

# Interpreter Training in the Western Armed Forces

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# Overview

- This presentation looks at:
  - The post cold-war political scene and its impact on structure, interaction and deployment of Western armed forces
  - The implications to role of interpreting for armed forces, and hence training needs
- Compares against frameworks for professional assessment
- Concludes with concepts of interpreter training for the armed forces

# A General Framework of Interpreting needs in Armed Forces

- Internal management & operations (if multilingual)
- Peace-time interactions with external organisations (political accountability, diplomacy, public relations)
- Within theatres of deployment
  - Pre-conflict (monitoring, intelligence gathering)
  - During conflict (situation awareness, managing POWs, refugee movements)
  - Post-conflict (enforcing martial law, hand-over to civic authorities)
  - Humanitarian efforts

# NATO (multilingual alliance)

- Official Languages: French & English
  - Language of Operations: English
- Permanent Civilian Staff
- Military Command & Control
  - Seconded Staff Officers
  - Defence planning feeds into nations' plans
- National force generation
  - Units operate in own language
  - Interpreting skills provided by nations for own needs
- Interoperability
  - Joint exercise programme to validate concept

# Background: the cold-war era

- 1945-1985 Interpreting needs relatively stable
- Throughout the cold war, Western armed forces were developed and deployed with the notion of
  - NATO vs. Warsaw Pact
  - High intensity, short conflict in Europe
  - No ultimate winner (nuclear war)
- Western armed forces interpreting focused on
  - Remote monitoring of Warsaw Pact (mainly Russian)
  - Pre-conflict intelligence
  - Internal management
- NATO was never deployed

# Cold-war era was not conflict free

- Third party conflicts in Africa, Asia, Middle East, South America
  - “observers” sent by each side (limited commitment & hence language needs requirement)
- No direct intervention helped maintain East-West balance of power
  - (exceptions: US intervention in Vietnam, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan)
- UN played a limited but important peace-keeping role
  - Frequently led by third-party commands

# Collapse of Soviet influence in late 80s and early 90s

- Rapid changes led to much initial uncertainty
  - Soviet internal reform (from 1985)
  - Fall of Berlin wall (1989)
  - Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan (1989)
  - Dissolution of Warsaw Pact (1991)
- Western Armed Forces faced rapid change in security risks in a very short period of time

# Post-cold war: key challenges

- Need for NATO?
  - “Strategic Concept” 1991
- Cost justification more important
- Increased UN empowerment
- New instabilities (Balkans, Islamic fundamentalist regimes)
- New models of deployment (downsized forces with widened role & possible scenarios of deployment)



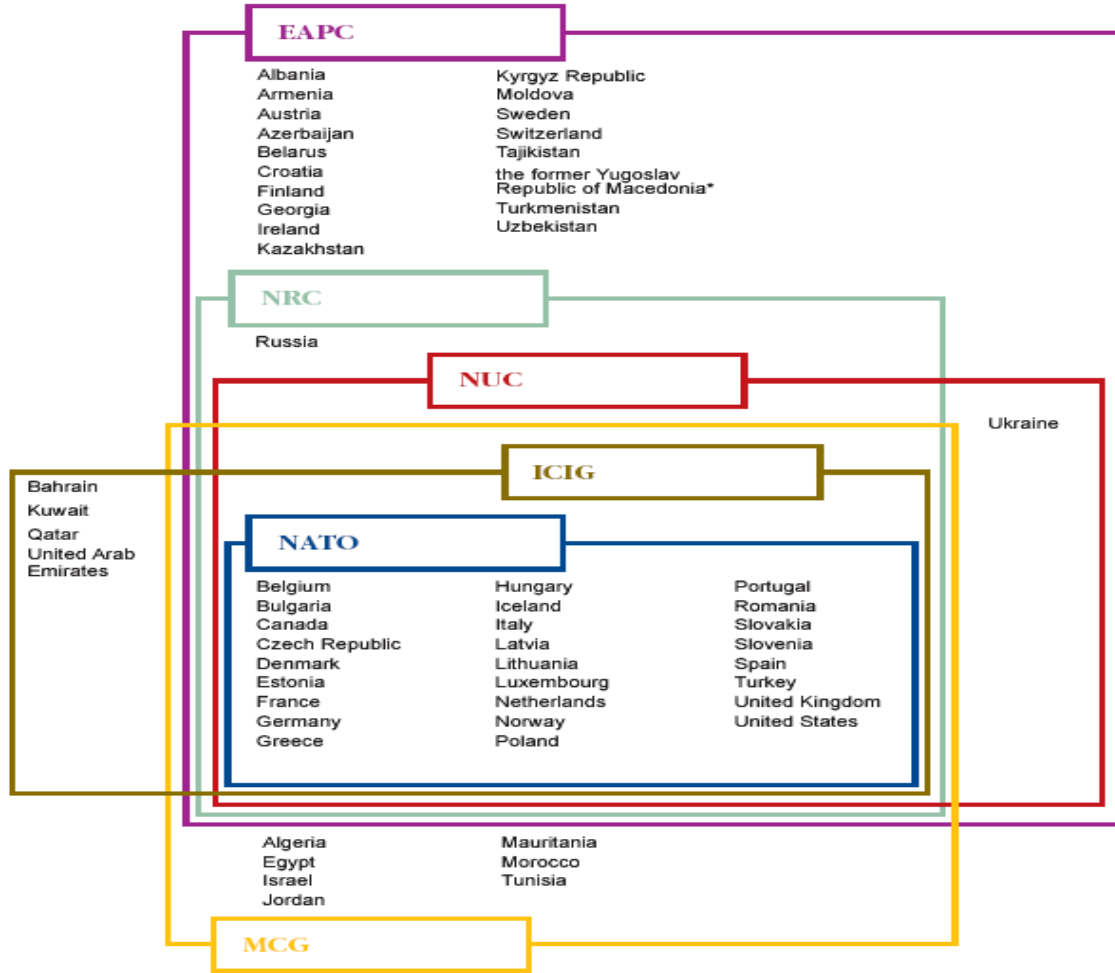
# Western “strategic concepts”

- Cooperation in security in exchange for political stability, upholding democratic principles, human rights
  - Partnership for Peace programme (1994)
  - Mediterranean Dialogue (1995)
  - Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (2004)
- Democratic control over deployment
  - Accountability
  - NATO’s “open door” programme, transparency, civic interaction
- Western armed forces *de facto* policeman of the world

# NATO expansion & Partnership for Peace

- NATO expanded from 16 countries in early 90s to 26 countries:
  - Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic (1999)
  - Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004)
  - Albania, Croatia & FYROM memberships progressing
- Bilateral PfP Agreements with a further 20 states
- NATO/PfP = Joint military exercises & security co-operation involving 46 states

## NATO's partnerships

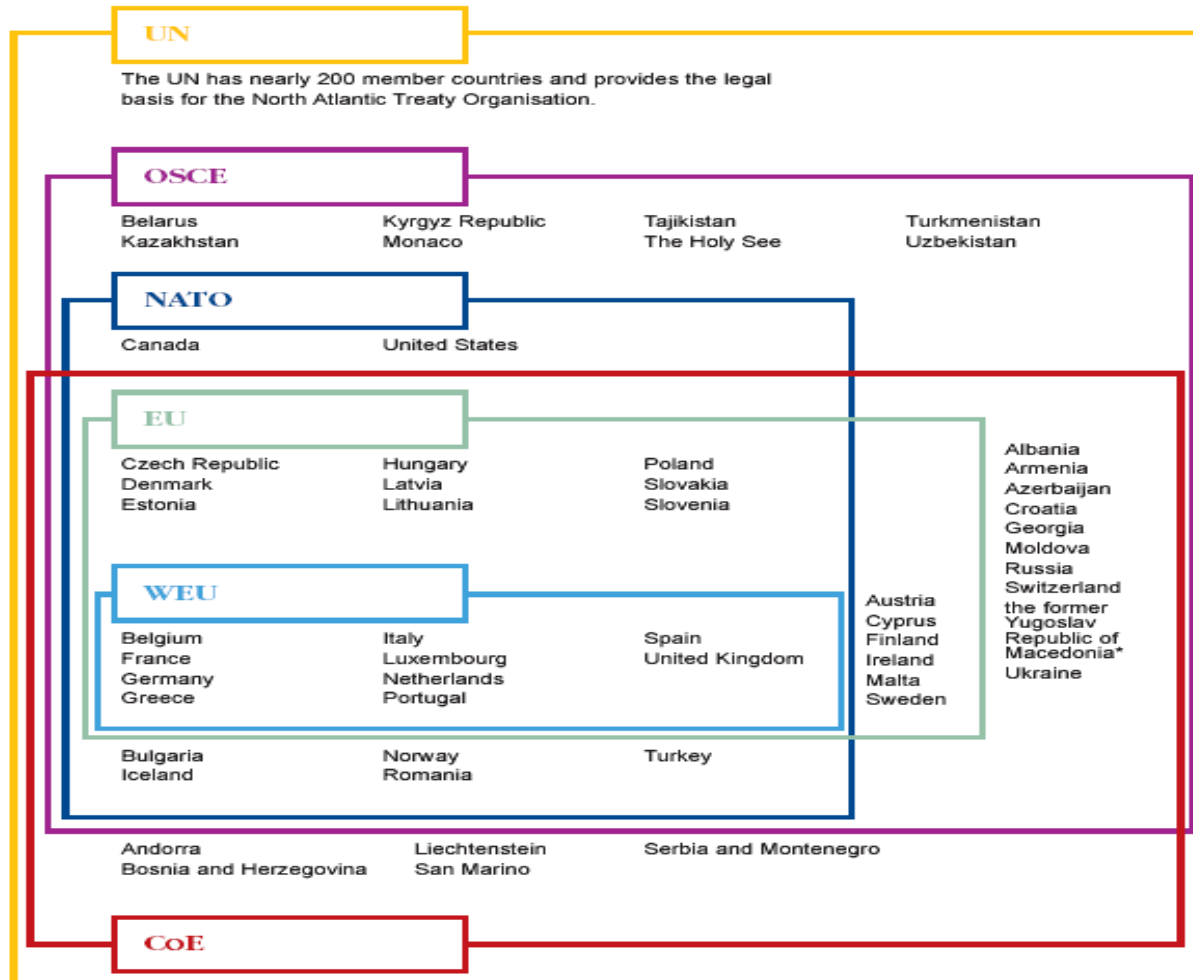


\* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

- |   |             |  |  |             |                                       |
|---|-------------|--|--|-------------|---------------------------------------|
|  | <b>EAPC</b> | Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council;<br>NATO + Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries |  | <b>NATO</b> | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation    |
|  | <b>NRC</b>  | NATO-Russia Council  |  | <b>MCG</b>  | Mediterranean Cooperation Group       |
|  | <b>NUC</b>  | NATO-Ukraine Commission  |  | <b>ICIG</b> | Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Group |



## Working with other organisations



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**UN** United Nations  
**OSCE** Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**NATO** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

**EU** European Union  
**WEU** Western European Union  
**CoE** Council of Europe



# Western Armed Forces in Theatre

- Yugoslavia (1991 - present) UN/NATO  
– Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo,  
FYROM
- Somalia (1993 - 1995) UN/US
- Iraq (1991, 2003 - date) UN, US/allies/UN
- Afghanistan (1993 - date) UN/NATO

# Yugoslavia

- UNPROFOR/IFOR/SFOR/EUFOR
  - Up to 60,000 troops from 47 nations
  - At handover to EUFOR in 2003, 7,000 troops plus over 2,500 police
- NATO intervention
- NATO tactical doctrine
  - “Lot” houses
  - CIMIC
- Yugoslavia has become a “template for intervention”

# Somalia

- Armed support for UN based relief efforts
- 1993-1995 numerous independent US actions
- Withdrawal in 1995 of UN/US military presence and humanitarian efforts

# Iraq

- 1991 – US led broad alliance, including Middle East logistical support
  - Entry and exit from the country
- 2003 – date
  - Conflict lasted c. 40 days
  - Country still in a state of martial law



# Afghanistan

- 1993 – UN backed NATO protection around Kabul
  - civic stabilisation
  - First NATO action outside traditional theatre
- 2001-2002 – US/allied actions “war on terror”
- 2006 – NATO expansion of civic stabilisation role across the country

# Impact on interpreting needs: from the cold war..

	Types of interpreting (COLD WAR)			Whispered	Ad-hoc
	Conference	Simultaneous	Consecutive		
Internal org					X
Accountability	X	X	X		
Diplomacy	X	X	X	X	X
Public relations		X	X	X	X
Within Theatre:					
pre-conflict intelligence			X		
situation awareness		X	X		
POWs					
Public relations					
refugee movements					
enforcing martial law					
handover to civic authorities					
Humanitarian efforts					

# .. To needs reflecting current commitments

	Types of interpreting (POST COLD WAR)				
	Conference	Simultaneous	Consecutive	Whispered	Ad-hoc
Internal org					X
Accountability	X	X	X		
Diplomacy	X	X	X	X	X
Public relations		X	X	X	X
Within Theatre:					
pre-conflict intelligence			X		
situation awareness		X	X		
POWs		X	X	X	
Public relations		X	X	X	X
refugee movements			X		X
enforcing martial law		X	X		X
handover to civic authorities		X	X		X
Humanitarian efforts		X	X		X

# Typical Assessment criteria (models of quality)

## **Buhler (1986)**

Sense consistency  
Logical cohesion in utterance  
Correct grammatical usage  
Completeness of interpretation  
Fluency of delivery  
Native accent, pleasing voice

## **Wilss (1996)**

Linguistically correct  
Culturally appropriate  
Functionally effective  
Referentially complete

## **Pöchhacker (2002)**

Accurate  
Adequate  
Equivalent  
Successful

Seeking to operationalise these into interpreter training raises issues:

Replication outside the assessed context

Self awareness + self learning

Consistency in performance

And doesn't account for military specific needs

# Important attributes in a military context

	Internal Ops	Civic/political interface	Within Theatre
English/Native Language combination	Low	High	High
Culturally appropriate (status, gender, age)	Low	High?	High
Reliability	High	High	High
Loyalty	High	Low?	High
Operational Awareness	High	Low	High
Security Clearance	High	Low	High
Compatibility with team (non-verbal)	Low	High	High

Professional Soldier (Alliance National)

Civilian Employed by Alliance

Outsourced to Alliance National

Outsourced to Theatre National

X

X

X

X

X

X?

X?

# Conclusions: emergent model of interpreter training

- Existing models/methods of Western Armed forces are suited to peace time but not 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - Predictive models for force generation and scenario deployments should also be applied to language needs assessment at an alliance level
- National force generation reviewed to assess gaps
  - “Notice to Move” impact on interpreters
  - Within theatre recruitment
  - Assessment of task assignments and interpreting modes