These differences indicate that intermediate PME remains a national affair in the Nordic countries. How can they overcome these substantial barriers? The civilian sector offers some ideas.

*Multinational Cooperation in Civilian Education*

Fifteen years ago, heterogeneous higher and vocational-technical education systems across Europe presented substantial barriers to capitalizing on the free movement of highly educated and skilled labor within the EU and beyond. Incompatible degree requirements, course credit systems, accreditation, and quality assurance procedures precluded recognition of educational credentials for students and graduates, stymied competition for each, discouraged international innovation, and hence limited European productivity and competitiveness in an increasingly global marketplace. Policy makers realized that these barriers to cooperation had to be addressed at a foundational level if they were to be overcome.

The Bologna and Copenhagen processes in civilian higher and vocational-technical education were designed to facilitate a gradual convergence of national higher education systems across Europe.[[31]](#footnote-31) The Bologna Process has encouraged the harmonization of education credit systems. This has enabled standardization of degrees and their requirements across the three levels of higher education—baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral—so as to facilitate recognition of degrees across institutions and borders. The Copenhagen Process is facilitating similar harmonization within the vocational-technical system of European education. Furthermore, that process has drawn upon the Bologna standards so that comparisons can be drawn between these two types of education and mutual recognition of student accomplishments and qualifications can occur within national systems.[[32]](#footnote-32) This has pushed states and their educational institutions to develop formalized descriptions of the competencies that ought to be developed within particular courses of study. These national qualification frameworks are enabling educational systems to base credit on learning outcomes rather than contact hours between students and faculty or student workload.[[33]](#footnote-33) This, in turn, enables comparability across educations, nationally and internationally, through the European Qualification Frameworks. Finally, three layers of quality assurance facilitate harmonization: processes inside the institutions themselves, at the national level, and in an international and European context. This layered mechanism of governance perpetuates the harmonization of national educational institutions and systems through persuasion and systemic incentives rather than authoritative sanctions for noncompliance.[[34]](#footnote-34)

These reforms have had a substantial impact on higher education in European states. Indeed, they have had an impact on PME as these systems have moved to integrate themselves into national systems of higher education.[[35]](#footnote-35) They are based upon five principles: standardization of educational credit; standardization of degree requirements; development of competency descriptions for higher and vocational-technical education; quality assurance at the institutional, national, and international level; and recognition that incentives built into the layered processes are sufficient to perpetuate harmonization across institutions, educational sectors, and borders.

*Fostering Nordic Cooperation*

How might these principles be applied to Nordic command and staff education? Although it might be tempting to consider these principles in the order that they built upon one another in the civilian realm, cross-border PME harmonization should begin with the recognition that common competencies are expected from officers of particular ranks and levels of responsibility. In PME, such competencies have long been explicitly used to develop and assess curricula. Across the EU, 59 of 65 undergraduate PME institutions have competency descriptions and 34 of them use them as the basis for awarding credit.[[36]](#footnote-36) At the command and staff level, 40 of 43 institutions have competency descriptions and 25 of those use them to assign credit.[[37]](#footnote-37) These include the institutions of Sweden and Finland. Norway and Denmark have national competency descriptions and are moving to use them to assign credit.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Agreement on common competencies that should be developed by a command and staff college education would enable a wide degree of cooperation that can go beyond that in the civilian realm. Common competencies suggest similar curricula in command and staff courses since officers at this point in their career are being prepared of similar levels of responsibility. NORDEFCO has already adopted the principle of “common courses for common purposes” in its specialty training courses. Therefore, it is a short step to conclude that common courses for common purposes to develop common competencies in field-grade officers should be developed—particularly with regard to education and training that addresses multinational cooperation.

Second, the most substantial barrier to foreign officer participation in higher education is language—even among the Nordic countries. Common courses for common purposes ought to be taught in a common language: English. Nordic courses in peacekeeping and peace support operations have long been based upon English-language materials and instruction because English is the language that will be used in multinational military operations. Preparation to perform well in those circumstances requires mastery of the material in that language.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Third, a common governance structure to facilitate monitoring of competency development and assure the quality of the education provided must be established. Harmonization of civilian educational systems is driven by the layered governing structure of quality assurance. National militaries have an even greater incentive than national educational ministries to ensure that their educational institutions produce competent graduates as these are their own employees. NORDEFCO’s working group has indicated that “common competent bod[ies] for recognition [and] certifying staff” should be pursued as a means of ensuring the quality of common courses.[[40]](#footnote-40) The logic of the initiative suggests that these “common competent bodies” can develop into a certification and accreditation regime for the training courses and common command and staff courses.

Establishing a curriculum of common courses for common purposes in a common language and mechanisms for assuring its quality provides a firm basis to consider how its cooperative delivery can be implemented. We consider three: a Nordic Defence College, standardization of existing command and staff courses, and limited standardization of command and staff curricula around a core of common courses for common purposes. Each option is based on common courses for common purposes in a common language. They vary with regard to the degree that the entire curriculum of Nordic command and staff courses are common in content, delivery, and accreditation. They also vary in their potential to promote officer exchanges. Despite such variance, each requires increased cooperation amongst NORDEFCO members and present different challenges to be overcome.

The first option is a Nordic Defence College that would supplement or supplant the existing command and staff schools in the Nordic states. A NORDEFCOL would consist entirely of common courses for common purposes, would use English as the language of instruction, and would necessarily be governed by a committee of participating states that would provide guidance with regard to curriculum content, accredit the course of study, and assure its continued quality through monitoring and evaluation. Beyond this, a NORDEFCOL would necessarily have a large number of slots available to “foreign” officers and common entrance standards would be required to ensure that performance standards could be uniform and rigorous. The selection of officers to attend also would be explicitly managed through an exchange scheme to ensure equity. The result would be something like the Baltic Defence College on a grander scale.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The second option is the standardization of existing command and staff courses across the Nordic region in content, time, and length. This would be a NORDEFCOL-like education with the curriculum delivered in national schoolhouses. A common curriculum delivered by each existing command and staff college would require each institution to change its curriculum and working language wholesale. Decentralized delivery of a common curriculum would require extensive curriculum guidance, separate accreditation of the course of study in each country’s schoolhouse, and consistent monitoring and evaluation to assure its continued quality. Deeper cooperation could be enabled through synchronous scheduling of the academic year that would enable foreign officer participation, although this need not occur. Entrance requirements could remain national, although the greater the number of officer exchanges, the more likely that common entrance standards would be required to ensure quality and rigor. The result would be something like the American system of Joint Professional Military Education across the four services.

The third option is a common core curriculum offered in the context of national command and staff courses. Common courses for common purposes taught in English would be developed and offered across the command and staff colleges. A committee of participating states would govern accreditation, monitoring, and evaluation of core courses. Other courses—national courses for national purposes—could remain as such, accredited and governed by national authorities. Entrance requirements could remain national. Academic calendars could be synchronized to facilitate the exchange of students within a coordinated scheme that could allocate slots across the nations according to a common formula and imposing common entrance requirements and a cap for maximum participation in the name of equity. The result would be something like the Combined Joint Exercise (CJEX) filtered through the core of the command and staff curriculum.[[42]](#footnote-42)

These three alternatives are summarized in the following table.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1: Possible Institutional Expressions of Nordic PME Cooperation | | | |
|  | **NORDEFCOL** | **Standardization** | **Common Core** |
| Common Courses | Entirely | Entirely | Partially |
| English | Entirely | Entirely | Common Courses Only |
| Entrance Standards | Common | National | National |
| Quality Assurance | NORDEFCO | NORDEFCO | NORDEFCO + National |
| Common Schedule | Entirely | Academic Year | Academic Year |
| Mobility | All | Facilitated by Scheduling | Facilitated by Scheduling |

Each of these three alternative ways of institutionalizing PME cooperation in the Nordic countries has different degrees of potential to enable further reform and cooperation. Each option has its own liabilities as well. A NORDEFCOL would require significant investments during a period of austerity, although it might prove to be more efficient over time. It would focus any efforts to further reform PME in one organization and would certainly give a Nordic profile to any subsequent cooperation in multinational military operations. Like the Baltic Defence College, a NORDEFCOL could serve as a single provider for all command and staff education for the Nordic countries. It could also serve as an elite institution for officers bound for multinational, rather than national, billets.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Standardizing courses of study across the Nordic schoolhouses would require significant adjustment of the curriculum and eliminate its national content. It would thereby provide opportunities for economies of scale in curriculum production, validation, and accreditation, provide an institutional focus for further PME reform, and again establish a Nordic profile in multinational military operations. It would eliminate the need for officer exchanges between the Nordic countries, at least for curricular purposes, as they should receive the same education regardless of provider. Still, exchanges would require harmonization of the academic year to accommodate officer duty assignments. Common entrance standards would facilitate such exchanges and help ensure the rigor and quality of the education provided.

Finally, establishing a common core of courses requires the least adjustment in the purpose and structure of intermediate PME across the Nordic states, yet provides for a common Nordic profile in multinational operations, and lays the basis for further cooperative reforms. The common core courses would likely occupy a large portion of the curriculum and be built from what is currently on offer. Officer exchanges need not occur to facilitate a common core education, but would require common scheduling for the academic year to accommodate officer duty assignments and would benefit from common entrance requirements to ensure the quality and rigor of the curriculum. Such a solution represents perhaps the most likely step forward in cooperation among the Nordic states at the command and staff course level.

**Conclusion**

The Nordic states have a long history of educating some of their officers in a cooperative manner. They have developed common courses for common purposes in discrete training subjects and are now considering how to expand their cooperation to their command and staff courses. They are doing so to capture some efficiencies, improve the quality of their staff officers, and enhance the Nordic profile in multinational expeditionary operations. Cooperation between even these strategically proximate states is difficult at this level, however, because these courses have long been established as national courses for national purposes. They are different lengths, taught in each state’s native tongue, have different entrance requirements, are accredited by different types of authorities, and confer different benefits upon graduates.

We have argued that the harmonization of the civilian sector in higher and vocational-technical education under the Bologna and Copenhagen Processes offer mechanisms that can be adapted to PME cooperation—particularly as these PME systems have largely completed their Bologna reforms. The development of common competency descriptions for learning outcomes provides a Bologna-Copenhagen-inspired way to harmonize PME across borders. Common competencies provide the basis for common courses for common purposes in a common language that are subject to common quality assurance standards.

Nordic harmonization can express itself in many ways and we discussed three: a Nordic Defence College, standardization of the command and staff courses across the Nordic region, and a core curriculum of common courses. Each presents its own unique mix of benefits and liabilities, as well as potential for further reform. A Nordic Defence College offers the simplest expression of these principles, providing a single institution to foster the common competencies expected of a field-grade officer that will be able to participate effectively in multinational expeditionary operations. A common curriculum delivered by each existing command and staff college would require each institution to change its curriculum and working language wholesale and require external oversight. A common core curriculum would require partial reform and change in the working language of each institution and external oversight to assure quality. NORDEFCO nations are examining these principles and institutional proposals as they consider how to deepen their cooperation in PME. Other groups of strategically proximate NATO nations, such as those of central Europe and southeastern Europe, should follow suit.[[44]](#footnote-44)

*A Role for NATO*

That cooperation is much more likely to take place within subsets of Allies does not mean that the Alliance should play no role. NATO institutions and processes can enable, facilitate, and encourage reform in PME that increases the capabilities and competence of officers who will assume important staff functions when the next crisis erupts. It can do so in three ways: promoting the NATO reference curriculum for intermediate PME, increasing the role of the annual Conference of Commandants, and consistently including NATO’s skill shortfalls in the list of gaps that Smart Defence is intended to correct.

*Promoting the Reference Curriculum*

In 2011, a multinational team of PME faculty under the auspices of the Canadian Defence Academy created a reference curriculum for pre-commissioning, junior officer, and intermediate-level PME on behalf of NATO and the Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes.[[45]](#footnote-45) It addresses developing competencies in operational-level processes, command and leadership, and defense and security studies. It was intended to “provide *partner* countries with in-depth learning objectives and curriculum support for academic courses related to officer professional military education.”[[46]](#footnote-46) While certainly useful for partner nations, the command and staff colleges of NATO *members* should pay even more heed to this curriculum. Indeed, the curriculum ought to the basis for developing Alliance-wide common courses for common purposes and be updated on a regular basis to account for strategic, operational, and doctrinal developments within and across the Alliance. In this way NATO can establish competencies for officers who will populate its staff positions and enable the personnel offices of member states to assign appropriately educated and trained officers that will not require on-the-job training when crises erupt.

*Conference of Commandants*

The commandants of the command and staff colleges of the NATO nations and partners gather annually to promote cooperation, exchange information and best practices, and thereby improve the curricula and pedagogical methods used in their institutions. The event offers the opportunity to promote and socialize the principle of common courses for common purposes across the Alliance. It also can provide the basis for working groups below the level of the commandants to undertake the work of harmonizing the curricula of the schools, their academic calendars, and perhaps a governance structure to monitor and assure the quality of the education provided to the officers of NATO nations.

*Alliance Leadership*

Finally, the leadership of the Alliance should keep the quality of personnel assigned to NATO billets in the forefront of the Smart Defence agenda. Ambassador Daalder and Admiral Stavridis candidly and forcefully highlighted the dearth of qualified staff officers populating the command structure of NATO and the degradation in operational effectiveness it caused in Operation Unified Protector in high profile outlets such as *Foreign Affairs*, *The New York Times*, and Alliance forums. Both have left their positions and other NATO leaders must now carry the banner.

Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has promoted the Connected Forces Initiative to promote cooperation in the education and training of the military personnel of NATO member states so that they can operate effectively in a multinational environment. [[47]](#footnote-47) Yet his comments have been limited to promoting NATO schools and “how we can get even more value out of them.”[[48]](#footnote-48) He has devoted much more time and energy to highlighting the budget and hardware shortfalls of European Allies.[[49]](#footnote-49) Yet wars are fought by people and the operational degradation caused by inadequate numbers of well-educated and appropriately-trained staff officers was brought into full relief by Operation Unified Protector. This frustrated American commanders perhaps even more than the expected Allied shortfalls in precision munitions, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, and aerial refueling aircraft.[[50]](#footnote-50) In a time of austerity, the skill gap risks being overshadowed by the budget and equipment gaps unless given priority and consistent attention by the Secretary General. Smarter officers must be a consistent part of the Smart Defence agenda, not an afterthought.

This is perhaps the greatest danger of the current push for austerity. In the business of national and international security, high quality professional military education is cheap, relatively and absolutely. Yet it is an easy place to cut the budget because its costs are invisible. The knowledge and competence of military personnel is not as easily assessed as the number of aircraft or artillery pieces in the arsenal and therefore degradations are not easily noticed until they have an operational effect. The American military spent over three years learning the basics of a very old and well-known form of warfare, because it had systematically failed to educate generations of its officers in insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare in its PME schoolhouses. It suffered tactical, operational, and almost strategic defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan as a result. European militaries suffered as well. Yet these knowledge shortfalls could have been corrected for the price of a few fighter aircraft—for example, those that were lost on the ground in Camp Leatherneck in 2010.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Multinational military operations require highly educated and trained professional officers to deliver the operational and strategic outcomes that political leaders demand. Educating the officers of Allies in a cooperative manner can be a more efficient and more effective means of achieving these objectives. The multinational cooperation among strategically proximate partners that is being pioneered by the Nordic states is perhaps the most pragmatic way to begin.

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5. Andrea Gilli, “Procurement Lessons from the War I Libya,” *RUSI Defence Systems* (Autumn/Winter 2012); Timothy P. Sheridan, NATO in Libya: Implications on the Future of the Alliance, (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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7. “Operation Unified Protector: Lessons from National Military Perspectives,” *Project Factsheet*, (Brussels: NATO Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre, 27 February 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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11. NORDSAMFN was the Nordic Cooperation Group for Military UN Matters and was replaced by NORDCAPS, the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support in 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. NORDEFCO formed in 2009 to consolidate multiple Nordic defence initiatives. See <http://www.nordefco.org/The-basics-about-NORDEFCO>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. “Annual Report for COPA HR & EDU – 2012,” Memorandum to the Nordic Military Coordination Committee, (21 December 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For instance, the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program was established in 1981 (“Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program Fact Sheet,” (January 2009) available at <http://www.sheppard.af.mil/library/factsheetspage/factsheet.asp?fsID=5168>. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
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16. Jakobsen, Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations, page 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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18. “Training for Peace,” NORDEFCO website, available at http://nordefco.imaker.no/latest-updates/training-f/, accessed 15 June 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “Courses at SWEDINT and How to Apply,” Swedish Armed Forces website, available at <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/Swedish-Armed-Forces-International-Centre/Courses-at-SWEDINT/>, accessed 15 June 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. NORDCAPS Planning Element, “NORDCAPS Briefing,” (undated), Slide 11, available at <http://www.powershow.com/view/13b8bd-MzNmN/NORDCAPS_Briefing_powerpoint_ppt_presentation> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
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22. NORDEFCO, “Courses 2013,” available at <http://www.nordefco.org/files/nordefco-courses-a4.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. “Annual Report for COPA HR & EDU – 2012,” Memorandum to the Nordic Military Coordination Committee, (21 December 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “Annual Report for COPA HR & EDU – 2012,” page G-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The percentage of slots available for foreign officers varies from 1-3 percent in Finland, 5 percent in Denmark, 7-8 percent in Norway, and 10 percent in Sweden. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Personal communication with Søren Bach (11 April 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Rear Admiral Nils Wang, Commandant of the Royal Danish Defence College, says that his institution “is already moving towards describing and certifying all Danish PME under the umbrella of the New Danish Qualification Framework. All Danish curricula are broadly within the scope and rage of NATO’s Reference Curriculum,” (personal communication with Nils Wang, (27 May 2013)). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Personal communication with Morten Flagestad (18 February 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Personal communication with Nina Gemvik(11 February 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Personal Communication with Captain Mika Penttinen (5 February 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See “The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999,” [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/OFFDOC\_BP\_bologna\_declaration.1068714825768.pdf]; and Jeroen Huisman, Clifford Adelman, Chuo-Chun Hsieh, Farshid Shams, and Stephen Wilkins, “Europe’s Bologna Process and Its Impact on Global Higher Education,” in Darla K. Deardorff, Hans de Wit, John D. Heyl, and Tony Adams, editors, The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education, (Thousand Oaks, CA: 2012); and *Copenhagen Declaration*, 30 November 2002, [<http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc125_en.pdf>]; Europa: Summaries of EU legislation, “The Copenhagen Process: Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training,” last updated 08.04.2011, [http://europa.eu/legislation\_summaries/education\_training\_youth/vocational\_training/ef0018\_en.htm]. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Johanna Witte, M. V. Wende, and Jeroen Huisman,“Blurring Boundaries: How the Bologna Process Changes the Relationship Between University and Non-university Higher Education in Germany, the Netherlands and France,” *Studies in Higher Education* 33, 3 (June 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ron Tuck, An Introductory Guide to National Qualifications Frameworks: Conceptual and Practical Issues for Policy Makers, (France, International Labor Organization, 2007), page 5, available at: <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@ifp_skills/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_103623.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
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35. Sylvain Paile, Europe for the Future Officers, Officers for the Future Europe: Compendium of the European Military Officers Basic Education, (Warsaw: Polish Ministry of National Defence, September 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Scores taken from national tables in Paile, Europe for the Future Officers, pages 53-226. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Scores taken from national tables in Paile, Europe for the Future Officers, pages 53-226. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Personal communication with Ole Kværnø, Director, Institute for Strategy, Royal Danish Defence College (29 June 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Corum, “Some Key Principles of Multinational Military Education,” page 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. “Annual Report for COPA HR & EDU – 2012,” page G-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See Corum, “Some Key Principles of Multinational Military Education,” for a discussion of the structure of the Baltic Defence College. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. On CJEX, see Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Advanced Command and Staff Course: Joint Services Command and Staff College, (November 2012), page 26-27), available at: <http://www.da.mod.uk/prospectus/jscsc/acsc/at_download/courseFlyer>. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Indeed, Denmark is pursuing such an option with the Baltic Defence College, (Corum, “Some Key Principles of Multinational Military Education,” pages 23, 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. I.e., Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia and Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Generic Officer Professional Military Education Reference Curriculum, (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy, 21 September 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Major General P.J. Forgues, “Foreword,” Generic Officer Professional Military Education Reference Curriculum, page 2, *emphasis* added. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. “The Connected Forces Initiative,” available at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-107090C3-88095132/natolive/topics_98527.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “Remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Munich Security Conference plenary session on ‘Building Euro-Atlantic Security’,” (4 February 2012), available at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_84197.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
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51. # Nathan Hodge, “Coordinated Taliban Raid Penetrates Base,” *The Wall Street Journal* (16 September 2012). The $200,000,000 loss of 6 Harrier jets could fund the Baltic Defence College, for instance, for over 30 years (see Corum, “Some Key Principles,” page 26.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-51)